

Dear Colleagues and Students,

You are kindly invited to the seminar entitled as “Irregular warfare in history: from outlaws to freedom fighters” organized by the Department of History.

Date: 07 April 2025, Monday

Time: 16.30

Avenue: A-130 FEASS Seminar Room

Title: Irregular warfare in history: from outlaws to freedom fighters

Speaker: Mark Lawrence, University of Kent

Abstract:

Irregular combat predates formal military organisation by centuries. Even as world empires expanded in the early modern period (c. 1500-1800), irregular Pandours, militia and Cossacks waged war in their own way, while regular armies deployed their own ‘partisans’ besides. But the surge of irregular fighting around 1800 in Europe and Asia changed the nature and appeal of the oldest form of violence. Henceforth, irregular warriors were vilified as rebels, bandits, and obstacles to the power of the state. The rules of war did not apply to them. Atrocities were answered by counter-atrocities, and the Geneva Convention would not afford irregulars full right of quarter until as late as 1977.

In the wake of the Second World War, however, the situation changed again. Irregular fighters developed a praxis of liberation struggle which merged Clausewitzian ideas of ‘escalation dominance’ with the revolutionary ideals of people’s war advocated by Mao ze Dong and other anti-imperialists. This lecture shows how the vilification of irregulars during the strategic wars of the 1792-1945 period was replaced by the acceptance, even celebration, of the freedom fighter.

Bio:

Mark Lawrence is a military historian and historian of modern Europe and the Hispanic world. He works at the University of Kent’s School of History, which was rated 1st in the UK for research excellence in the 2021 Research Excellence Framework. Mark is the author of seven books, an edited collection, and several articles and book chapters besides. He teaches modern European and military history, and has given invited academic talks from as far afield as India and Mexico. He speaks fluent Spanish and German and in 2020 directed and narrated a documentary on Mexico’s Cristero War (La Cristiada - A Civil War: Think Kent Discovers Film and Panel).