

For a generation, the United States government tried to pacify the wild Apache tribe of the southwest. Over the course of that decade's long campaign, Apache leaders like Cochise, and later Geronimo, became famous throughout the world for their fighting ability, survival instinct, and sheer grit in the face of overwhelming odds. Less famous are the American soldiers who ground down the Apache nation and brought the final Indian war to an end.

In his classic work, the *Conquest of Apacheria*, historian Dan L. Thrapp tells the bloody and tragic story of the Apache Wars. Thrapp starts at the beginning, 1848, when the United States took control of Apache territory after the war with Mexico. The reader will be surprised to learn that the Apaches were initially happy to see the Americans, as over the centuries the Apaches and the Mexicans had become bitter enemies. The name Apache, Thrapp tells us, is in fact a corruption the Spanish word Pachu, meaning enemy. Thrapp tells us much about the Apache people and their way of life. During the latter half of the 19th century, the Apache nation probably numbered no more than 5-6,000 people spread out over Arizona and New Mexico. They were divided into half a dozen tribes, none of whom liked one another.

For the first decade or so after their initial contact, the Apaches and Americans got along well, though there were mutual suspicions. That all changed when Cochise was accused of kidnapping American children and subsequently held by the United States Cavalry. Cochise escaped confinement and ran for the hills, kicking off a decade long guerilla war which was not ended until 1873. The year before, President Grant appointed a colleague of his from the Civil War, General George Crook, a veteran Indian fighter. Crook did not seek to defeat the Apaches in a great battle, rather he sent numerous columns into the field and waged war on their territory, burning out villages and stores, and chasing renegade Apaches wherever they ran. Crook relied not on cavalry units, but on Apache scouts from rival tribes. These found bands of Apache warriors and led the cavalry to them. Once captured, Crook brought them back to the reservation where he implemented what is now understood to be classic counter insurgency doctrine. He gave the Apaches land, livestock, and homes; and encouraging them to engage in free enterprise and learn what he called 'the pride of ownership'.

Unfortunately Crook's sensible program was disrupted by crooked and incompetent Indian agents, as well as thieving contractors who shorted Apache orders and inevitably provided them with inferior quality goods. Mismanagement of the reservations led to open revolt in the early 1880's, and another long campaign in which the previously unknown Geronimo, became famous. After five years in the field, Crook managed to talk Geronimo into surrendering. He and most of the rest of the tribe was imprisoned in Florida and later Alabama before finally being resettled in Oklahoma, where he died in 1913.

The Conquest of Apacheria is great history and, in many ways, a manual for successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency operations. It is also a fine and exciting read that conveys the determination of the Apaches to remain free and the toughness of American cavalry troopers fighting them.