

What is irregular warfare?

Irregular warfare refers to a type of armed conflict that differs from conventional warfare between state militaries. It typically involves non-state actors using unconventional tactics against government forces or civilian populations[1][2]. This form of warfare often blurs the distinction between combatants and civilians, employing strategies such as guerrilla tactics, terrorism, and insurgency[2][3]. Irregular warfare aims to wear down the enemy through persistent harassment, flexible tactics, and rapid maneuvers, often incorporating political, psychological, social, and economic factors alongside military ones[1][2]. Historically, it has been used by colonial powers against indigenous peoples and later by smaller groups against larger, more sophisticated military forces[3][4]. In modern contexts, irregular warfare has been associated with insurgencies, counterinsurgencies, and terrorist activities, presenting significant ethical and legal challenges due to its often indiscriminate nature and the involvement of non-state actors[2][3].

[1] Guerrilla Warfare. (2015). In Compton's Encyclopedia. Compton's Encyclopedia.

[2] Amstutz, M. R. (2018). International Ethics: Concepts, Theories, and Cases in Global Politics. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

[3] Hodge, J. (2020). Violence in the Name of God: The Militant Jihadist Response to Modernity (pp. 44–45). Bloomsbury Academic.

[4] Allison Hein, A. (2024). Theology in Motion (p. 9). Fortress Press.