

IDSA Monograph Series  
No. 57 December 2016

---

# Culture, Context and Capability

American and Indian  
Counterinsurgency Approaches

Ayesha Ray



IDSA Monograph Series

No. 57 December 2016

---

# Culture, Context and Capability

## American and Indian Counterinsurgency Approaches

Ayesha Ray



INSTITUTE FOR DEFENCE  
STUDIES & ANALYSES

रक्षा अध्ययन एवं विश्लेषण संस्थान

© Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photo-copying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses (IDSA).

ISBN: 978-93-82169-70-3

*Disclaimer:* The views expressed in this Monograph are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute or the Government of India.

First Published: December 2016

Price: Rs. 175/-

Published by: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses  
No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram  
Marg, Delhi Cantt., New Delhi - 110 010  
Tel. (91-11) 2671-7983  
Fax.(91-11) 2615 4191  
E-mail: [contactus@idsa.in](mailto:contactus@idsa.in)  
Website: <http://www.idsa.in>

Layout &  
Cover by: Vaijayanti Patankar

Printed at: M/S Manipal Technologies Ltd.

# CONTENTS

## *Chapter 1*

Explaining Counterinsurgency in Theory and Practice ..... 5

## *Chapter 2*

State Building: The Context of American  
and Indian Counterinsurgencies ..... 28

## *Chapter 3*

Organizational Culture: Political and  
Military Preferences on War..... 57

## *Chapter 4*

Military Capability and Decisions to Use Force ..... 81

## *Chapter 5*

Conclusion ..... 98



# Explaining Counterinsurgency in Theory and Practice

In recent years, perhaps no other subject has received as much attention and discussion in the field of international security and conflict studies as counterinsurgency (COIN)\*. The interest in COIN among scholars and practitioners has evolved due to the rapidly changing nature of threats states face in the international system today. Conventional warfare is being gradually and steadily replaced by extended, asymmetrical conflicts between states and non-state actors. This monograph attempts to do three things. First, it compares the historical experience of American and Indian COIN using specific cases as illustrative examples. The American experience of COIN has been external to the state with most operations conducted on foreign soil. In the Indian context, with the exception of the Sri Lankan case, almost all COIN operations have been conducted within India's internal borders to address rising insurgencies. Therefore, the context in which COIN operations are executed in both countries carries particular weight as a comparative study. Second, organizational and strategic cultures on COIN in both countries reveal stark similarities and differences. And third, the type of doctrinal principles embraced by India and the United States (US) has shaped their respective military capabilities to fight insurgents.

The very first attempt at undertaking a serious study of small wars was made by C.E. Callwell in 1896.<sup>1</sup> In modern times, the first COIN

---

\* The monograph uses the acronym COIN for counterinsurgency throughout. It must be understood that COIN itself can be a strategy, policy or combination of measures that could mean different things in different contexts.

<sup>1</sup> C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice*, London: Harrison and Sons for His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1903.

doctrine, called *Small Wars Manual*, was written by the US Marine Corps in 1935, with the final edition being published in 1940.<sup>2</sup> The *Small Wars Manual* is a compilation of information describing “nation building, establishing constabularies, civil affairs, infrastructure repair, election management, river crossing, intelligence gathering, psychology, disarmament of the populace, and force composition”, among other things.<sup>3</sup> Orthodox principles on COIN emerged in the post-1945 period as European states attempted to quell a series of violent uprisings.<sup>4</sup>

Low intensity conflict has been the dominant mode of warfare for the British army since 1945. While British soldiers died on active service somewhere in the world in nearly every year between 1945 and 1997, the only significant conventional experience comprised 35 months of British participation in the Korean War, involving no more than five battalions at one time; 10 days during the Suez Crisis in 1956; 25 days of the land campaign over the Falkland Islands in 1982; and 100 hours of land operations in the Persian Gulf in 1991. To a lesser degree, much of the same could be said of the experiences of the French, US, Soviet/Russian, Indian, and even Israeli armies since 1945.<sup>5</sup>

Counterinsurgency is primarily a strategy to defeat guerrilla fighters who hide among civilian populations over an extended period of time. These low-intensity conflicts have been fought by the French in Algeria, the British in Malaya and the Soviets in Afghanistan. Contemporary US strategy draws widely on French and English doctrines from the

---

<sup>2</sup> *Small Wars Manual*, US Marine Corps, Washington D.C: U.S.G.P.O., 1940.

<sup>3</sup> Jim Sauer, “Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the Global Jihad”, *American Thinker*, October 18, 2009. [http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2009/10/counterinsurgency\\_doctrine\\_and.html](http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2009/10/counterinsurgency_doctrine_and.html), accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>4</sup> David Martin Jones and M.L.R. Smith, “Counter-insurgency Politics: Going Global”, *The World Today*, Vol. 65, No. 10, October 2009, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> Ian Beckett, “Forward to the Past: Insurgency in Our Midst”, *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Summer 2001, p. 59.

1950s and 1960s, as well as lessons from Vietnam.<sup>6</sup> Published in 2006, the current American COIN doctrine is the brainchild of General David Petraeus. This US doctrine, embodied in *Army and Marine Corps Field Manual*, posits COIN as a nation-building exercise. It lists the five goals of COIN as: “safeguarding indigenous populations; improving democratic governance; combating corruption; delivering economic projects; and instituting the rule of law.”<sup>7</sup>

## The Overlapping Categories of Revolutionary, Insurgent and Terrorist

Insurgency is broadly defined by scholars and practitioners on the subject. This often tends to complicate a study on COIN.<sup>8</sup> Most scholars would agree that, broadly, COIN denotes a political movement involving conflict between a state and a group opposing the state that uses violence to secure its political objectives. These objectives involve seizing power and authority from state agencies—police, military, etc.—to a complete dismantling of state machinery. The meaning of insurgency, however, is mired in controversy as it is frequently used interchangeably with revolution or terrorism. Any act that uses violence to secure political ends also straddles the terrain of terrorism. Whether revolutionary, insurgent or terrorist, groups that seize power through

---

<sup>6</sup> Tara McKelvey, “The Cult of Counterinsurgency”, *The American Prospect*, October 23, 2008, available at <http://prospect.org/article/cult-counterinsurgency>, accessed July 3, 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Bing West, “Counterinsurgency: A New Doctrine’s Fading Allure”, *World Politics Review*, January 24, 2012. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/11249/counterinsurgency-a-new-doctrines-fading-allure>, accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Christopher Clapham has argued that other insurgency movements are essentially “reform insurgencies”, in which the theoretical intention is to seek radical reform of the state, as in the National Resistance Army’s (NRA) campaign in Uganda. There are also what Metz has characterized as “commercial insurgencies” and W.G. Thom has called “economic insurgencies”, in which mineral resources or drugs have been the real prize of a cynical quest for power, as in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Colombia. See Beckett, “Forward to the Past: Insurgency in Our Midst”, n. 5, p. 61.

the advocacy and promotion of violence fall within the same group. In fact, the principal use of violence as a means to justify political ends makes it extremely difficult to draw clear lines of distinction between categories of revolutionary, insurgent and terrorist. The meaning and application of COIN, therefore, almost always expands into engaging with the meaning of counterterrorism.

Martha Crenshaw, one of the first exponents of a theory of revolutionary terrorism, has used the example of the Front de Liberation Nationale (FLN) in the Algerian Revolution to examine a strategy used by insurgents where the objective was “capturing political power from the state and introducing fundamental political and social changes through an application of violence”.<sup>9</sup> The FLN movement took recourse to violence in its eight-year struggle against French rule only when all peaceful forms of protest against the state had been exhausted.<sup>10</sup> The psychological effectiveness of terror tactics is largely derived from the unpredictable nature of the groups and their methods.<sup>11</sup> Crenshaw is aware of limitations inherent in the use of revolutionary terrorism. While it strengthens the comparative analysis of several cases, its application is bound to specific situations: “violent and lengthy conflict between a revolutionary organization and an incumbent regime over the future power distribution in the state”.<sup>12</sup> The obvious similarity between revolutionary and insurgent groups is not in the nature or objectives but the use of violent methods to change the existing distribution of military capabilities in their favour.

---

<sup>9</sup> Martha Crenshaw Hutchinson, “The Concept of Revolutionary Terrorism”, *The Journal of Conflict Resolution*, Vol. 16, No. 3, 1972, p. 384. Also, see Martha Crenshaw Hutchinson, *Revolutionary Terrorism: The FLN in Algeria, 1954–1962*, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1978; and Martha Crenshaw Hutchinson, “The Causes of Terrorism”, *Comparative Politics*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1981, pp.379-399.

<sup>10</sup> Crenshaw Hutchinson, “The Concept of Revolutionary Terrorism”, n. 9, p. 387.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 394.

Another identifiable trend in revolutionary warfare is the overlap in political and military functions. In a “revolutionary war”, the objective being the population itself, the insurgent is driven to secure the trust of the population, while the counterinsurgent is interested in keeping the population subordinate. Both goals are political in nature. The government has to move much beyond a simple strategy of securing its political goals and using military force. However, since politics informs every single decision taken by the state, the overlap in political and military actions cannot be clearly separated and the political effects of every military posture ought to be weighed carefully.<sup>13</sup>

A separate category which gets conflated is that of the insurgent and terrorist. While insurgencies take the form of a long protracted struggle and are much harder to fight, terrorism can be a short-term challenge in which terrorist groups seldom win. A Rand Corporation study examined 648 terrorist groups between 1968 and 2006, and found that 398 of those groups have now ceased to exist. Forty-three per cent (171) of those that ended were absorbed into the political systems of the countries in which they operated, while 40 per cent (159) were defeated by police activities. Remarkably, only 7 per cent (28) of those groups were defeated by military action.<sup>14</sup> Non-state terrorist groups like Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL)/Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) work like any traditional insurgent group. Their methods demonstrate a steady record of taking and holding territory, controlling populations and governing at the local level. They also seek to mobilize populations against governments.<sup>15</sup> In 2004, when ISIL was still al-Qaeda, it transformed itself from an insurgent group to a conventional

---

<sup>13</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice*, Westport CT: Praeger, 1964.

<sup>14</sup> Haviland Smith, “Defining Terrorism: It Shouldn’t be Confused with Insurgency”, *American Diplomacy*, December 2008. [http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2008/1012/comm/smith\\_defining.html](http://www.unc.edu/depts/diplomat/item/2008/1012/comm/smith_defining.html), accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Jerry Meyerle, “Is the Islamic State a Terrorist Group or an Insurgency?”, *Defense One*, October 3, 2014, available at <http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2014/10/islamic-state-terrorist-group-or-insurgency/95765/print/>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

military by seizing and holding territory. Despite suffering heavy casualties in US air strikes, the group adopted tactics of low-level insurgency to continue its protracted war. Within a short period of time, it developed an ability to control wide swathes of territory to become one of the strongest jihadist groups in the world. Its ability to wage conventional-style military battles against Syrian and Iraqi armies further removed it from traditional definitions ascribed to terrorist groups.<sup>16</sup> While terrorist groups do not, by definition, seek to control territory and populations, neither do they rest on popular support for existence. However, the ISIS is evidence of a group which evolved from a terrorist group into a formidable force capable of executing a sophisticated insurgency. This suggests that terrorist groups are perfectly capable of engaging the state in protracted long-term conflict.

According to Paul Wilkinson, terrorist acts can be executed without mounting a full-scale insurgency.<sup>17</sup> Such acts are part of a wider struggle—a civil war with frequent fighting breaking out between different groups. Recent research on the intersection between terrorism and civil wars—the dominant type of warfare during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries—confirms the contemporary relevance of Wilkinson’s assessment. Data assembled and analyzed by Michael Findley and Joseph K. Young suggest that most incidents of terrorism occur in geographic regions marked by civil war.<sup>18</sup> Civil wars are typically coded, among other things, as wars between two parties, one of which is government.

The conduct of civil wars is therefore, by definition, marked by insurgency and counterinsurgency, again suggesting a close interrelationship between terrorism and insurgencies. The

---

<sup>16</sup> Scott Stewart, “The Difference between Terrorism and Insurgency”, *STRATFOR*, June 26, 2014, p. 2.

<sup>17</sup> Assaf Moghadam, “The Connectivity between Terrorism, Insurgency, and Civil War”, *SITE Intel Group*, June 20, 2014, available at <http://news.siteintelgroup.com/blog/index.php/about-us/21-jihad/4389-al-qaeda-terrorism-and-insurgency>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

prevalence of terrorism in Iraq, Syria, Yemen, and other theatres ravaged by civil war and insurgency provide empirical support for this link.<sup>19</sup>

Terrorism, therefore, occurs within the context of broader conflict, typically an insurgency or civil war and can exist alongside tactics used in guerrilla warfare. The significant overlap in the meaning of terrorism/insurgency and counterterrorism/COIN produces an expansive interpretation of both strategies at the domestic level as they can adapt themselves to peacetime problems. In several instances, COIN has been broadly applied to all forms of civil action and not just instances of extreme violence. This makes the study of COIN extremely challenging.

An important yet underplayed dimension in the study of COIN is the inadequate attention to ideological power—one of the most dangerous weapons insurgents use to influence local populations. Whether one seeks to understand the motivations of Maoists or jihadists, it is clear that both groups are characterized by dogma, a set of doctrinaire principles strongly committed to the use of violence.<sup>20</sup> While violence is randomized in terrorism, groups like India's Maoists, heavily influenced by Mao Zedong's principles of revolutionary warfare, have a well-constructed theory of violence. For Maoists, the state represents the oppressor; disenchantment with the state is rooted in the grievances of the people. Justification for this violence is the concealed violence of the state. Islamist insurgents also have a theory on violence, but their justification comes from God and an interpretation of their faith. The only reason Maoists succeed is because theirs is a faith-based system. In other words, "the system is evil, providing relief is palliative and thus, the faith based system does not yield to evidence".<sup>21</sup> Of course, the debate to explain the underlying causes of violent extremism in the

---

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Interview with Ajai Sahni, Director, Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, October 6, 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Islamic world is a highly polarized one, with those on the Left maintaining that the struggle against terrorism must prioritize social and economic development. The second group frames the fight against Islamist terrorism singularly focused on state actors, jihadist ideology, counter-intelligence and coercive action.<sup>22</sup> These opposing views are most prevalent in explaining the causes and motivations for the use of violence in other cases as well. Yet, whether violence originates from unlawful activities of the state, totalitarian Left-wing ideologies like Maoism or Right-wing religious Islamic precepts, many, if not all, terrorist and insurgent groups are bound by a common and identifiable set of ideological positions. They are anti-state, anti-democratic, anti-compromise and anti-rational, where dialogue and reconciliation is discouraged in favour of violence. Even more damaging is the enormous influence such anti-progressive ideologies exercise over different sections of the population. So strong is the allure of ideological power and the rationale to uphold a set of utopian principles at any cost that many educated youth are easily indoctrinated into continuing the violence and finding reasons to justify it. Therefore, beyond offering military, political or strategic solutions, a successful defeat of terrorist and insurgent groups will be more likely when COIN and counterterrorism approaches pay serious attention to the groups' ideological weaponry.

## **Insurgencies as Asymmetrical Wars**

Setting them apart from conventional wars, almost all insurgencies share another common feature: they are asymmetric conflicts. An asymmetrical war is one in which a large number of well-equipped regular military forces engage a smaller group of less-equipped rebels. As the state's power relative to these groups is significantly higher, rebels are reluctant to engage in large-scale confrontations given the risk of incurring heavy losses. Therefore, larger battles are rare. Insurgents, however, rely on a strategy of mobilizing civilian populations against the state to gradually

---

<sup>22</sup> Omer Taspinar, "Fighting Radicalism, Not Terrorism: Root Causes of an International Actor Redefined", *SAIS Review*, Vol. XXIX, No. 2, Fall 2009, p. 1.

erode its authority.<sup>23</sup> In *Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars*, Andrew Mack observes that “in order to win, insurgents must impose a steady accumulation of costs on their opponent.”<sup>24</sup> The insurgents’ intent is to appear undefeated and provoke the stronger opponent into escalating its forces on the ground thereby incurring significant political and economic costs. Ivan Arreguin-Toft notes that:

“in asymmetric conflicts when strategic interaction causes an unexpected delay between the commitments of armed forces and the attainment of military or political objectives, strong actors tend to lose for two reasons. First, although all combatants tend to have inflated expectations of victory, strong actors are particularly susceptible to this problem.”<sup>25</sup>

Conventional wars differ from insurgencies in that the same set of laws and principles hold equally true for both contending sides in the former. The degree to which each opponent applies those principles in a conventional battle depend on the opponent’s ability, situation and relative strength. On the other hand, revolutionary war, which can certainly be described as asymmetrical, follows a completely different set of rules because many of the rules applicable to one side do not work for the other.<sup>26</sup> Crucial differences in the conduct of conventional and asymmetrical wars are available in David Galula’s notes on revolutionary warfare in which he clearly underlines the presence of

---

<sup>23</sup> Daniel L. Byman, “Friends Like These: Counterinsurgency and the War on Terrorism”, *International Security*, Vol. 31, No.2, 2006, p. 84.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew J.R. Mack, “Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict”, *World Politics*, Vol. 27, No. 2, January 1975, p. 185. Mack’s observations are countered in a brilliant piece. See Ivan Arreguin-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars”, *International Security*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Summer 2001, p.105. On the nature of asymmetric conflict, also see T.V. Paul, *Asymmetric Conflicts: War Initiation by Weaker Powers*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

<sup>25</sup> Arreguin-Toft, “How the Weak Win Wars”, n. 23, p. 105.

<sup>26</sup> David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 1964, p. xii.

asymmetry between two opposing camps. The cause for this asymmetry originates from the nature of war, a disproportionate strength between two opponents and a difference in their assets and liabilities.<sup>27</sup>

## **Western and Indian Literature on COIN**

Western literature and Indian contributions on COIN provide meaningful insights into state building, organizational culture and military capability. I explore the themes of this study by engaging relevant arguments and debates in the literature, both in the US and in India. For the purpose of this monograph, however, and because of the sheer challenge of canvassing the entire American experience of COIN, I use the end of the Second World War as a historical benchmark to limit the scope of my study to American COIN policy in three cases: Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. In the Indian case, this historical milestone widely coincides with India's post-independence period, though the breadth of Indian cases are much larger given the country's extended and prolonged involvement in COIN operations in the post-independence period. To add a few disclaimers: first, I use only those cases relevant to the arguments presented in this study. Second, this monograph is intended to be a primer on American and Indian COIN approaches. It does not make any claims to provide an exhaustive study of the subject. Due to the limited scope of this study, some of the ideas in this monograph may be explored further in a book-length project.

After the Second World War, compelled by a need to understand its communist enemy's weaknesses and motives, Western writing on COIN focused itself on Mao Zedong's principles of revolutionary warfare. Over various decades, however, and depending on the context of war, the debates shifted to a deeper, attentive and more serious re-evaluation of COIN methods and principles, expanding the discussion from tactics to address guerrilla warfare to fighting non-state terrorist groups. American military theorists and strategists were attracted to

---

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

French COIN theorist David Galula's work on the subject, which, even though a guiding philosophy for doctrine and principles, is not the only seminal work on the subject. An obvious limitation of Western COIN approaches is its uncritical reliance on models drawn from post-Second World War years of colonialism. Campaigns conducted in Malaya, Aden and Kenya are used by American, British, Australian and other militaries to frequently draw on lessons of COIN.<sup>28</sup>

An exclusive focus on COIN as a state building project gained visibility in the American context with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The Vietnam experience was different in that American forces were sent in to aid the Southern Vietnamese in their fight against Northern communist guerrillas where defeating the enemy was the ultimate goal, not state building. This changed after 9/11 when American warfare, motivated by regime change in both Afghanistan and Iraq, aligned itself to democracy-promotion rhetoric. In other words, state building was just a new way of conducting war where dismantling the old state apparatus and constructing a new regime similar to a Western liberal model was the desired goal.

Counterinsurgency as state building has been approached by Western scholars in several ways. First, state building is situated within discussions of enemy-centric or population-centric strategies. The enemy-centric lens views COIN as an alternative to conventional warfare. Here, COIN is a battle against an organized enemy, and the primary goal is its defeat. This strategy includes "soft and hard-line approaches, kinetic and non-kinetic methods, decapitation vs. marginalization strategies, and so on".<sup>29</sup> Such a strategy rests on the premise that defeating the enemy is inevitable for stability. The population-centric approach understands COIN as a means of establishing control over the population and the environment (physical,

---

<sup>28</sup> For more on this issue, see Russel Glenn, *Rethinking Western Approaches to Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Post-Colonial Conflict*, London: Routledge, 2015.

<sup>29</sup> David Kilcullen, "Two Schools of Counterinsurgency", *Small Wars Journal*, January 27, 2007, available at <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/two-schools-of-classical-counterinsurgency>, accessed July 3, 2016.

human and informational) in which the population resides. This strategy rests on controlling the population first to ensure stability.<sup>30</sup> Irrespective of the approach scholars adopt, both population-centric and enemy-centric approaches, while posited as effective state building strategies, are, in fact, methods of warfare. Therefore, state building is a continuation of war using either force or a combination of coercive and non-coercive methods.

Second, the Vietnam experience serves as a model for Western scholars on how not to pursue ill-conceived strategies even where state building may not be the preferred goal.<sup>31</sup> An important lesson from the Vietnam experience was the Pentagon's enormous investment in resources to understand the motivation and morale of enemy combatants. It was widely argued and believed that effective COIN strategies, whether directed at defeating the enemy or advancing grandiose projects like state building, would continue to suffer as long as political, economic and psychological motivations of insurgents were ignored.<sup>32</sup> Complicating matters further, poorly executed strategies would elicit the distrust of the military who were wary of fighting such battles.<sup>33</sup> The failure to undertake appropriate COIN strategies in Iraq has been explored in detail, and at great length, by Andrew Bacevich.<sup>34</sup>

---

<sup>30</sup> David Kilcullen, in his book, draws on several years of field experience in Afghanistan and Iraq to suggest that COIN operations require skilled security forces sensitive to building local alliances and partnerships. See David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerrilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.

<sup>31</sup> See Andrew Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.

<sup>32</sup> William Rosenau, "Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Iraq and Afghanistan", *Harvard International Review*, Vol. 31, No. 1, 2009, p. 54.

<sup>33</sup> To examine the American military's continued resistance to COIN strategies, see David Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming U.S. Military for Modern Wars*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009.

<sup>34</sup> Andrew Bacevich, *Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*, New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2009; and Andrew Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2013.

Third, very recent debates in the West on COIN as a tool of state building argue the grave problems inherent in applying such approaches to tactics employed by non-state actors.<sup>35</sup> Here, the most recent scholarship attempts to contend with the rise of Islamist insurgencies where “Islamic fundamentalism has emerged as a new ideological impetus behind insurgency, from the struggle against the Soviets in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 to the continuing conflicts in the Philippines, Sudan, Kashmir, and Chad.”<sup>36</sup> A COIN strategy directed at state building would need to confront the challenge of framing an effective global COIN strategy which can also successfully contain Islamist resistance by terrorist networks or state actors. As Afghanistan and Iraq show, merely engaging such groups in battle, without addressing the problem of recruitment or radicalization, carries enormous costs to state building. “Global counterinsurgency thinking conspicuously neglects the idea that war is, in essence, a political condition—the continuation of policy by other means—that involves competing values and ideologies.”<sup>37</sup>

In the Indian case, the context for such discussions is quite different because India, from independence, was forced to engage with internal movements that challenged the territorial integrity of the Indian state. As evinced by its experience in Kashmir, Punjab, the Northeast and other states, this unrest manifested itself in movements for secessionism predicated on ethno-religious mobilization. Counterinsurgency strategy in India, I argue, has two specific components. First, it is aimed at protecting the Indian state from internal collapse; and second, for this

---

<sup>35</sup> For a sophisticated conceptual framework on civil war that elaborates the use and mechanisms of violence between varieties of non-state groups, see Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

<sup>36</sup> Beckett, “Forward to the Past: Insurgency in Our Midst”, n. 5, p. 61.

<sup>37</sup> Jones and Smith, “Counter-insurgency Politics: Going Global”, n. 4, p. 27. For an excellent account of the rise of radical Islam as a direct response to globalization and modernization, see Kristopher K. Robinson, Edward M. Crenshaw and J. Craig Jenkins, “Ideologies of Violence: The Social Origins of Islamist and Leftist Transnational Terrorism”, *Social Forces*, Vol. 84, No. 4, June 2006, p. 2011.

purpose, it must engage not just in building a new state in violence-affected areas, but bringing order, stability and development to those states to absorb disaffected populations into mainstream Indian society. Hence, state building in the Indian context is also a form of continued war, but one in which the political component of seeking a settlement with groups and actors fighting the very idea of an Indian state is accorded greater primacy. A credible COIN policy in India then has to begin by addressing the grievances of the local populations. A significant body of work is available on this subject, combined with state responses to the problem. For instance, Sanjib Baruah uses India's northeastern states as an example to move away from a strictly security-centred analysis to trace continuities in colonial and post-colonial state building, embedded in state approaches to development and the role of identity in conflict.<sup>38</sup> Similarly, Scott Gates and Kaushik Roy draw on several cases from South Asia to answer why marginal stateless groups rebel, the manner in which states respond and their implications for peace building.<sup>39</sup> Others take a similar approach but focus on a combination of strategies—accommodative and coercive—adopted by state governments to strengthen their legitimacy, inviting success in some cases and failure in others.<sup>40</sup> These positions largely resonate with the American approach to COIN when examined through the lens of population-centric versus enemy-centric strategies.

In a groundbreaking study on wartime political orders, Paul Staniland argues that the relationship between state and non-state actors is both cooperative and conflictual, with considerable variation in who wins and who loses. These wartime political orders, in turn, shape patterns of violence against “civilians, governance and economies, and post-war politics”.<sup>41</sup> Insurgency and COIN can be perceived as competitive

---

<sup>38</sup> Sanjib Baruah, *Beyond Counterinsurgency: Breaking the Impasse in Northeast India*, New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011.

<sup>39</sup> Kaushik Roy and Scott Gates, *Frontiers, Insurgencies and Counterinsurgencies in South Asia*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Namrata Goswami, *Indian National Security and Counterinsurgency: The Use of Force vs. Non Violent Response*, London: Routledge, 2015.

<sup>41</sup> Paul Staniland, “States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 2, June 2012, p. 243.

state building, a contest over the shaping of political order. Staniland develops a typology of wartime political orders—active, passive and non-existent—and uses several Indian cases to illustrate his argument. Kashmir is cited as an example of active cooperation where, in some instances, both state and non-state actors collaborate in targeting common enemies. “Control and balance of power are endogenous to political conflict and deal-making.”<sup>42</sup>

The second and third themes of this study explore how American and Indian COIN strategies on decisions to use force are strongly influenced by their respective military’s organizational cultures. While the second theme examines decisions to use force that are a combination of political and military preferences, the third theme clarifies the link between military doctrine and military capability. These issues are largely addressed within discussions on organizational culture but explained separately in two different chapters. For a study like this that attempts to compare and contextualize the COIN strategies of two countries, the importance of organizational culture gains salience for several reasons. First, organizational culture encapsulates a set of assumptions and beliefs about how a group can adapt to its external environment and maintain its internal structure.<sup>43</sup> One would assume that American and Indian militaries would obviously operate quite differently given their fundamentally diverse contexts. Yet, a close reading shows that both American and Indian militaries experience similar sets of problems when encountering insurgents.

Second, organizational culture offers a powerful explanation for why states use force. Knowing why states use force can explain why militaries select some methods over others while fighting insurgents. In an excellent comparative analysis of British and French strategies in COIN operations, Marc DeVore cautions that countries often reflect different cultures in their COIN approaches. British and French COIN cultures differed fundamentally despite sharing population-centric to enemy-

---

<sup>42</sup> Ibid, p. 249.

<sup>43</sup> Robert M. Cassidy, “Counterinsurgency and Military Culture: State Regulars versus Non-State Irregulars”, *Baltic Security and Defence Review*, Vol. 10, 2008, p. 54.

centric approaches. Britain's military organizational culture was predicated on civilian supremacy, winning hearts and minds through political reforms, economic development, minimum force and the use of Special Forces combined with local irregulars; and in France, military supremacy and the overwhelming use of force was absolute, strongly in favour of controlling and indoctrinating a population.<sup>44</sup> The institutional culture within which such COIN operations were conducted is equally important and here, as Marc De Vore shows, the contributions of Jack Snyder and Barry Posen continue to remain particularly instructive. In foreign policy, the military, based on its expertise, has a natural proclivity to use force, often exaggerating threats to make this mission possible.<sup>45</sup> Military professionals also desire operational autonomy to decide how this force should be employed. Officers sometimes possess what is known as "offensive bias", intent on destroying an enemy's armed forces rather than just defending or deterring against enemy threats. In COINs, this bias concentrates all resources towards the destruction of guerrilla forces and less to the pacification of rural areas. Also, "an offensive mindset creates pressures for escalation, as military commanders seek to attack insurgent sanctuaries or employ means hitherto proscribed."<sup>46</sup> Third, organizational culture

---

<sup>44</sup> Marc R. DeVore, "Institutions, Organizational Culture, and Counterinsurgency Operations: Why do States Fight Similar Insurgencies Differently?", *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2013, p. 170. For an excellent review of some of the most important issues dodging the American military's organizational culture, see Peter Munson, "Military Culture and its Implication for the Future Force", *Small Wars Journal*, October 8, 2012. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/military-culture-and-its-implication-for-the-future-force> accessed on August 2, 2016. To understand why different political systems create very different military cultures, see Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from Peripheral Wars*, Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994.

<sup>45</sup> DeVore, "Institutions, Organizational Culture, and Counterinsurgency Operations", n. 44, p. 174.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. Also, see Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984, p. 24; Barry Posen, "Inadvertent Nuclear War?: Escalation and NATO's Northern Flank", *International Security*, Vol. 2, No. 7, 1992, pp. 28–54; Elizabeth Kier, "Military Doctrine: France between the Wars", *International Security*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 1995.

acts as a compass for moral and ethical guidance. It determines how the organization interacts with its environment. An adaptive organizational culture meets the requirements of a changing environment, but such changes ought to be “deliberate and integrated”.<sup>47</sup> Both American and Indian decision making in the conduct of COIN operations expose the underlying tensions in these organizational pathologies.

Much of the American military’s organizational culture, in its wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, has continually demonstrated a preference for fighting insurgents using conventional methods. Only recently has the American military tried to reformulate its assigned roles and responsibilities in COIN operations. For the most part, it finds itself locked within the confines of its conventional war experience, with an inability to learn from the lessons of Vietnam. In *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, John Nagl compares organizational cultures of British and American armies to explain why Britain succeeded in Malaya while America failed in Vietnam. Nagl notes that the American military’s role, from its very origins, was to eradicate threats to national survival, while the British Army was an instrument of limited war designed to achieve limited goals at limited costs. As a consequence, the US military’s historical focus was an unfailing and exclusive focus on being a conventional war-fighting organization. He contends that this focus was such a major part of the American military psyche that the Vietnamese era saw its core task as the absolute defeat of the enemy on the battlefield. This attitude was so ingrained during the Vietnam period that enemy destruction on military terms constituted the dominant operational intent, despite indicators to the contrary which should have driven the army to the realization that military objectives must be kept subordinate to wider political goals.<sup>48</sup>

Similarly, Eliot Cohen points to two dominant characteristics in American strategic culture: machines and the predilection for direct

---

<sup>47</sup> Munson, “Military Culture and its Implication for the Future Force”, n. 43.

<sup>48</sup> John Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam: Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife*, New York: Praeger, 2002.

and violent assault.<sup>49</sup> The slant towards conventional war-fighting strategies discourages adaptation to other roles. Jeffrey Record writes that several problems in American political and military culture explain why the American way of war has met with little success, especially in COIN. Almost all of America's historical experiences in COIN demonstrate the "limited utility of its conventional military superiority against a determined and skilled insurgent foe".<sup>50</sup> British strategist, Colin Gray, identifies the American way of war as displaying several characteristics: "apolitical; astrategic; ahistorical, problem-solving, culturally ignorant, technologically dependent; firepower focused; large-scale; profoundly regular; impatient; logistically excellent; and sensitive to casualties".<sup>51</sup> Most American political and military leaders are averse to accept wartime military operations as subordinate to political considerations. The objective of war is victory, even though securing this victory is not always a realistic goal as it is driven by political considerations. Insurgencies are political contests which cannot be defeated by military means alone.<sup>52</sup> Robert Cassidy outlines similar problems with adopting a conventional war bias:

Military organizations that remain totally enmeshed in day-to-day tasks of running administrative business, that ignore history and serious study and allow themselves to believe their enemies will possess no asymmetric approaches are, frankly, headed for defeat. Certainly in comparison to the thinking and atmosphere

---

<sup>49</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, "The Strategy of Innocence? The United States, 1920–1945", in Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox and Alvin Bernstein (eds), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States and War*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994, pp. 428-465.

<sup>50</sup> Jeffrey Record, "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency", CATO Institute, Policy Analysis No. 577, September 1, 2006.

<sup>51</sup> Colin S. Gray, "The American Way of War: Critique and Implications", in Anthony D. McIvor (ed.), *Rethinking the Principles of War*, Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2005, pp. 27–33.

<sup>52</sup> Jeffrey Record, "The American Way of War: Cultural Barriers to Successful Counterinsurgency", n. 51, op.cit, p. 5.

of the U.S. military in the period preceding World War II, the current picture reveals several weaknesses.<sup>53</sup>

Indian contributions detailing the impact of the Indian Army's organizational culture specifically on COIN operations are much less researched. Perhaps the most authoritative work on the subject is Rajesh Rajagopalan's *Fighting Like a Guerrilla: The Indian Army and Counterinsurgency*, in which the author unravels some of the most pressing issues in India's organizational culture that sustain its COIN operations. Rajagopalan seamlessly teases out the many differences in strategy and the prevailing tension in means and ends evident in COIN best practices. Not only does he argue that Indian COIN strategy suffers from a conventional war bias, a result of its historical experience in fighting wars with Pakistan and China, but also describes, in detail, the strengths and weaknesses of various paramilitary organizations and police agencies involved in COIN operations.<sup>54</sup> On doctrinal issues in particular, Sumit Ganguly and David Fidler's volume, *India and Counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned*, offers excellent comparisons between Indian and American COIN cases.<sup>55</sup> Evaluating the successes and failures of COIN operations in Mizoram, Nagaland, Kashmir, Punjab and Maoist-affected states, the authors in the edited book illustrate, with clarity, the complex administrative, procedural and structural problems involved in police operations and the enormous challenges COIN operations pose to adaptation and learning in both countries. Much of the Indian military's approach to COIN has to be examined in the context of decisions to modernize the country's security forces and the command and control systems that guide such operations.<sup>56</sup> Shrikant Paranjpe observes that a

---

<sup>53</sup> As quoted in Williamson Murray, "Military Culture does Matter", *FPRI*, Vol. 7, No. 2, January 1999, p. 4.

<sup>54</sup> See Rajesh Rajagopalan, *Fighting Like a Guerrilla: The Indian Army and Counterinsurgency*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2008.

<sup>55</sup> Sumit Ganguly and David P. Fidler, eds., *India and Counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned*, New York: Routledge, 2009.

<sup>56</sup> On this issue, see Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India's Internal Wars: Counterinsurgency Role of Central Police Forces", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2013, pp. 648–68.

significant dimension of the narrative on the use of force in internal operations is abandoning a defence-based approach in favour of a compellence-based approach. The Indian military and security forces show a preference for combining offensive and defensive strategies to protect local civilian populations from insurgents: defensive strategies rest on providing economic and development packages to those displaced to win their support, while offensive strategies adopt force to crush insurgents in areas where they thrive on a culture of terror.<sup>57</sup>

In addition to the themes developed in Chapters 2, 3 and 4, the concluding chapter engages with some of the contemporary debates on COIN in seeking to address the complexities raised by Islamist insurgencies. The issue is relevant for both India and the US as the type of challenges posed by religious extremism demand a fundamental reappraisal of existing strategies to fight religion-inspired insurgents. Scholars and practitioners call this new phenomenon a global COIN—a concerted attempt by states in the world to develop sophisticated strategies to fight non-state religious terrorist groups. Current studies on COIN are struggling to present a global strategy arguing for the application of counterinsurgent techniques on a much wider scale to prevent localized conflicts, as also jihadi groups—in Afghanistan, Egypt, Indonesia, the Philippines or European capitals—from being absorbed into the al-Qaeda network of global, anti-Western, Islamist resistance.<sup>58</sup> These intellectuals, however, caution that a global COIN strategy must not appear as appeasement. Global COIN requires a sophisticated public policy that can simultaneously address the problem of recruitment and radicalization.

Both classical and contemporary revisionist counterinsurgency theorists are mistaken in viewing counterinsurgency as a technique rather than a strategy that relates operational means to political ends.

---

<sup>57</sup> Shrikant Paranjpe, *India's Strategic Culture: The Making of National Security Policy*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2013, p. 129.

<sup>58</sup> See David Martin Jones and M.L.R. Smith, "Counter-insurgency Politics: Going Global", *The World Today*, Vol. 65, 2009, pp. 26-28.

Another group of scholars essentially argues that insurgencies inspired by Islamism are a direct response to globalization and modernization. They establish a causal relationship between Islamist insurgency and radicalization, claiming that these insurgencies have emerged as a response to globalization and modernization. They posit that rapid development

creates social disorganization and strains, thereby encouraging political violence. Terrorism (like other forms of political violence) is more likely at intermediate levels of economic development and in traditional societies experiencing rapid economic change. During transitional development, however, rapid urbanization, growing inequalities, the presence of foreigners, the erosion of traditional social norms and the rapid growth of new institutions (such schools and urban employment) create both grievances and ideal recruiting grounds for terrorist organizations.<sup>59</sup>

### **Themes, Arguments and Methodology of the Study**

This study explores how the experience of American and India COINs is radically different in some contexts yet similar in others by using the lens of historical context, organizational culture and military capability. Three dominant themes inform the scope and direction of this project. The first theme, developed in Chapter 2, examines the context and vocabulary within which COIN principles are discussed and used. Here, and more recently, as witnessed in the American context, COIN, as a political and military strategy, frequently encompasses the goal of state building. State building, of course, is a highly contested label because of its numerous manifestations and hence, an objective of this study is to clarify what the American state building project is and how that is fundamentally different from the Indian context.

The second theme, explained in Chapter 3, explores the importance of a military's organizational culture in formulating COIN strategy. A

---

<sup>59</sup> Kristopher K. Robison, Edward M. Crenshaw and J. Craig Jenkins, "Ideologies of Violence: The Social Origins of Islamist and Leftist Transnational Terrorism", *Social Forces*, Vol. 84, No.4, 2006, p. 2011.

military's organizational culture provides critical insights not only into military preferences but also the decision-making structure guiding political and military choices.

The third and final theme, a focus of Chapter 4, evaluates the nature of military doctrines and military capability in measuring the success or failure of COIN operations.

The arguments are:

1. The American approach to COIN is “state building”; in some cases, a forced outcome of its chosen external wars. This involves replacing, changing or transforming an old regime with an entirely new state structure. The broader goal of Indian COIN approaches is “state preservation” to protect the country's territorial integrity, sovereignty and prevent the state from internal collapse. Here, state building is a means to that end.

While state building consists of a military and political component, the US leans more towards the military component, while India has generally preferred political settlement to the use of the force.

2. The approach to COIN operations in both India and the US is a product of their respective organizational cultures. These organizational cultures are indicative of the diverse institutional approaches to COIN in which the influence of military and political preferences on the conduct of COIN operations is significant.
3. In both countries principles governing the application of force are different. The US views its adversary (whether terrorist group or insurgent) as an enemy that can be defeated with overwhelming force. India pursues a more calibrated response to the insurgent with a preference for absorbing the insurgent into the mainstream.

The study is a product of close to five months of research conducted as Visiting Research Fellow at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analysis (IDSA) in New Delhi, from June to November 2015. It is a conceptual and empirical study of American and Indian COIN experiences that builds a framework to understand and evaluate these practices better. Through a review of American and Indian documents on COIN—the primary military doctrines of both countries and other

secondary sources on the subject—the monograph provides a comparative and interpretive analysis of COIN principles in India and America. Data were collected from elite interviews, newspapers, books, journals and most open sources. The excellent library at IDSA provided a wealth of information and resources on the topic. The institute’s rich collection of occasional papers and monographs on Indian COIN were particularly instructive. Conversations with several of the institute’s research fellows, who are experts in the field with many years of practical and theoretical knowledge, was also tremendously beneficial. The online archive of the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) was useful in accessing official government and military statements.

To reiterate, due to the limited scope of this study, the monograph is unable to address every single facet of American and Indian COIN experiences. What it attempts to do instead, for clarity and consistency, is keep the observations centred on the primary arguments and themes of the study and offer some preliminary observations on the American and Indian experience of counterinsurgency.

## **State Building: The Context of American and Indian Counterinsurgencies**

### **The American Military's Experience of COIN**

America's long and extensive involvement in COIN operations were conducted on external soil. The US repeatedly found itself engaged in conflicts, many a direct result of policies in conflict with ideologies at variance with the liberal foundations of American democracy. Numerous examples abound here: the Philippines, El Salvador, Venezuela, Guatemala, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. Vietnam was situated in the context of the Cold War rivalry between the US and the Soviet Union, but in the post-Cold War environment, the ideological threat posed by communism was replaced by the rise of religious fundamentalism. Still, there has been little reluctance on the American side to disengage from costly wars in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. America continues to demonstrate an active intent to expand the scope of its "War on Terror", with COIN the means to achieve that end.

For the purpose of this monograph, the context and experience of American COIN are examined in three specific time periods: Cold War years; the post-Cold War period; and the post-9/11 period. These periods are relevant because in each phase, the definition, scope and meaning of COIN experienced significant changes. The US has never embraced a single COIN strategy. In fact, American COIN was tailored to the context of America wars, with its involvement taking many forms, from intervention to state building. America's relationship with COIN emerged when it embarked on a period of "colonialism and quasi-colonialism" at the end of the nineteenth century and continued for several decades. During this time, it conducted COIN campaigns, most notably in the Philippines and Central America, as "it sought to

control, pacify, and in some cases treat humanely its subject populations”<sup>1</sup>. In the Philippine War (1899–1902), the US forces corralled civilian populations in towns, either through incentives such as improved government services and free education or enabled forced relocations, to make it easier on military forces to hunt and destroy guerrilla bands in the surrounding hills and jungles.<sup>2</sup> The insurgency lasted sporadically for a period of 15 years, and 126,000 American soldiers were engaged in the conflict, of which a total of 4,234 died, along with 16,000 Filipino insurgents. The poorly equipped Filipinos were easily overpowered by American troops in open combat. During this period, the Americans desperately tried to build civilian institutions.

During the Cold War years, the US offered small assistance programmes to host country governments in Central America, Honduras and El Salvador, in an effort to dislodge domestic and regional insurgents; both the Honduran and El Salvadorian campaigns (1980–92) ended victoriously. And American clandestine policies toppled the Sandinista regime headed by Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua.<sup>3</sup> In all these missions, a clear pattern emerged. Counterinsurgency missions generally came on the heels of American efforts at toppling foreign governments in countries that shared little in common with the US political ideology. In Vietnam, American and British advisors worked with the South Vietnamese government to create a strategic hamlet programme that would separate the Vietnamese civilians from communist guerrillas by forcing them into protected villages. Between 1961 and 1963, over 8 million people were relocated into strategic hamlets; however, the poor

---

<sup>1</sup> Bing West, “Counterinsurgency: A New Doctrine’s Fading Allure”, *World Politics Review*, January 24, 2012. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/11249/counterinsurgency-a-new-doctrines-fading-allure> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Mansoor, “From Baghdad to Kabul: The Historical Roots of U.S. Counterinsurgency Doctrine”, *Origins*, Vol. 3, No. 1, October 2009. <https://origins.osu.edu/article/baghdad-kabul-historical-roots-us-counterinsurgency-doctrine> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen L. Melton, “Aligning FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency with Reality”, *Small Wars Journal*, April 9, 2013. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/aligning-fm-3-24-counterinsurgency-with-reality> accessed on August 2, 2016.

administration of the programme enabled insurgents from the National Liberation Front to overrun or infiltrate most of the villages. The programme alienated Vietnamese peasantry by driving them away from their ancestral homes, which was then utilized by the communist insurgency to its utmost advantage.<sup>4</sup>

In the post-Cold War environment, with America emerging as an uncontested global hegemon, there was renewed hope in its ability to build strategic interests divested from the shadow of Cold War rivalry. That, however, did not prevent it from actively engaging with the rest of the world. America intervened in a number of external conflicts abroad, particularly in Somalia, Haiti, Serbia and Kosovo, stirring debates among national security leaders about the relevance of the American military's irresistible emphasis on executing large-scale conventional war. "A generation of military troops gained experience in complex urban conflicts, where a focus on protecting populations and working with civilian agencies and non-governmental organizations over waging conventional battle against enemy forces became the key to success."<sup>5</sup> America's marriage with COIN was far from over. In fact, it was merely transforming itself to accommodate existing conditions.

When the Cold War ended in 1991, the US military assumed it would no longer be involved in COIN. The subject was dropped from the curriculum of the military's professional education system. None of the armed services wrote new doctrines or developed new operational concepts. The only lingering attention was a handful of war games with insurgency scenarios as a sideshow. The strategic environment following the 9/11 terrorist attacks introduced a change in that position; and the presence of a distinctly new type of threat demanded an altered approach. George Bush unveiled the Bush Doctrine of pre-emption,

---

<sup>4</sup> See David Ucko, *The New Counterinsurgency Era: Transforming the US Military for Modern Wars*, Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Janine Davidson, "Principles of Modern American Counterinsurgency: Evolution and Debate", The Brookings Institute, June 8, 2009. <https://www.brookings.edu/research/principles-of-modern-american-counterinsurgency-evolution-and-debate/> accessed on August 2, 2016.

taking America to the doorstep of Afghanistan. The US entrenched itself in Afghanistan and the Bush administration widened the scope of its War on Terror by invading Iraq in 2003. Since the enemy (al-Qaeda) then appeared dispersed and amorphous, in both wars American strategists were confronted with the dilemma of returning to earlier COIN practices. Over the course of its two wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the US military and other government agencies were forced to relearn the lessons of COIN.

The military wrote new doctrine and rebuilt its educational curriculum. Intelligence agencies refined their insurgency-focused analytical tools. Even the State Department and U.S. Agency for International Development developed guidelines to spell out their role. Across the security community, war games, studies, conferences, seminars and workgroups on insurgency proliferated.<sup>6</sup>

This chapter explains why and how the American COIN experience in Vietnam, and more specifically in Afghanistan and Iraq, was guided by one defining principle: state building, sometimes synonymously used with nation building. In the American context, it is almost impossible to divorce COIN from state building. It is different from the Indian case where the foundations of COIN, as I argue, rest on state preservation, with state building serving as a tool in achieving that end. The state building project may appear to follow a similar programme in both countries, but it means very different things. In the following sections, I explain what these principles mean for the two countries and why a discussion of state building (the US) and state preservation with state building (India) provides a grounded perspective for studying the context of insurgencies and the accompanying responses to it.

### ***When COIN is a State-building Enterprise***

At the outset, definitions of state building and nation building warrant clarification and elaboration. The triumph of Western-style democracy

---

<sup>6</sup> Steven Metz, “Strategic Horizons: U.S. Counterinsurgency still Fighting the Last War”, *World Politics Review*, May 8, 2013. <http://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/articles/12935/strategic-horizons-u-s-counterinsurgency-still-fighting-the-last-war> accessed on August 2, 2016.

over its communist rival at the end of the Cold War advanced a liberal democratic model as the blueprint for nation building. This was largely predicated on Woodrow Wilson's philosophy that liberalism and democratic forms of government were key to peace and security in both international and domestic politics.<sup>7</sup> While considerable overlap exists between the two concepts, state building is a less complex and a more informed tool for conceptualizing American COIN for the following reasons. First, nation building, by itself, does not secure the survival or viability of a state.<sup>8</sup> While, in theory, great powers appear committed to nation building, the methods and design used by them in practice identify far closely with state building. Second, nation building is a broad concept embracing a wide set of neo-Wilsonian principles, that is, political and economic liberalization are preconditions for stability and peaceful domestic and foreign relationships. Yet, no two states are alike. Nation-building theories applied to all cases using wide brushstrokes undermine the importance of specific decisions attached to the merits of each separate case. Third,

while the term nation refers to a group, the "state" is the bureaucratic apparatus which autonomously governs the territory where the nation resides. The term nation-state then offers greater "analytic value" only in a very limited number of cases when the territory where the nation resides corresponds exactly to that of the state.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>7</sup> Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 40–42.

<sup>8</sup> Marina Ottaway, "Think Again: Nation Building", *Foreign Policy*, November 9, 2009. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/09/think-again-nation-building/> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>9</sup> Roberto Belloni, "Rethinking Nation-building: The Contradictions of the Neo-Wilsonian Approach to Democracy Promotion", *The Whitehead Journal of Diplomacy and International Relations*, Vol. 7, 2007, p. 100. Peter Kreuzer and Mirjam Weiberg, *Framing Violence: Nation- and State-Building: Asian Perspectives* (Frankfurt: Peace Research Institute, 2005). See also James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

This is obviously rare in many instances, especially when fighting non-state actors and terrorist groups. Fourth, since COIN is a military tool to achieve a political end and uses coercion to defeat insurgents, state building offers a more effective tool of analysis for comparative study.

This is not to suggest that state building is easier than nation building. State building is an enormously costly project and even the most sophisticated militaries like the US Army are ill-equipped to succeed.<sup>10</sup> Because state building is a long-term project, it carries with it exceedingly high costs in men and resources. Several dangers are inherent in investing the military in state building. First, imposing a preferred social and political model on societies naturally resistant to absorbing such models is harmful, setting one up for failure. Second, it grossly undermines the professionalism of the military. Third, it places, on the military, an enormous burden for success. Fourth, the changing nature of warfare, with greater mechanization, makes it much more challenging to work with local populations. How does the state building project present itself? In other words, what does it look like? In the American context, I turn to Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq as illustrative cases.

### *Vietnam*

In Vietnam, much of the state building programme came under the category of what is popularly known as “pacification”. Unable to exert control over its own territory and population, the non-communist Government of Vietnam (GVN) failed to supply the resources and manpower necessary to fight the Vietnamese communist movement. This invited American intervention, where the US, while fighting Vietnamese insurgents, helped the GVN develop institutions and legitimacy to secure its interests after the withdrawal of the US forces. The task of state building in Vietnam was entrusted to a specific agency called Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS). Their officers were trained to perform a wide set of functions: reform of village governance; dissemination of agricultural

---

<sup>10</sup> Gian P. Gentile, “Think Again: Counterinsurgency”, *Foreign Policy*, January 13, 2009. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2009/01/13/think-again-counterinsurgency/> accessed on August 2, 2016.

techniques; efforts to improve local taxation; and raising local militias designed to beat the Vietnamese communist movement at guerrilla warfare. The CORDS operated under a single chain of command which interfaced with the GVN from the Presidential Palace down to the smallest district.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the sheer magnitude of operations involved prevented CORDS from delivering effective state building in South Vietnam. “Understanding why the U.S. failed at nation building in South Vietnam should, therefore, inject an appropriate note of caution into plans of would-be-nation builders at home.”<sup>12</sup>

In Vietnam, the Marine Corps Combined Action Program (CAP), another popular strategy, focused on providing proper security for the populations. As a COIN strategy, this programme was effective as it identified social, religious and tactical environments of the conflict.<sup>13</sup> A major folly of the US COIN strategy in Vietnam was the failure of the US to adequately prepare the Army of the Republic of South Vietnam (ARVN) to wage war against the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA). American COIN strategy also suffered from a lack of unity in command at the senior political level. The US Marines had to report to two different agencies: the Commander in Chief, Pacific (CINCPAC); and the US Military Assistance Command, Vietnam (MACV).<sup>14</sup> The same set of challenges would confront the US in Afghanistan and Iraq as well.<sup>15</sup> Andrew Gawthorpe writes:

steep indeed are the challenges facing an outside power in attempting to help a foreign state not only build up its coercive and administrative institutions—such as its military, police force and civil service—while also ensuring that these institutions enjoy

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Paul Melshen, “Mapping Out a Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan: Critical Considerations in Counterinsurgency Campaigning”, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2007, p. 669.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Andrew Gawthorpe, “Nation Building: A Forgotten Aspect of the Vietnam War”, *Defence-in-Depth*, available at <http://defenceindepth.co/2014/12/08/nation-building-a-forgotten-aspect-of-the-vietnam-war>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

legitimacy among a population who are not used to being subject to a strong state.<sup>16</sup>

## *Afghanistan*

The Obama administration withdrew a majority of American forces from Afghanistan in 2014, but the war which had begun post-9/11 contained a blueprint for state building. The state-building project in Afghanistan presented a highly complicated picture as the history of the state was deeply embedded in Cold War rivalries between America and the Soviet Union. As the Afghan state was built from foreign aid meant to subsidize competing military groups, it was only a matter of time until it descended into civil war and collapsed when the aid flows stopped.<sup>17</sup> The Bonn Conference in 2001 set up the groundwork for state building in Afghanistan. Its goal was to establish and re-establish basic state institutions: create an Emergency *Loya Jirga*, Interim Authority, Transitional Authority, Constitutional *Loya Jirga*; and later, conduct presidential and parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2005.<sup>18</sup> The Berlin Conference of 2004 extended the state building project into several other areas: reform of ministries; civil service law; merit-based recruitment; and retraining of staff. The American state building project in Afghanistan, also known as Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), was one of “reconstruction,” “democratization,” and “stabilization” and looked something like this: an interim government under Hamid Karzai was put in place; a new constitution was approved in 2003; the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) under Britain’s leadership began training a new Afghan Army; and the United Nations (UN) drew up a humanitarian assistance plan to promote education and combat literacy.<sup>19</sup> Thus, several agencies, both military and non-military,

---

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Barnett R. Rubin, “Peace Building and State-building in Afghanistan: Constructing Sovereignty for Whose Security?”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2006, p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> Karsten Friis, “Which Afghanistan? Military, Humanitarian, and State-building Identities in the Afghan Theater”, *Security Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 2012, p. 291.

<sup>19</sup> Cora Sol Goldstein, “The Afghanistan Experience: Democratization by Force”, *Parameters*, Vol. 42, Autumn 2012, pp. 18–19.

were involved in the job of creating a new state apparatus in Afghanistan which would closely resemble a Western political model.

State building in Afghanistan failed for a number of reasons. First, the US could never fully assuage the concerns of different sections of Afghan society. The Pashtun majority in rural areas was resistant to transformative aspects of the US occupation, while being completely opposed to the Karzai government. Physical and political reconstruction was next to impossible in an environment of enduring hostility and insecurity. This offered the Taliban an opportunity to reorganize itself. Second, a glaring failure of state building processes in Afghanistan was an inability to strengthen the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) during the early stages of the campaign against Taliban and al-Qaeda. Much of the fighting was done by ISAF, along with Special Operations Forces (SOF), using force in the formative stages. It was only in the later part of the war that a broader COIN strategy embracing military methods and governance and development programmes was adopted.<sup>20</sup> Describing the mission legitimacy of ISAF, Lisa Karlborg, through numerous in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, reveals that the locals perceived ISAF troops either through a frame of liberation or a frame of occupation.<sup>21</sup> And both these conflicting frames occupied the narrative equally. Third, American military and political strategies demonstrated shifts over time, during different phases of the campaign, oscillating between conventional and non-conventional methods, producing yet another contradiction in trying to eliminate the enemy completely or transforming it through stabilization.<sup>22</sup>

Despite exceedingly high costs of state building in Afghanistan, arguments are made in defence of this approach. Drawing comparisons

---

<sup>20</sup> Todd R. Greentree, “A War Examined: Afghanistan”, *Parameters*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2013, p. 93.

<sup>21</sup> For more on the local perceptions of ISAF among the Afghan population, see Lisa Karlborg, “Enforced Hospitality: Local Perceptions of the Legitimacy of International Forces in Afghanistan”, *Civil Wars*, Vol. 16, No. 4, 2014, pp. 432–42.

<sup>22</sup> Friis, “Which Afghanistan? Military, Humanitarian, and State-building Identities in the Afghan Theater”, n. 18, pp. 280–82.

from the French case, Sheri Berman observes that state building in Afghanistan is the ability of the Afghan population to govern itself and deliver basic services. In order to maintain political order, the essence of state building, according to her, “involves destroying, undermining, or co-opting these actors to create a single national political authority”.<sup>23</sup> In other words, state building in Afghanistan can be achieved when long-established patterns of authority and old order are replaced by a new political and social framework. She writes, “a prerequisite for state building is the centralization of political authority”, which demands a clear strategy for co-opting local elites—as happened in France (managing the nobility and clergy). In Afghanistan, this means handling warlords, tribal leaders and the Taliban.<sup>24</sup> In the post-2001 phase, “Afghan state building involved direct cooptation of the military class by the central government—central state authorities and armed groups found avenues to cooperate despite enduring disagreement about ultimate political goals.”<sup>25</sup> But “tactics like night raids and drone strikes, albeit successful in their kinetic intent, are portrayed as detrimental to the type of civil society reconstruction necessary to winning a war in society as ethnically and tribally complex as Afghanistan.”<sup>26</sup>

## *Iraq*

State building in Iraq was externally imposed by the US in 2003 with the following objectives: ousting Saddam Hussein; rebuilding the collapsed state; establishing enduring governance structures; and developing accountable systems to manage competition.<sup>27</sup> “*The state’s*

---

<sup>23</sup> Sheri Berman, “From the Sun King to Karzai: Lessons for State Building in Afghanistan”, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 2, March–April 2010, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Paul Staniland, “States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders”, *Perspectives on Politics*, Vol. 10, No. 3, June 2012, p. 249.

<sup>26</sup> Ibrahim Gabr, “The Incompatibility of COIN Warfare and Nation-Building in Iraq and Afghanistan”, July 22, 2014, available at <http://www.e-ir.info/2014/07/22/the-incompatibility-of-coin-warfare-and-nation-building-in-iraq-and-afghanistan/>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Toby Dodge, “Iraq: The Contradictions of Exogenous State Building in Historical Perspective”, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2006, p. 190.

*ability to impose order on its population, to monopolize the means of collective violence across the geographical context of its territory, is at the heart of any definition of state capacity and assessment of state building.”<sup>28</sup>*

American efforts to reconstruct the Iraqi state were divided into military and civilian components that were poorly integrated with each other. Launched during Phase IV of Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF), “stabilization” was embraced as a pivotal strategy of state building. Douglas Feith in the Pentagon helped create the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA), headed by General Jay Garner. The ORHA was particularly weak during the initial phase of the assault on Saddam Hussein and his forces as it held a tenuous grip on the details of Iraqi reconstruction. When Garner was replaced by Paul Bremer in 2003, the ORHA was replaced by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA). The new proposals for reconstruction included de-Ba’athification and demobilization of the Iraqi Army.<sup>29</sup> However, this policy would be disastrous in the long term, as some Middle East experts quickly warned that US reconstruction resembled a “pattern of reverse state building”—weakening bureaucratic capacity and legitimate military authority and, as a consequence, the capacity of the state to generate revenue from the private sector. Evidence of such reverse state building was Paul Bremer’s decrees on dissolving the army and information ministry, banning 30,000 Ba’ath officials from government jobs and putting 400,000 Iraqis out of work. Along with growing unemployment, these measures exacerbated social unrest.<sup>30</sup>

State building in Iraq, just like in Afghanistan, found itself mired in controversies because of ineffective results on the ground. What were some of the causes for the failure of state building in Iraq? There were

---

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 191.

<sup>29</sup> Alastair Finlan, “Trapped in the Dead Ground: US Counter-insurgency Strategy in Iraq”, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 16, No. 1, March 2005, pp. 8–9.

<sup>30</sup> Khalid Mustafa Medani, “State Building in Reverse: The Neo-liberal Reconstruction of Iraq”, *Middle East Report*, No. 232, Autumn 2004, p. 29.

many reasons but the most serious were: first, a clear disjuncture between COIN operations and the approach to dismantling the old state and replacing it with a new one.<sup>31</sup> Population-centric approaches built on principles of “clear, hold and build” dominated much of military thinking; yet, different situations demanded a precise set of responses which were either ignored or carelessly planned.<sup>32</sup> Fred Kaplan observes that the 2007 post-surge phase witnessed a dramatic increase in kinetic operations; paradoxically, it appeared that “the success of COIN operations increased as it decreased its participation in peace and nation building activities”—evidence of the fundamental incompatibility between COIN and nation-building activities.<sup>33</sup> Gian Gentile argues that the gravest problem with the nation-building narrative is that “Success is measured by the tactics of these wars and the saviour generals who supervise them.”<sup>34</sup> He asks: did a surge produce some signs of success; and were fighting forces able to pivot from war making to nation building? These things seem to be enough for some policymakers even when, over the long run, “the truth points to the futility of transforming a foreign nation at the barrel of a GI’s gun”.<sup>35</sup>

Second, in its effort to restore political order, the American administration was slow to check Nouri-al-Maliki’s anti-Sunni propaganda and the dangerous purging of Sunnis from Iraq’s political process. The sectarian divisiveness between Shias and Sunnis which originated in the seventh and eighth century revivalist movements within Islam was much beyond the scope of the American administration’s grasp. Heightened political rivalry between these groups, combined

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibrahim Gabr, “The Incompatibility of COIN Warfare and Nation-building in Iraq and Afghanistan”, n. 26. For more on this, see Fred Kaplan, *The Insurgents: David Petraeus and the Plot to Change the American Way of War*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2014.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Gian Gentile, “America’s Nation-building at Gunpoint”, *Los Angeles Times*, August 13, 2013. <http://articles.latimes.com/2013/aug/13/opinion/la-oe-gentile-army-colonel-gives-iraq-and-afghanis-20130813> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

with deep disenchantment with American policies on the ground, would cause irreparable harm to American state-building efforts. For instance, the emergence of ISIS, many argue, is a clear outcome of dragging the US back into war. Third, American forces in Iraq were not geared to effectively conduct COIN operations. Faced with widespread resistance and an absence of sound intelligence, unconventional warfare units like Special Forces, Delta Force Group and Sea, Air, and Land Combat Teams (SEAL) faced insurmountable challenges.

In both Afghanistan and Iraq, the state building narrative has centred on how to proceed with post-conflict reconstruction and whether that process should be decentralized or centralized. While centralized reconstruction helps secure the legitimacy of the nascent central government, decentralization allows stronger local governments and a closer match with the preferences of the population. Robert McNab and Edward Mason argue the benefits of a decentralized model in which reconstruction can be implemented through what they call community-driven reconstruction (CDR). The CDR's emphasis on local choice and accountability would be appealing by building linkages between local governments and commanders through reconstruction assistance. This would be achieved in distinct phases: democratic selection of local councils; providing block grants to local councils; and equitable use of funds as a carrot for further assistance.<sup>36</sup>

Important also to this debate is the relevance of assessing the benefits and dangers of state building in both Afghanistan and Iraq by evaluating local populations' perceptions to political reform. In Iraq, for example, the de-Ba'athification process had effectively eliminated the Sunni majority from receiving legitimate political positions in the Iraqi Governing Council (IGC) and the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG). For coalition forces, the transfer of sovereignty which granted Iraq independence from the coalition in 2004, followed by subsequent elections in 2005, was a step towards political reform. But for most

---

<sup>36</sup> Robert M. McNab and Edward Mason, "Reconstruction, the Long Tail and Decentralisation: An Application to Iraq and Afghanistan", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2007, pp. 374–75.

Sunnis, the IGC and IIG represented Kurdish and Shia interests. The new Iraqi Army was also mostly composed of Shias and Kurds.<sup>37</sup> The Marine Expeditionary Force (MEF) was one of the first coalition commands to address the grievances of Sunnis; and it tried to facilitate political reform by providing economic assistance to Sunnis, reforming higher organizations of the IGC and IIG and inducting Sunnis into the Iraqi Army. This attempt at state building through the initiation of a wide set of political reforms gained little traction in reversing the insurgency because of the sharp conflict between the interests of the Shia-dominated IGC and the Sunnis over economic assistance. While reconstruction efforts succeeded in Shia strongholds like Najaf, Sunni belts like Fallujah continued to suffer disproportionate effects of economic and political reform.<sup>38</sup> Therefore, perceptions towards state building and methods to achieve it elicited dramatically different responses from Shias and Sunnis, deepening the political divide between the two groups, fuelling sectarian tensions and sustaining the insurgency.

### **The Indian Military's Experience of COIN**

The Indian military's historical experience of COIN shaped itself during Partition. At the time, the Indian Army assisted political administration in the maintenance of law and order. These decisions were, and still are, largely political. Gradually, the nature of India's external and internal threats expanded its role to include COIN operations. The scope and meaning of internal security underwent considerable change over time. From aid to civil authority, proxy war and low-intensity conflicts, insurgency acquired many faces. In the 1960s, India fought Mizo rebels in the Northeast; and in the 1980s and 1990s, it fought Sikh rebels in Punjab, Kashmiri separatists in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and Tamil guerrillas in Sri Lanka.

---

<sup>37</sup> Carter Malkasian, "The Role of Perceptions and Political Reform in Counterinsurgency: The Case of Western Iraq, 2004–2005", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 2006, p. 372.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

### *The Challenge to State Preservation and Democratic Consolidation*

Appreciating the context of insurgencies in India requires a consideration of several key issues ignored in the literature. First, in contrast to the US experience, Indian COIN operations have always been internal to the country (with the exception of Sri Lanka). Second, COIN in India seeks to prevent state collapse; hence, a formidable task for Indian security and armed forces is state preservation—the protection of India’s sovereignty and territorial integrity from internal collapse. Preserving state unity requires a strategy that prevents states from either seceding or successfully co-opting anti-state local populations. This poses a considerable challenge in forging successful political solutions because enabling power-sharing arrangements between competing rebel groups is neither easy nor a preferred option. Ideological principles strongly entrenched among group members make it exceedingly difficult to co-opt local populations. This state preservation strategy, therefore, contains elements of state building as a means to secure the final end, that is, protecting the Indian state from internal collapse. Third, military force is just one component of such policy. Negotiating with insurgent groups to arrive at a compromise is an equally important part of the process. In India, political reconciliation over the primacy of force has been given preference in many instances. This will be discussed later in several cases. It is important to clarify here that the Indian state, according to this author, exhibits two basic insurgency models: religious/ethnic separatist/secessionist (Kashmir, Punjab, Nagaland and other northeastern states); and non-secessionist/anti-state (Maoists). While separatist movements are driven by a combination of ethnic, religious and ideological motivations, anti-state movements can be located within the broader ideological confines of anarchism and communism. Fourth, failure of governance and weak power-sharing arrangements sharply increase the odds in favour of insurgents. State capacity to fight insurgents then becomes a measure of democratic effectiveness. And to ensure democratic effectiveness, the state has to find ways to engage the local grievances of disaffected populations, governance, institutional building and a host of other reforms.

India has adopted a variety of Indian and Western political principles in its efforts to counter internal insurgencies. Many insurgencies have been contained applying Kautilyan precepts drawn through an effective

combination of political co-optation and compromise, use of military force, material inducement and breaking down of opposition groups. Military force, being the preferred method of conducting operations, is regularly supplemented with packages for economic development and political reconciliation.<sup>39</sup> Indian policymakers have absorbed some of the lessons of the Malayan model of COIN by creating missions directed at winning popular support.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to the US, however, COIN strategies in India did not witness significant operational shifts in different historical periods. Much of the reassessment of COIN in the American context was driven by American failures, first, in Vietnam and then, Afghanistan and Iraq—conditioned by the pre-Cold War and post-Cold War years. In India, the successes and failures of COIN are almost unique to each separate case.

In explaining how state building manifests itself, Paul Staniland's arguments are especially relevant. Staniland observes that “wartime political orders shape patterns of violence against “civilians, governance and economies, and post-war politics”.”<sup>41</sup> Insurgency and COIN are both parts of a competitive state building process, a contest over the shaping of political order where insurgents and state leaders engage in constant communication over what types of violence is acceptable. More importantly, levels of cooperation between the state and insurgent actors is the predominant axis along which political interests influence the interaction between the various organized groups engaged in violence.<sup>42</sup>

State preservation uses state building as its primary tool and requires forging secure agreements between state and rebel groups opposed to the state. But how do governments negotiate political settlements with

---

<sup>39</sup> Subir Bhaumik, “Insurgencies in India’s Northeast: Conflict, Cooption, and Change”, East West Center Washington Working Papers, No. 10, July 2007.

<sup>40</sup> Praveen Swami, “For a Review of Counterinsurgency Doctrine”, *The Hindu*, April 13, 2010. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/for-a-review-of-counterinsurgency-doctrine/article749251.ece> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>41</sup> Staniland, “States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders”, n. 25, p. 243.

<sup>42</sup> Staniland, States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders, p.247.

non-state actors or insurgent groups? Bethany Lacina offers some interesting insights here. She argues that agreements to arrive at post-conflict settlements are established on rule-based competition for political power. A compromise with local militant actors can achieve lasting peace only if it is democratic and built on the rule of law.<sup>43</sup> When institutionalized and rule-based means of politics are absent, the local distribution of power between groups is fundamentally altered, often precipitating violence by groups looking to seize power, dominance and control over resources and the state.<sup>44</sup> This damages any scope for meaningful and lasting agreements. Just as state building can be a burdensome project, state preservation introduces its own set of challenges. Strategic, logistical and other problems facing the Indian state in combating such insurgencies are identified in a few cases given below. These processes are fraught with problems, particularly in ensuring smooth governance and political accommodation necessary to build political settlements with insurgent groups. In many instances, the inability or ineffectiveness of the state to secure peace is not just a function of weak state building or state failure, but the presence of deep factional divisions existing between insurgent groups with conflicting ideologies, demands and counterclaims.

### *The Northeast: Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Assam*

Nagaland has been the scene of a protracted insurgency since the late 1950s. The onset of the Naga insurgency in 1956 exposed the army and civil administration's lack of experience in such situations. Local unrest slowly spread to other parts, soon affecting large swathes of the Northeast. Politicians were slow to assess the threat and policy was tuned towards using military force and appeasing local populations.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> Bethany Lacina, "The Problem of Political Instability in Northeast India: Local Ethnic Autocracy and Rule of Law", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 49, No. 6, 2009, p. 1017. Also, see Sanjay Barbora, "Rethinking India's Counterinsurgency Campaign in the Northeast", *Economic and Political Weekly*, Vol. 41, No. 35, 2006. Pp. 3805-3812.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Brigadier S.P. Sinha, "Counterinsurgency Operations in Northeast-I", *Indian Defense Review*, June 5, 2011. <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/counter-insurgency-operations-in-northeast-i/> accessed on August 2, 2016.

In Nagaland and Mizoram, borrowing from the British experience in Malaya, the Indian Army tried concentrating villages together to isolate populations from rebels groups. In Nagaland, there was severe opposition to this policy, while the Mizoram case produced mixed results.<sup>46</sup>

A peace agreement was reached between the National Naga Council (NNC) and the Government of India on November 11, 1975. Popularly known as the Shillong Accord, this agreement was described as a sell-out by a section of the NNC. The internecine rivalry within the organizational leadership produced a split, resulting in the formation of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah) (NSCN [IM]) and National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Khaplang) or the NSCN (K). The Government of India entered into ceasefire agreements with the NSCN (IM) in 1997 and with NSCN (K) in 2001.<sup>47</sup> Breakthrough talks between the central government and various rebel groups were achieved in August 2015, before which several different armed Naga groups were unable to form successful agreements owing to their different ethnic affiliations.<sup>48</sup> The 2015 Naga Framework for Peaceful Agreement, albeit premature, was a crucial milestone in democratic consolidation as the NSCN (IM)'s leader, Muivah, finally indicated a willingness to work with the Indian government through a means of "shared sovereignty".<sup>49</sup> A significant advantage of this framework

---

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> For a detailed description and analysis of the various groups involved and their demands, see Mirza Zulfiqur Rahman, "Northeast India in 2011: Meandering Pathways of Peace, Reconciliation, and Development", in Suba Chandran and P.R. Chari (eds), *Armed Conflicts in South Asia 2012*, New Delhi: Routledge India, 2013, pp. 75-100.

<sup>48</sup> Staniland, "States, Insurgents, and Wartime Political Orders", n. 25, p. 250.

<sup>49</sup> The concept of shared sovereignty is an important one. Staniland elaborates on this further. "It involves cooperation between states and its enemies in which each side retains certain amount of control over territory. This is a negotiated form of political order in which the insurgent organization retains autonomy. The enemy is not destroyed but instead, the two sides reach a clear division of influence and authority that satisfies both in the pursuit of mutual gains." See *ibid.*, p. 248.

agreement for the Indian state is that it did not change the territorial status quo.<sup>50</sup> However, as different groups have their own representative structures, it becomes difficult to separate specific demands. The people of Manipur and Mizoram have shared similar grievances. Mizoram's relative peace in the past two decades is the outcome of a number of historical factors. The Mizo rebellion which ended in 1986 created a fairly inclusive Mizo identity. As the state was marginal to people's lives in Manipur, the political space was left wide open for a variety of players, including those speaking in the name of traditional authority and organizations with exclusive ethnic appeal to perform state-like functions.

In Assam, the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) has been involved in peace talks with the Government of India since 2011. However, the legitimacy of these talks was threatened when leaders who were brought to the table were arrested and "coerced" into the peace process. Another serious challenge to peace talks was the absence of Paresh Baruah who was unwilling to join negotiations. Perhaps the most important challenge to the peace process is an embedded belief that peace negotiations are less about conflict transformation, or dealing with the root causes of the problem, and more about implementing a successful COIN strategy.<sup>51</sup> Journalist M.S. Prabhakara points to the proliferation of a specific kind of political mobilization in the state of Assam by small groups, mostly tribal communities numbering just a few thousands in some cases, to demarcate a territory and political space for themselves. To advance their political survival and secure a peaceful future, the Scheduled Tribes (STs) seek territorial councils and non-STs seek their reclassification.<sup>52</sup> Atul Kohli, an expert on ethno-

---

<sup>50</sup> Namrata Goswami, "The Naga Peace Accord", IDSA Briefing, August 11, 2015. [http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/TheNagaPeaceAccordWhyNow\\_NamrataGoswami\\_070815](http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/TheNagaPeaceAccordWhyNow_NamrataGoswami_070815) accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>51</sup> V. Venkatesan, "Rebels and the State", *Frontline*, Vol. 27, No. 11, 2010. <http://www.frontline.in/static/html/fl2711/stories/20100604271107900.htm> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

nationalist movements in India, observes that heightened mobilization of group identities is followed by negotiations. Eventually, such movements decline as exhaustion sets in, some leaders are repressed, others co-opted, and a modicum of genuine power sharing and mutual accommodation between the movement and central/state authorities is reached.<sup>53</sup> Tripura is perhaps the only state in the Northeast that presents itself as a COIN success. The success of the Tripura model is discussed in Chapter 3. Among proposals to enable political negotiations with armed rebel groups in the Northeast is to create a transfer of power arrangement that absorbs aggrieved populations into the mainstream. This may be achieved by restructuring governance between the central government and state through the creation of a Northeast Regional Federation that not only includes zonal councils but also exercises legislative power over items mentioned in the Concurrent List in Schedule 7 of the Constitution.<sup>54</sup> “Such restructuring would facilitate further devolution or delegation of powers and responsibilities to the Northeast in an act of creative federalism.”<sup>55</sup>

### *Punjab*

In Punjab—a state which became the centre of a violent insurgency in the 1980s—ethnic and religious aspirations, combined with poor state governance, provoked a separatist movement for autonomy, led by Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale. In 1984, terrorists who had taken siege of the Golden Temple in Amritsar were flushed out in a military operation that used overwhelming force. In the events following Prime Minister Indira Gandhi’s assassination in 1984, more than 2,000 Sikhs were massacred in one of the darkest pogroms against ethnic minorities in Indian history. In 1985, elections were held after Rajiv Gandhi and Akali Dal leader, Harchand Singh Longowal, signed the Longowal Accord. But the agreement was considered a sell-out by hard-line

---

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> For more on this issue, see B.G. Verghese, *India’s Northeast Resurgent: Ethnicity, Insurgency, Governance, Development*, New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1996, pp. 316, 328.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 329.

extremists, for which Longowal paid the price with his life. In the ensuing elections, the Akali Dal came to power but was plagued by internal factional fighting. Militant hardliners had taken control over the movement by 1992; the primary groups were the Babbar Khalsa, the Khalistan Commando Force, the Khalistan Liberation Force and the Bhindranwale Tiger Force, each containing several splinter groups.<sup>56</sup> Between 1991 and 1993, the Gill Doctrine was developed and adopted as a successful model in later insurgencies. The objective of the Gill Doctrine was to break the collective psychological strength of the militants, to engage and then isolate them from the victims.<sup>57</sup>

In his book, *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Political Leadership and Ethnonationalist Movements*, Jugdep Chima explains the rise and decline of Sikh insurgency through the lens of internal disunity and competition between state elites as a trigger for violent ethno-nationalism.

The dynamic interaction between states and ethnic elites affects the trajectory of ethnic sub-nationalist movements by defining the political relationship between an ethnic group and the central state. Internal leaders and factions compete against each other over positions of leadership.<sup>58</sup>

Chima claims that from 1992 to 1993, armed militants were weakened as a result of effective state repression, internal disunity and their schism with the extremists. But the government leadership also united and concurrently implemented policies systematically to restart the democratic political process at the local and state levels in Punjab—essential to state building and state preservation. This opened up opportunities for Sikh extremists to participate in politics, avoid

---

<sup>56</sup> Virginia Van Dyke, “The Khalistan Movement in Punjab, India, and the Post-militancy Era”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. XLIX, No. 6, November–December 2009, pp.975-997.

<sup>57</sup> Prem Mahadevan, “The Gill Doctrine: A Model for 21st Century Counter-terrorism?”, *Faultlines*, Vol. 19, April 2008.

<sup>58</sup> Jugdep Chima’s *The Sikh Separatist Insurgency in India: Political Leadership and Ethnonationalist Movements*, New Delhi: Sage, 2010, p.8.

marginalization and break free from militants controlling them. Chima's comparative perspective explains why and how co-optation of insurgents, or absorbing insurgents into the mainstream as part of a COIN operation, serves an important state preservation technique. Both coercive and non-coercive means were used to turn the insurgents. Non-coercive methods include money and coercive methods focus on force, carrying greater risks to military professionalism with documented cases of brutality, torture and forced disappearances.<sup>59</sup> Ultimately, as Chima points out, three key strategies were combined to squash the Punjab insurgency: ignoring the demands for autonomy presented by the insurgents in the hope that the movement would weaken and split within itself over time; conducting participatory elections in 1992 that allowed a popularly elected non-sectarian government under Beant Singh to come to power in the state; and integrating non-violent ethnic leaders into the mainstream who feared becoming alienated from the democratic political process.<sup>60</sup>

A sound state building or state preservation strategy must also guarantee the rights of citizens. How must the state guarantee civic rights? Patrick Heller notes that “procedural guarantees of civic and political rights including rights of association and free speech do not automatically translate into the effective exercise of democratic rights”.<sup>61</sup> State power has its own limitations. The agencies of the state—the police, the judiciary, the educational system—are simply cast too thinly and too unevenly to enforce and provide for citizen's rights. The problem poses an even greater challenge when “the state's legitimate realm of domination, prescribed by the constitution, is contested and weakened

---

<sup>59</sup> Sameer Lalwani, “India's Approach to Counterinsurgency and the Naxalite Problem”, Combating Terrorism Center Paper, October 31, 2011. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/india%E2%80%99s-approach-to-counterinsurgency-and-the-naxalite-problem> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>60</sup> Jugdep Chima, “Controlling the Sunni Insurgency in Iraq: Political and Military Strategies from Successful Counterinsurgency in Punjab-India”, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 2007, pp. 619–25.

<sup>61</sup> Patrick Heller, “Degrees of Democracy: Some Comparative Lessons from India”, *World Politics*, Vol. 52, July 2007, p. 489.

by countervailing sources of authority”.<sup>62</sup> In Assam, the ULFA managed to retain a significant degree of popular support for its armed struggle for sovereignty by formally dividing its organization into discreet “military” and political wings and creating a unified People’s Consultative Group whose members included prominent journalists, human rights activists, lawyers and academics from the ethnic Assamese society. In contrast, Sikh militants in Punjab were unable to create an institutionalized internal political front or retain an effective external political front in the form of extremists, who eventually fractionalized into a multiplicity of competitive groupings and rejoined the government-sponsored political process.<sup>63</sup>

### *Kashmir*

Kashmir is central to India’s and Pakistan’s state-building projects post-Partition, which were fervently at odds with each other. Today, Kashmir poses the most severe challenge to state preservation as not only armed militant groups retain a much more effective political front in the form of religious extremist factions, but also extreme radicalization of the state along religious lines and growing political polarization has made any agreement between hostile groups nearly impossible. The All Parties Hurriyat Conference (APHC), for instance, maintains a strong united front on most grassroots political issues. Sumit Ganguly has analyzed the breakdown of institutions in Kashmir as a precursor to violent uprisings of the 1990s, exacerbated by an influx of Islamist militants from Pakistan. Had Kashmiris been given the option of voicing their dissent through a fair electoral process, they may have been less likely to opt for the militant option.<sup>64</sup> A failure to uphold the autonomy of

---

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. For the most authoritative account on democratic consolidation, see Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Consolidation*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996. Atul Kohli has tackled similar issues in the Indian context. See Atul Kohli, *Democracy and Discontent: India’s Growing Crisis of Governability*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. For an analysis of the social and economic problems faced by India’s minority Dalit and tribal populations, see Government of India, *Development Challenges in Extremist Affected Area*, Report of an Expert Group to Planning Commission, New Delhi: Government of India, 2008.

<sup>63</sup> Patrick Heller, Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Sumit Ganguly, “Explaining the Kashmir Insurgency: Political Mobilization and Institutional Decay”, *International Security*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1996, pp.76-107.

Kashmir, hold a plebiscite, instances of violent repression and human rights violations and an overbearing presence of military camps and checkpoints fostered resentment among Kashmiri youth. While all this is true and part of the blame rests with the Indian state's gross mishandling of the situation, the challenge to state building in Kashmir cannot simply be explained by a failure of state policy to address the demands of local Kashmiris. The Indian Army, though frequently perceived as an occupying force within the general population of disaffected Kashmiris, has seriously tried to facilitate development and education programmes to co-opt the populations against secessionism and radicalization. Launched in 1998 under the initiative of General Arjun Ray, Operation Sadbhavana tried to achieve successful outcomes by providing health care to remote and inaccessible areas. The goals were achieved by conducting medical camps, running forward medical centres (FMCs), remote area support posts (RASPs) and mobile medical teams (MMTs).<sup>65</sup> The Indian Army also established numerous schools in war-affected areas and continues to work with non-governmental organization (NGO) groups to build sustainable models of development.<sup>66</sup>

Perhaps the most serious issue confronting debates on state building and state preservation in Kashmir is pacifying Kashmir's politics of secessionism and a separatist movement energized by Islamist fundamentalism. Any secessionist or separatist movement is immensely destructive to the unity of the Indian state, but those built upon religious foundations are especially dangerous. On military presence in Kashmir, Kanti Bajpai asks: "Do Indian actions in Kashmir amount to genocidal violence?"<sup>67</sup> Reports of widespread human rights violations by the state in Kashmir are prevalent, but brutality has not just been unleashed

---

<sup>65</sup> Renu Dhillon, "Kashmir Valley: The Hearts and Minds Campaign", Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS), No. 1182, April 15, 2014.

<sup>66</sup> Pratibha Singh, "Education and Peace Building in Kashmir", CLAWS, Issue Brief No. 33, May 2013. For an excellent paper on Operation Sadbhavana, see Arpita Anant, "Counterinsurgency and Op Sadbhavana in Jammu and Kashmir", IDSA Occasional Paper No. 19, October 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Kanti Bajpai, "Kashmir: Is Secession the Answer?", *The Hindu*, September 6, 2008. <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-opinion/kashmir-is-secession-the-answer/article1332629.ece> accessed on August 2, 2016.

by Indian security forces; Pakistan-sponsored militants hiding among the locals pose an equally serious threat to the state and country's internal security. Violations by security forces still do not classify as a genocide. While genocide is a systematic, well-planned, intended extermination of a specific population, whatever the motives, there is not enough evidence to prove that the Indian government has actively sought the extermination of the Kashmiri people. Also, Article 370 of the Constitution grants special rights and privileges to the people of J&K. Kashmir has its own Constitution and all laws are passed only with the approval of the state legislature. The central government's responsibilities are restricted to foreign policy, defence and communications. While "New Delhi has fiddled with Article 370 or at least with the spirit of it, it would be an exaggeration to say this amounts to a case for secession."<sup>68</sup> The APHC has been reticent on its political values and is fractured by internal divisions with no coherent policy on Kashmir. Militancy in the Kashmir Valley against both Hindus and Muslims continues unabated. This, in combination with rising radicalism, presents an extremely complex picture for the future of a democratic Kashmir.<sup>69</sup> Still worse, a number of Kashmiri leaders are actively engaged and politically committed to advancing the pro-secessionist stance. On June 27, 2013, while addressing a gathering at Anantnag, Kashmir Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) patron, Mufti Mohammad, said:

There are people in Kashmir who want secession from India and are for Azadi (independence). It is their democratic right and they are free to propagate their ideology as democracy is the battle of ideas. But we have a firm belief in Indian Constitution and are for resolution of Kashmir issue within the ambit of Indian Constitution. Our party will fight for restoring the honour, dignity, self-respect and pride of Jammu and Kashmir (read Kashmir) within the framework of Indian Constitution.<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Fazal Mehmood, "Secessionism and Constitutional Loyalty can't Go Together", *The Shillong Times*, Saturday, July 6, 2013 <http://www.theshillongtimes.com/2013/07/06/secessionism-and-constitutional-loyalty-cant-go-together/> accessed on August 2, 2016.

He added:

People of Kashmir want peace and their self-respect to be restored... Our party strives for making Kashmir economic free zone and joint management of prestigious projects between two sides of Kashmir. Votes are the only weapons by which Kashmiri people have to change their destiny. I promise the people of Kashmir that I will change the political dimensions of Kashmir if voted to power. New Delhi must extend hand of friendship to Pakistan and the Kashmiris will be the ultimate beneficiaries.<sup>71</sup>

The problem with the separatist narrative is that such statements are not reflective of Kashmir's political reality. The politics of separatism feeds an anti-India hysteria among local Kashmiris which has turned into an increasingly violent movement against the Indian state in recent years. The overt support extended to the self-determination struggle of Kashmiris by Pakistan-backed terrorist groups like the Hizb-ul-Mujahideen and the Lashkar-e-Taiba only complicates political negotiations for India, destroying any possibility for peace.

### *Maoists*

An ongoing challenge to state preservation is the Maoist insurrection that is destabilizing the internal security of the country. The Maoists, a group of communist guerrillas, emerged in 1967 as a peasant revolution against exploitative landlords. Popularly known as the Naxalite movement, the group gained momentum from 2004 onwards, turning into a violent form of resistance. The Maoists are mostly active in Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Andhra Pradesh. In 1987, an elite commando unit, the Greyhounds, was raised in Andhra Pradesh to conduct offensive operations against the Maoists. From a 9,300 force in 2004, their numbers have steadily grown, with current estimates at 40,000 permanent members and 100,000 militia.<sup>72</sup> In response to their activities, the Indian military launched Operation Green Hunt (a

---

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Anuj Chopra, "India's Failing Counterinsurgency Campaign", *Foreign Policy*, May 14, 2010. <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/05/14/indias-failing-counterinsurgency-campaign/> accessed on August 2, 2016.

100,000 troop counteroffensive) in 2009. In May 2013, in one of the most vicious campaigns executed by Maoist guerrillas, a Congress Party convoy in the central Indian state of Chhattisgarh was ambushed, setting back the Congress-led central government's anti-Maoist COIN campaign, Operation Green Hunt. Twenty-seven people, including much of the Congress leadership in Chhattisgarh, were killed in the attack and another 32 injured.

The Maoist case is different from India's other COIN campaigns in that Maoists enjoy a tactical advantage over Indian security forces. They orchestrate sophisticated large-scale operations; attack training centres and police stations to capture weaponry; attack jails to break out --captured comrades; and target judges and state functionaries to weaken state presence. They use improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to take innocent lives, and also enjoy access to funding by operating an extortion network that accrues as much as 14 billion rupees (\$300 million).<sup>73</sup> The Indian government faces the onerous, insurmountable task of fighting guerrillas without alienating the local population intimidated by many of these groups. A major impediment to this objective is the continued emphasis on conventional military techniques and brute force, while ignoring the social problems of the people living in these areas. The Andhra state's response to the problem is an outlier and can be used as a successful model of state building and state preservation. Much of the success is owed to Y.S. Rajasekhara Reddy's (YSR) strategies, who combined COIN efforts with a strong focus on rural development. The Andhra government implemented programmes on poverty alleviation, employment generation and tribal welfare, like Remote and Interior Areas Development and Jalayagnam (irrigation project). These programmes significantly undermined the ability of Maoists to recruit new members. The development model was also successful in Telangana where socio-economic transformation of the Telangana state undermined the Maoists' ability to engage in mass mobilization.<sup>74</sup> The more confounding problem, though, is why

---

<sup>73</sup> Varun Vira, "Counterinsurgency: The Maoists", *Small Wars Journal*, December 7, 2011. <http://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/counterinsurgency-in-india-the-maoists> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>74</sup> Arijit Mazumdar, "Left-wing Extremism and Counterinsurgency in India: The Andhra Model", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 37, Issue 4, 2013, p. 453.

some Maoist belts are more resistant to government aid packages and programmes in comparison to others. Reasons range from the inability of specific state governments to the ideological and armed strength of the Maoists.

Though this monograph is focused on India's internal insurgencies, it is necessary to discuss the only case where India undertook COIN operations on foreign soil.

### *Sri Lanka*

The Indian military's involvement in Sri Lanka emerged from the necessity to prevent the rise of a Tamil separatist movement in the early 1980s. The Sinhalese government faced major opposition from its Tamil minority population when it severely restricted their political freedom. Within a few years, a number of militant groups, such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (hereafter LTTE), mushroomed in the Jaffna Peninsula and orchestrated a series of violent attacks against Sri Lankan armed forces. The Sri Lankan Army launched a massive offensive against the LTTE in the summer of 1987. Concerned about the future of Tamil minorities in Sri Lanka while empathetic to its own Tamil population, New Delhi decided to extend its political support to Tamil minority representative groups. In the first phase of the anti-militant campaign (1983–87), India's political leadership mediated between the Sri Lankan government and Tamil separatists. But in what would tantamount to a colossal political failure, India allowed Tamil separatists a safe haven, to the extent of supporting the operation of dozens of training camps for Tamil guerrillas in the Indian state of Tamil Nadu.<sup>75</sup> The Indo-Sri Lankan Accord was signed on July 29, 1987. India sent an "Indian Peace Keeping Force" (IPKF) to the northern and eastern regions of Sri Lanka. Indian forces soon found themselves at the receiving end of a violent backlash from radical Sinhalese nationals. A series of military clashes erupted between the IPKF and the LTTE derailing the entire peace process. Consequently, New Delhi withdrew the IPKF from Sri Lanka in late 1989. By March 1990, most Indian

---

<sup>75</sup> Devin Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 31, No. 4, 1991, p. 353.

soldiers had returned back to India despite continued fighting in Sri Lanka.<sup>76</sup>

From the perspective of external COIN operations in the Indian context, the Sri Lankan case is important for two reasons. First, the IPKF's role in Sri Lanka is relevant not because of the Indian military's attempt at reducing levels of violence but because of strategic and operational blunders made by India's political leadership that damaged the military's professionalism. Second, unlike the US, the Indian military had no intention of building or creating a new state. Its primary purpose was to maintain peace and deliver assistance to the Sri Lankan government in neutralizing the LTTE threat.

To summarize, American and Indian COINs illustrate the relevance of historical context in several ways. First, American COINs have been fought externally, while Indian COINs remain mostly internal to the state. Yet, for both countries, the larger conflict against insurgents is an ideological war, whether it is fighting communist rebels or religious fundamentalists. This ideological war, for the US, is intent on promoting its liberal democratic principles; and for India, the ideological war is interested in upholding national sovereignty. Second, the Cold War context, historically, is extremely vital to understanding American policy on COIN in the past and present day. Third, in the American case, the goal of COIN is state building; in the Indian case it is state building and state preservation. Notably, while strategic goals appear different in both countries, methods employed by them to fight insurgents are quite similar, with an emphasis on governance and institutional development in addition to the use of military force. Nagaland and Punjab offer models of successful COIN strategies, albeit with an application of divergent methods (explained in later chapters). Fourth, the most pressing challenge for both India and the US in fighting insurgents is the ability (or lack thereof) to arrive at successful power-sharing agreements between rebel groups and the state. Finally, in India, the extra burden of managing secessionist politics has complicated reconciliation efforts between insurgent groups and the state.

---

<sup>76</sup> Shelton U. Kodikara, "The Continuing Crisis in Sri Lanka: The JVP, the Indian Troops, and Tamil Politics", *Asian Survey*, Vol. 29, No. 7, 1989, p. 718.

## Organizational Culture: Political and Military Preferences on War

The conduct of war and military operations usually unfold in a context that follows a calibrated set of responses. While historical circumstances are crucial to predict this pattern, so is strategic and organizational culture. Though divergent in content and goals, the two offer valuable insights into political and military decisions on war, and why choices motivating decisions on COIN, both in India and the US, are worth deeper analysis. Strategic culture is often a product of numerous influences: a country's geopolitical setting; its relationship with foreign states; political and social norms; and military culture. Organizational culture, a subset of strategic culture, is predominantly a reflection of military culture. In military operations, strategic culture finds expression in strategic doctrine, personnel practices, command and control arrangements and weapons procurement. Whether or not a military engages offensively or defensively, is excessively reliant on technology and firepower, or whether it uses surprise and deception is an outcome of the strategic and cultural context of states.<sup>1</sup> Colin Gray refers to strategic culture as “the disarmingly elementary notion that a security community is likely to think and behave in ways influenced by what it has taught itself and its relevant contexts. And that education, to repeat, rests primarily upon the interpretation of history and history's geography.”<sup>2</sup> Military defeat can reshape a nation's strategic culture very quickly.

---

<sup>1</sup> Carnes Lord, “American Strategic Culture in Small Wars”, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 3, No. 3, 1992, pp.205-216.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in James R. Holmes, “India has a Strategic Culture”, *The Diplomat*, April 19, 2013. <http://thediplomat.com/2013/04/india-has-a-strategic-culture/> accessed on August 3, 2016.

While strategic culture is important, this chapter explores, specifically, the impact of organizational culture on decisions taken before and during military operations in India and the US. In America, debates on both issues have received attention in equal measure. In India, discussions on strategic culture have received much greater attention, with much less debate on organizational culture and its impact on military decisions. In India, political goals have primarily shaped military preferences. Despite an extant set of well-defined principles for fighting external enemies, the country's strategy towards internal enemies appears to be much less cohesive. These contradictions, evident in choices made by India's political leadership and its use of the Indian military in COIN, are examined in the Indian case. But first, an analysis of organizational culture in the American case offers meaningful comparisons.

This chapter advances the following arguments. First, the approach to COIN operations in both India and the US is a product of their respective organizational cultures. Second, organizational cultures of both countries suggest the adoption of multiple institutional approaches to COIN. Third, the importance of military and political preferences in the conduct of COIN operations remains equally important for both.

## The US

America's strategic and organizational culture has deeply informed, if not directly influenced, the approach to its wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq. According to the US Army's COIN field manual, "counterinsurgency strategy understands culture as a web of meaning or an operational code valid for an entire group of people acquired by all members of a particular society or group by means of enculturation".<sup>3</sup> For a decade after the end of the Cold War, preference for big conventional wars was welcomed as the dominant paradigm. In fact, most strategic thinkers and scholars have pointed to the American

---

<sup>3</sup> Department of the Army, the US, *Counterinsurgency*, Field Manual No. 3-24, Washington, DC: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2006, referenced in Nicholas Mirzoeff, "War is Culture: Global Counterinsurgency, Visuality, and the Petraeus Doctrine", *PMLA*, Vol. 124, No. 5, October 2009, p. 1740.

military's cultural aversion to COIN, as much of its doctrine, training and education was a preparation for regular wars. Instead of developing a new set of COIN principles, the failure of COIN in Vietnam preserved the military's faith in conventional war techniques. Some within the American military establishment continued to doggedly advocate a preference for conventional war strategies. For example, in Vietnam, General Westmoreland was a strong advocate of search and destroy operations to eliminate as many Vietnamese guerrillas as possible, while rejecting the political nature of war. His strategy of attrition invited a fair share of criticism from sections within the US Marines. Williamson Murray observes that strategic and operational lessons of Vietnam were assessed in quantitative and qualitative terms, such as number of weapons captured, number of villages pacified and number of enemies killed. Beyond this quantified assessment of COIN, matched with an extraordinary degree of hubris, there was utter denial in political and military circles of the language, culture, traditions and history of the Vietnamese. Neither the civilian leadership at the Pentagon nor the professional military even appeared to desire such knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Much of what drove this hubris was an abiding faith in methods of conventional warfare - maintaining technological superiority. The assumption was that technological sophistication would deliver superior and effective results in battle.

In the shadow of Vietnam, which left the American military deeply damaged, changes in military culture were gradual to develop. The McNamara paradigm—a belief that American technological superiority would allow the US forces to achieve quick, easy victories over their opponents with relatively few casualties—had, so far, served as the desired model. In its 1976 basic operations manual, FM 100-5, the merits of a mechanistic, firepower-intensive approach once popular in Vietnam were reintroduced. Yet, despite the resolute faith displayed by senior leadership in old methods of warfare, younger and newer generations of officers were interested in embracing the writings of Clausewitz. Murray notes, “it was the Clausewitzian understanding of

---

<sup>4</sup> Williamson Murray, “Clausewitz Out, Computer In”, *The National Interest*, Summer 1997, p. 60.

friction, uncertainty and change gained at the cost of Vietnam that dominated American military thought in the last decade and a half of the Cold War”.<sup>5</sup> While not entirely rejecting the importance of advanced technology to maintain battlefield superiority, the focus was shifting towards the human factor in war. Doctrinal manuals of the US Army and Marine Corps, in the 1980s, reflected this desired shift. For instance, “the army’s 100-5 operational doctrinal manual of 1986 represented a fundamental revolt against the mechanistic, predictive, and top-down approach of the 1970s iteration”.<sup>6</sup> Further, it was becoming clear that military choices had to be governed by a well-prescribed set of political principles. But as most American future engagements with wars would show, the learning was incremental and the tendency to rely on conventional war strategies was never quite abandoned.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have been marked by a constant struggle to find an appropriate balance in conventional war training and COIN operations. The legacy of Vietnam still haunts the US Army decades after its traumatic defeat. When faced with the threat of a land war with the Soviet Union, America reluctantly turned away from a COIN doctrine focused on conventional operations.<sup>7</sup> In a changed post-9/11 environment where threats from non-state terrorist groups drew the attention of policymakers, missions in Afghanistan and Iraq pressed for expensive COIN methods. However, a number of political and economic reasons prompted the military to focus on the acquisition of weapons designed for conventional wars. In his memoirs, Secretary Gates explains the herculean effort required to divert resources away from weapons acquisition to the requirements of ongoing wars.<sup>8</sup> The American mission in Afghanistan was driven by strong military considerations and an over-reliance on military mechanisms, and

---

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, p. 61.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Justin Lynch, “The Counterinsurgency Paradigm Shift”, War on the Rocks, November 20, 2014, available at <http://warontherocks.com/2014/11/the-counterinsurgency-paradigm-shift/>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

superseded the authenticity of a comprehensive approach from the very beginning. Ad hoc military goals, writes Carl Robichaud, shaped the Afghanistan intervention in specific ways: “a narrow focus on counterinsurgency disproportionately emphasized short-term stability while neglecting other priorities especially securing government legitimacy; the instrumental use of development assistance as the mantra to win hearts and minds generated unsustainable and inefficient practices, often producing an over-concentration of scarce resources.”<sup>9</sup> The operations, therefore, were doomed to fail as the military campaign was too narrowly focused and was unable to create the visibility of a state, allowing the Taliban to regroup and recruit.<sup>10</sup>

The Iraq War further exposed the limitations of extended reliance on conventional military power in unconventional settings: “Operation Iraqi Freedom achieved a quick victory over Iraqi conventional military resistance, but did not secure decisive political success.”<sup>11</sup> It also mistakenly assumed that enemy forces would be defeated if only American forces could maintain a tactical advantage. A 2005 Rand Corporation study concluded that “Iraq underscores the overwhelming organizational tendency within the U.S. military not to absorb historical lessons when planning and conducting counterinsurgency operations.”<sup>12</sup> Iraq also showed that America was unable to match the lessons of Vietnam to the ground realities of the challenges it was facing in combat operations in Iraq. The 2007 surge in Iraq is a case in point where 25,000 additional American troops heavily relied on tactics and operational concepts previously in use. In 2007, President George W. Bush explicitly stated that the political goal of the Iraq surge was to end sectarian conflict and reconcile Sunnis, Shias and Kurds in the

---

<sup>9</sup> Carl Robichaud, “Buying Time in Afghanistan”, *World Policy Journal*, Vol. 24, No. 2, Summer 2007, p. 4.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Rand Corporation, *Iraq: Translating Lessons into Future DoD Policies*, Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2005, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

government.<sup>13</sup> The surge “resurrected dubious battlefield lessons from the past—Vietnam—and applied them”.<sup>14</sup>

Drawing from his personal combat experience, Gian Gentile noted that even though most of the US Army adopted a range of techniques for COIN way back in 2004, there was a fundamental “disconnect between claims and reality”.<sup>15</sup> It was widely believed that the surge was responsible for a reduction in violence. Yet, reduced levels of violence can be attributed to two external factors: first, predating the surge, in 2006, senior American officers paid heavy sums to former enemies to secure their alliance in the fight against al-Qaeda, which lowered the scale of violence; and the second reason for decline in violence was Muqtada al-Sadr’s decision to stand down, flee to exile in Iran and order his forces to suspend attacks against Americans. Without these developments, Americans would still be dying in large numbers.<sup>16</sup> Also, as early as February 2005, and more widely in 2006, Sunni tribes began turning against al-Qaeda (the Anbar Awakening). Hence, what appears to be a success of American strategy was actually the result of a very different set of external conditions present even before the decision on the surge was taken by top officials in the American administration.

Victor Davis Hanson asks what such an organizational culture, which finds it hard to separate itself from its conventional war preference, implies for the future of American military practice, both technological and strategic? Will the American military conform to these general cultural traits so deeply embedded in its past? Much of this would depend on whether or not the military is serious about making the shift in its organizational preferences and how it would prefer to perceive

---

<sup>13</sup> Alex Kingsbury, “Why the 2007 Surge in Iraq Actually Failed”, *The Boston Globe*, November 7, 2014. <https://www.bostonglobe.com/opinion/2014/11/17/why-surge-iraq-actually-failed-and-what-that-means-today/0NaI9JrbtSs1pAZvgzGtaL/story.html> accessed on August 2, 2016.

<sup>14</sup> Gian P. Gentile, “A (Slightly) Better War: A Narrative and its Defects”, *World Affairs*, Vol. 171, No. 1, Summer 2008, p. 57.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

itself. Hanson claims that technologically, the push for small wars will continue. Global positioning system (GPS) bombs and cruise missiles will be accurately guided by a few highly trained ground operatives.<sup>17</sup> And the US military's perception of itself as warrior or peacekeeper will be crucial in predicting outcomes. Iraq's experience is a telling sign that soldiers have to transcend artificial boundaries between warrior and peacekeeper. Instead of viewing them as binary functions, they must readily embrace both roles. But more importantly, resolving the tension in combat roles requires a shift in organizational culture that better recognizes the overlap in combat and peace operations to reward individuals who have an ability to work well in such indefinite settings.<sup>18</sup>

The US military is likely to find it hard to invent a new strategy that replaces its preference for conventional war with a more realistic time frame to fight insurgents. Again, the reasons for this are organizational. A large segment of COIN duties are assigned to SOF and other specialists, many of whom are in the army's reserves. But the American military's focus on conventional warfighting is so deeply institutionalized that, it makes any new strategy difficult to execute. For instance, even when HQ 3 Corps was preparing to deploy to Iraq in early 2004 and was aware of conducting COIN and S&R operations, its pre-deployment training still focused on conventional operations.<sup>19</sup>

To match COIN goals to the military's conventional war experience, on November 28, 2005, Department of Defense (DoD) Directive 3000.05, "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations", mandated stability operations as a core US military mission the DoD would prepare to conduct and

---

<sup>17</sup> Victor Davis Hanson, "Military Technology and American Culture", *The New Atlantis*, 2003, available at <http://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/military-technology-and-american-culture>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> For more on this, see Ryan Close, "Neither Pigs nor Parrots: A Military Culture that Can Win the Peace", *Journal of Public and International Affairs*, Vol. 18, Spring 2007, pp.106-126.

<sup>19</sup> Nigel Aylwin-Foster, "Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations", *Military Review*, 2005, p. 8.

support. It prescribed that stability operations would be given priority comparable to combat operations, and be explicitly integrated across all activities to include doctrine, organizations, training, education, exercises, material, leadership, personnel, facilities and planning. This document attempted to align stability operations and COIN doctrine at levels that would match conventional training.

The American military's organizational culture also reveals numerous challenges facing the agencies involved in combat missions in Afghanistan and Iraq and their designated functions. Several bodies, in both conflicts, are part of decisions to use force. These are: the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM); Army Rangers; the US Special Forces (Green Berets); the 160th Special Operations Aviation Regiment; Civil Affairs (CA); Psychological Operations Forces (PSYOP); the US Navy Seals; and US Air Force.<sup>20</sup> The SOF are engaged in two distinctly different but complementary combat missions: those involved in direct missions; and those in support of unconventional warfare. Direct action missions are engaged in raids, ambushes and special reconnaissance. Each of the units is assigned a different set of missions. But the leaning towards conventional war-fighting strategies discourages adaptation to other roles.

In the summer of 2016, in attempts to adopt a more expansive approach to COIN, the Pentagon tried to restructure the way it fights the Islamic State and other terror groups. For this purpose, it altered its command structure to rely more heavily on the USSOCOM—if approved, the plan would be known as the Campaign for Countering Trans-Regional Terrorist Organizations.<sup>21</sup> However, this decision could run into a series of problems. First, chiefs of other combatant

---

<sup>20</sup> Anna Simons and David Tucker, "US Special Operations Forces and the War on Terrorism", in *Grand Strategy on the War on Terrorism*, 2003, NPS Paper, available at [http://faculty.nps.edu/asimons/docs/SOF\\_and\\_War\\_on\\_Terrorism.pdf](http://faculty.nps.edu/asimons/docs/SOF_and_War_on_Terrorism.pdf), accessed on July 3, 2016.

<sup>21</sup> Gordon Lubold, "Pentagon Shifts Command Structure for Terror Fight", *The Wall Street Journal*, June 8, 2016. <http://www.wsj.com/articles/pentagon-shifts-command-structure-for-terror-fight-1465433733> accessed on August 3, 2016.

commands have been reluctant in the past to assign a single command complete control over operations. Admiral William McRaven, head of the USSOCOM between 2011 and 2014, attempted something similar but failed. Second, it is unclear whether Special Ops would have to perform additional duties over and above basic functions. Currently, 250 additional US SOF are arriving in northern Syria to support local Syrian Democratic Forces fighting ISIS. In their capacity to “advise and assist”, they are required to work closely with local forces fighting ISIS terrorists, placing them in situations that demand an active combat role.<sup>22</sup>

## India

Debates on India’s strategic culture evolved during George Tanham’s famous observation in the early 1990s that the country had, for very long, demonstrated an absence of strategic thought. South Asian experts like Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta arrived at similar conclusions in recent years, arguing that India’s strategic culture was one characterized by restraint. Tanham’s arguments continue to provoke critical reactions within some sections of the strategic community who advocate a composite Indian strategic culture. Some, like Rodney Jones, while noting the dualism and tension present in India’s strategic culture, defend it on the grounds that India’s Hindu or Vedic civilization shaped its strategic culture into a “mosaic-like” frame, making it “more distinct and coherent than most contemporary nation-states”.<sup>23</sup> Also, given the nature of its circumstances, Indian strategic culture has displayed a tendency to be both war-like and pacifist. Kanti Bajpai highlighted three models that permeate India’s strategic culture: Nehruvian, neo-liberal and hyperrealist; these models, though bound by core values, differ in their strategies. At a minimal theoretical level, they establish a set of principles which contain basic assumptions about systemic stability,

---

<sup>22</sup> Barbara Starr, “In Advisory Role, Special Ops Face Danger in Expanded Terror Fight”, *CNN Politics*, June 8, 2016.

<sup>23</sup> Rodney Jones, “India’s Strategic Culture”, Paper/Report prepared for Defense Threat Reduction Agency, Advanced Systems and Concepts Office, October 31, 2006, p. 20.

the role of war in human affairs, nature of the enemy and efficacy of the use of force; and at the level of grand strategy, they contain “secondary assumptions on operational policy”.<sup>24</sup>

India’s strategic culture, though complex and contradictory, is a frequently debated issue. Arguments in defence of a well-defined strategic culture make the mistake of presenting it as a coherent set of principles. Such an impression betrays numerous problems in identifying what this strategic culture actually means and how it gets projected on policy. While history, politics and cultural conditions have, undoubtedly, steered India’s strategic culture, its sheer complexity deprives it of clarity and purpose. Many of these complexities and contradictions in Indian strategic culture are the result of deliberate political posturing by India’s politicians during different periods in its history. Under Prime Minister Nehru’s leadership, for instance, Indian strategy was built on peddling diplomacy as the singular means for mediating conflicts, with force only to be used as a last resort. Dialogue rather than military force was privileged in strategic engagements, with an abiding faith in the ability of international organizations to mitigate international conflict. For a majority of Nehruvians, military power was an instrument of defence, as underlined in Article 51 of the UN Charter. This rationale underlined India’s commitment to non-alignment, while also arousing deep cynicism of Western security models.<sup>25</sup> Nehruvian philosophy became a powerful determinant of India’s future foreign policy trajectory, conditioning many of its political stances on conflict and peace. The emphasis on diplomacy over the use of force, while laudable, did not, however, prevent a war with China in 1962, nor did it produce peaceful relations in a protracted war with Pakistan which has lasted over two decades. India continues to remain unsure about its future strategic posturing.

---

<sup>24</sup> Indrani Bagchi, “Why India does not Have a Vibrant Strategic Culture”, *The Economic Times*, October 21, 2012. [http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-10-21/news/34607671\\_1\\_indian-interests-strategic-culture-manmohan-singh](http://articles.economictimes.indiatimes.com/2012-10-21/news/34607671_1_indian-interests-strategic-culture-manmohan-singh) accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>25</sup> Namrata Goswami, “India’s Strategic Culture is Plain to See”, *Asia Times*, April 6, 2013, available at [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/SOU-01-050413.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/SOU-01-050413.html), accessed on July 3, 2016.

As Harjeet Singh states: “It is like a line or shadow beyond which little or nothing is distinctly discernible. India is a supreme cultural experience and the more it is probed, the greater its complexity, the more inexhaustible its variety and the more inconceivable its complexities.”<sup>26</sup> Much of the confusion in India’s strategic culture emerges from deeply embedded cultural and institutional constraints in identifying clear goals for India’s national security strategy. The definition of national security, for example, is quite fluid, changing according to the nature of threats. In the absence of robust institutions and timely interventions, Indian security strategy presents itself as ad hoc and confusing. Aside from strategic culture, the contours of India’s organizational culture on decisions to use military force are absent from any serious discourse on strategy. India’s higher defence organization contains a chain of numerous agencies, many of which have overlapping functions. While there is some clarity in decisions that would affect India’s external security, it is harder to coordinate the work of agencies engaged in internal operations. Not only are there different layers of decision making but there is also additional gridlock in the management and execution of plans.

Next, I focus on two issues in India’s organizational culture which, with some degree of vitality, seem to influence its military culture and decisions on the use of force in COIN operations specifically. These are: the choice between political and military strategies which include the military’s own attitudes towards organizational change and the presence of a conventional war bias; and second, controversial legislation on military operations during peace and wartime. I also, briefly, account for the types of agencies involved, at the centre and state levels, in the performance of such operations.

### **Primacy of the Military or the Political?**

Effects of Indian military culture on decisions to use force can be measured by whether political or military options, or a combination of both, enjoy the advantage in any given mission. Some patterns are

---

<sup>26</sup> Harjeet Singh, “India’ Strategic Culture: The Impact of Geography”, Manekshaw Paper No. 10, CLAWS, 2009, p. 27.

identifiable here. To deter its external enemies, India moved from a purely defensive approach to an offensive one, clearly observable in its doctrines on the use of nuclear and conventional weapons and in statements made by its political and military leadership. Much of the shift towards offensive doctrines in conventional wars was, and still is, a response to Pakistan's proxy war in Kashmir and large-scale terrorist attacks perpetrated on India's civilian population by Pakistan-sponsored terrorist groups like the Lashkar-e-Taiba, Hizbul Mujahideen and Jaish-e-Mohammed.<sup>27</sup> Distinctions between offensive and defensive systems are, however, difficult to make precisely because of the functions they perform. Offensive systems are aggressive, provocative means used for attack.<sup>28</sup> Defensive systems are a reaction to attacks. Johan Galtung suggests that an offensive defence posture leans more towards the offensive side: "it can be used to start an offensive in the sense of an aggression, and it is offensive in the sense of provoking the other side".<sup>29</sup>

Following the December 11, 2001 attack on the Indian Parliament, the Kaluchak attacks of 2002 and the Mumbai terror attacks of 2008, Indian political and military statements to the press underscored the importance of offensive operations. While the first of such discussions on the use of offensive doctrines started in the mid-late 1980s (Brasstacks), a greater urgency to respond to enemy threats in a manner appropriate to the time and place of India's choosing began replacing previous attitudes on warfare. For example, Defence Minister George Fernandes, Army Chief S. Padmanabhan and Air Chief S. Krishnaswamy were witness to "salami-slice operations", codenamed "Operation Parakram III", to judge the military's strike potential. Not only did a range of Indian Air Force fighters participate in this exercise, but "the Indian artillery also scorched the Mahajan ranges with 155

---

<sup>27</sup> See Ayesha Ray, *The Soldier and the State in India: Nuclear Weapons, Counterinsurgency, and the Transformation of Indian Civil-Military Relations*, New Delhi: Sage, 2013, pp. 99–103.

<sup>28</sup> Johan Galtung, "Transarmament: From Offensive to Defensive Defense", *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 21, No. 2, 1984, p. 132.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

mm and 130 mm high explosive shells in the mock of fire assault”.<sup>30</sup> After the 2001 and 2002 encounters with Pakistan, the Indian armed forces became doggedly sceptical of limited war objectives and in 2004, it launched the Cold Start Doctrine seeking to integrate battle groups capable of conducting high-intensity offensive operations.<sup>31</sup> The Indian military was indicating a preference for offensive military postures which meant that pre-emptive military strikes were no longer off limits.<sup>32</sup>

The Indian Army, in 2011, undertook a massive reorganization by formulating its Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (2012–27), directed at Pakistan and China. The plan proposed the raising of two new mountain divisions, a new mountain strike corps, a new strategic command with a strike corps and a shift from “dissuasive deterrence” to “active deterrence” against both China and Pakistan.<sup>33</sup> From 2005–10, all three branches of the Indian armed forces articulated the need to operate beyond its borders: the Indian Navy’s 2007 maritime strategy, army’s focus on expeditionary warfare and “full-spectrum” operations by the air force being most notable in creating the image of a “soft power”.<sup>34</sup> In a public statement in late April 2014, Prime Minister

---

<sup>30</sup> Raj Chengappa and Shishir Gupta, “In Striking Distance”, *India Today*, June 3, 2002, available at <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/vajpayee-sounds-war-cry-india-prepares-for-limited-military-offensive-against-pakistan/1/221339.html>, accessed on November 5, 2015.

<sup>31</sup> Ray, *The Soldier and the State in India*, n. 33, pp. 106–07.

<sup>32</sup> For a lucid account of the origins of the Cold Start Doctrine, see Walter Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars?: The Indian Army’s New Limited War Doctrine”, *International Security*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2007–08, pp. 158–90. Also, see Subhash Kapila, “India’s New Cold Start War Doctrine Strategically Reviewed”, Paper No. 991, South Asia Analysis Group, May 2004, available at+ <http://www.southasiaanalysis.org/paper991> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>33</sup> Khan A. Sufyan, “India’s Offensive New Strategy”, *The Diplomat*, February 9, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Walter C. Ladwig, “India and Military Power Projection: Will the Land of Gandhi Become a Conventional Great Power?”, *Asian Survey*, Vol. 50, No. 6, December 2010, p. 1163.

Narendra Modi announced an interest in authorizing offensive covert operations against terrorists. India's intelligence community also appeared comfortable with a new language of killing.<sup>35</sup> The present Modi government has shown full intent to send a message to India's adversaries that peaceful negotiations can only yield limited results in the long term. India's National Security Advisor, Ajit Kumar Doval, is pushing for doctrines that maintain a defensive offensive against Pakistan, which includes keeping aggression on the Line of Control (LoC) in check.<sup>36</sup> Notably, revolution in military affairs, accompanied by the technological sophistication of weapons, is also exerting considerable influence on military decisions on offensive and defensive options.

Counterinsurgency operations, in contrast, demonstrate a preference for combining military operations with political accommodation. Namrata Goswami calls the Indian state a "learning state", which is constantly adapting. She argues that preference to use overwhelming force was most visible in the 1950s and 1960s in the Northeast insurgencies where Assam Rifles used massive force to isolate insurgents. Goswami notes:

The problem was wrongly diagnosed then. As the insurgents became stronger and increased their support base among the locals, the state administration was forced to come up with a new strategy. Today, there is much less emphasis on just using force as a means to fight insurgents. Both civilians and the military are inclined to use a combination of both, even though the military is always tempted to use force first if the insurgent group is perceived as a threat. Civilians are interested in arriving at a

---

<sup>35</sup> Praveen Swami, "India New Language of Killing", *The Hindu*, May 1, 2014. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/indias-new-language-of-killing/article5963505.ece> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>36</sup> Makhdoom Babar, "India's National Security Doctrine is Defensive Offense against Pakistan", *The Daily Mail International*, January 3, 2015. available at <http://dailymailnews.com/2015/01/03/indias-national-security-doctrine-is-defensive-offense-against-pakistan/>, accessed on November 5, 2015.

political settlement and hence, depend on negotiations more. Military strategy gets tested on the ground when it becomes difficult for the armed forces to identify whether the insurgent is an enemy or a village local. They constantly walk the fine line of fighting the insurgent or protecting the local population.<sup>37</sup>

This process has been most difficult in Kashmir where it is harder to strike a political deal with ideologically diverse groups.

Remarkably, “anti-terrorism operations are defensive in nature while counterterrorism operations are offensive.”<sup>38</sup> A combination of defensive and offensive strategies is used to protect local civilian population from insurgents; provide economic and development packages to those displaced in a bid to win their support; and use force to crush insurgents in pockets where they create and thrive on a culture of terror and fear.<sup>39</sup> The offensive is essentially the emphasis on the military component, while the defensive is a strategy of political reconciliation using development and economic assistance. In many cases, a political solution is possible only after the success of a military operation. Paranjpe contends that “if the key to counter-terrorism is the initiation of political process and development activity in disturbed areas, then these initiatives can be successful only if the threat of terrorism is contained. India’s Punjab experience is a pointer in that direction: “The Punjab resolved itself when its people stopped extending their support to extremists who were terrorizing erstwhile sympathisers. The state’s use of force could, therefore, gain local support and help control the violence.”<sup>40</sup>

More recently, the Indian offensive against militants along the Indo-Myanmar border was undertaken according to a new set of principles, popularly called the “Modi–Doval” Doctrine on counterterrorism.

---

<sup>37</sup> Interview with Namrata Goswami, Research Fellow, IDSA, New Delhi, October 1, 2015.

<sup>38</sup> Shrikant Paranjpe, *India’s Strategic Culture: The Making of National Security Policy*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2013, p. 129.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, p.130.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 130.

This doctrine tries to absorb both defensive and offensive responses to insurgency. The strategy calls for engaging the enemy in three ways: purely defensive—the right to defend in the event of an attack; offensive defence—taking the fight to the enemy in the event of an attack; and offensive—striking the enemy when the time is favourable.<sup>41</sup> But this strategy is neither one-dimensional nor can it be applied in equal measure to different insurgent groups. For example, the doctrine may have worked in Myanmar but would produce very different outcomes with a country like Pakistan which, in all likelihood, would escalate the situation to a full-fledged war.

In the Maoist case, the Indian state has clearly chosen to fight insurgents predominantly with armed force, but sometimes has taken a minimalist approach as well. It is, at times, unwilling to employ significant effort or violence against Naxals in order to mitigate violence first, and defeat political subversion later. Despite facing a comparatively large, cohesive, ambitious and effective insurgent organization, the Indian state has been relatively restrained in its use of violence. It has eschewed the deployment of battle-tested COIN forces in favour of “an often-criticized ‘developmental’ approach, limited collateral damage, and tolerated much lower combat exchange rates rather than rebel forces”.<sup>42</sup> At other times, it has preferred force over mediation. The army’s strategy of “Iron Fist with Velvet Glove” has yielded strong payoffs, where it conducts surgical and professional operations based on real-time intelligence and causes minimum inconvenience to the local populace. The army also remains particularly sensitive to allegations of human rights violations which are investigated in a fair and transparent manner.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>41</sup> “Myanmar Operation Product of Modi–Doval Doctrine”, *Business Standard*, June 10, 2015. [http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/myanmar-operation-product-of-modi-doval-doctrine-115061000760\\_1.html](http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/myanmar-operation-product-of-modi-doval-doctrine-115061000760_1.html) accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>42</sup> Sameer Lalwani, “Understanding India’s Counterinsurgency Strategy against the Naxal Threat”, July 14, 2014, available at <https://casi.sas.upenn.edu/iit/sameerlalwani>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

<sup>43</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report, 2005–2006*, New Delhi: Ministry of Defence, 2006, Section 3.19, p. 24.

Tripura is, perhaps, the best model representing the success of political reconciliation over military force. The defeat of insurgency in Tripura was a consequence of implementing confidence-building measures such as jobs, attractive rehabilitation packages, monetary benefits and vocational training. These measures appealed to insurgents and they joined the mainstream. The governor and chief minister of Tripura, through the deliverance of public programmes, influenced misguided youth to become active stakeholders in the future of the state.<sup>44</sup> A positive outcome of pursuing political accommodation was that an entire group of the National Liberation Front of Tripura (NLFT, Nayan Basi [NB] faction) came to the negotiation table in 2006, many of whom also gave up arms. The political process initiated by Chief Minister Manik Sarkar was strengthened through peace marches in remote villages to gain the confidence of the people and demonstrate a serious commitment by the state to improve the lives of locals. Grassroots institutions such as autonomous development councils, gram panchayats and village councils were restructured, empowering local governance.

On the military front, COIN is not the primary task assigned to the Indian Army. In fact, the army is reluctant to actively participate in COIN operations, while the political leadership is willing to use the military as it sees fit. A specialized, elite COIN unit called the Rashtriya Rifles (RR) was created on October 1, 1990 for the purpose of combating the insurgency in Kashmir. While it works like an infantry unit, it has freed army infantry battalions from COIN operations. Paradoxically, however, operational problems like unit cohesion and lack of coordination with other border agencies such as the Border Security Force (BSF) have further institutionalized the role of the military in such operations. The RR is based in J&K and is controlled by the Ministry of Defence (MoD). Rajesh Rajagopalan notes that the need to counter conventional military threats from Pakistan and China has produced a COIN doctrine with a strong conventional war bias. This

---

<sup>44</sup> D.N. Sahaya, 'How Tripura Overcame Insurgency', *The Hindu*, September 22, 2011. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/how-tripura-overcame-insurgency/article2465348.ece> accessed on August 3, 2016.

bias appears in how the army views its role in such operations and the preparation required for it. Here, the debate over the creation of the RR is of principal importance because, when originally created, the purpose of RR was to reduce the burden on the military and be a permanently deployed force (along the lines of the Assam Rifles model). But funding issues compelled the military to take over some of the RR operations. A compromise was reached in which Rashtriya Rifles does the fighting, its battalions are stationed permanently but soldiers are drawn from different formations and move in and out of these battalions. The disadvantage of such an organizational set-up is that unit cohesion is difficult to achieve. In Kashmir, the RR are the ones fighting insurgents. The corps-level battalions are prepared for conventional war at all time and so, there is an overlap at the operational level.<sup>45</sup>

In addition to specialized units like the RR that are specifically trained for COIN operations, the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) provide assistance or work with local state police in insurgency-affected states. The CAPFs include the Assam Rifles, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), BSF, Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) and Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB). These agencies are directly under the control of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).<sup>46</sup> Execution of operations is plagued by a lack of coordination between CAPFs and state police. The CRPF has been guilty of negligence in discharging its responsibilities and also, of human rights violations.<sup>47</sup> A serious organizational deficiency of the CAPFs is weak and ineffective policing in most states, making it harder

---

<sup>45</sup> Interview with Rajesh Rajagopalan, Professor, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, October 6, 2015, JNU, New Delhi. In the 1980s and 1990s, there was a strong sentiment in the military against COIN because they were unwilling to fight their own citizens.

<sup>46</sup> Government of India, Ministry of Home Affairs, available at <http://mha.nic.in/pdtwo>.

<sup>47</sup> For a more detailed analysis on this issue, see Bibhu Prasad Routray, "India's Internal Lives: Counterinsurgency Role of Central Police Forces", *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 2013, p. 653.

for CAPFs to execute operations successfully. For instance, some local police in states like Assam, Manipur and Nagaland work underground and share close connections with insurgents, which jeopardizes the overall effectiveness of CAPF operations.<sup>48</sup> Also, despite large numbers of CAPFs deployed in Maoist-affected states like Chhattisgarh, conflict between local state police and CRPF is common over patterns of deployment, along with absence of operational jointness.<sup>49</sup>

It is important to stress that since COIN operations do not follow laws of conventional war, there is no such thing as military victory. Campaigns can extend over years, are much more gruelling to fight, forcing the Indian military to tune its strategy away from traditional roles and more in accordance with the context it fights in. K.C. Dixit observes:

Employment of army using conventional concepts and infantry tactics but with restrictions on the use of fire power, particularly in the initial stages of insurgency is the first step and must start with the identification of the problem and accurate visualization of pattern of insurgent operations to include their initial, intermediate, and final objectives.<sup>50</sup>

Theory and practice, however, reveal different sides to the story.

### **Legislating Military Roles: Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)**

An assessment of the impact of the Indian military's organizational culture on decisions to use force is incomplete without a discussion of the role of existing legislation, such as AFSPA, on the execution and conduct of military operations. The AFSPA, enacted in 1958, remains controversial till date because of the alleged "culture of impunity" it

---

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, p. 657.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid, p. 661.

<sup>50</sup> K.C. Dixit, "Sub-conventional Warfare Requirement, Impact and Way Ahead," *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2010, p. 130.

enforces. This culture of impunity, critics argue, is a result of widespread powers given to security agencies, namely, the army, CRPF and state police personnel, in disturbed areas, that is, insurgency-affected zones. The law sanctions the right to shoot to kill, raid homes and destroy property likely to be used by insurgents, and to “arrest without warrant”, even on “reasonable suspicion”, a person who has committed or about to commit a cognizable offence.<sup>51</sup> Parts of Section 4 and Section 6 of the Act are perhaps the most problematic. Section 4 of AFSPA states:

any commissioned officer, warrant officer, non-commissioned officer or any other person of equivalent rank in the armed forces, may in a disturbed area – a) if he is of opinion that it is necessary so to do so for the maintenance of public order, after giving such due warnings as he may consider necessary, fire upon or otherwise use force, even to causing death, against any person who is acting in contravention of law...c) arrest, without warrant, any person who has committed a cognisable offence or against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he has committed or is about to commit a cognisable offence...<sup>52</sup>

Section 6 of the Act states: “No prosecution, suit, or other legal proceedings shall be instituted, except with the previous sanction of the Central government, against any person in respect of anything done or purported to be done in exercise of powers conferred by this Act.”<sup>53</sup> Clearly, the problematic parts of this Act concern arrests without warrant solely on “reasonable suspicion” and the system of legal proceedings which gives considerable protection to security forces in conducting such operations without placing a large burden of responsibility on them.<sup>54</sup> The AFSPA was lifted from the state of Tripura

---

<sup>51</sup> Sudha Ramchandran, “India’s Controversial Armed Forces Special Powers Act”, *The Diplomat*, July 2, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/indias-controversial-armed-forces-special-powers-act/> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>52</sup> The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, September 11, 1958.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> For an excellent analysis on several political, cultural and legislative aspects of AFSPA, see Vivek Chadha, *Armed Forces Special Powers Act: The Debate*, IDSA Monograph Series No.7, November 2012.

in 2015, indicating that its role might get diluted in the future depending on the success of COIN operations. But it remains in force in Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Mizoram, parts of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh and J&K. In July 1990, AFSPA was invoked in the entire Kashmir Valley and the area covering 20 km radius from the LoC in the twin border districts of Rajouri and Poonch. In August 2001, it was extended to the Jammu region. In Kashmir, AFSPA is not merely a law; it is viewed through a military and political prism.<sup>55</sup>

In 2005, the Jeevan Reddy Commission asked for a repeal of AFSPA, which was staunchly opposed by the Indian Army. The military advanced several arguments for why it considers a repeal of AFSPA dangerous. First, it believes that AFSPA provides the only effective way for civil administration to carry out its functions by keeping the insurgency in check.<sup>56</sup> While acknowledging aberrations that may occur when men in uniform fail to distinguish between sympathizers and insurgents, General Kadyan notes that in the case of Nagaland, for instance, the much-heralded ceasefire of 1997 was made possible only because of AFSPA.<sup>57</sup> Second, soldiers need legal protection to operate in insurgent-affected zones, which AFSPA safely provides. Third, in states like Kashmir, militants often use innocent locals as human shields to seek refuge in homes. A dilution of this law could be especially harmful for peace by encouraging the movement and activities of terrorist organizations such as Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba.

On the issue of human rights, P.V. Ramana states: “a striking feature witnessed in the past few years is that as part of their training, each of the CRPF battalions has been sensitized to protecting and following human rights.” Both CRPF and police realize that adherence to human rights is beneficial to winning local support of the populations. For

---

<sup>55</sup> Arun Joshi, “AFSPA Cannot be Kept in Perpetuity”, *The Tribune*, September 25, 2015. <http://www.tribuneindia.com/news/jammu-kashmir/community/afspa-cannot-be-kept-in-perpetuity/87807.html> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

example, in Adilabad district in Telangana, initial operations were high-handed, antagonizing the population further. This changed when a new superintendent of police trained forces to be more respectful of the local culture. A change in tactics also ensured that cadre squads were more forthcoming with information on the insurgents.<sup>58</sup> But consensus and disagreements on how to conduct these operations continue to dominate the AFSPA debate. According to Gurmeet Kanwal, while AFSPA needs to be regulated because it serves as an enabling legislation, the army is punishing offenders, the most recent example being the decision in the Machil fake encounter case.<sup>59</sup> The Northern Command sentenced six army personnel, including a commanding officer, to life sentences for the 2010 killing of three innocent civilians in Kashmir.<sup>60</sup> Providing a valuable and often ignored perspective on AFSPA and human rights, Ajai Sahni argues that human rights violations have occurred even where AFSPA does not apply. State police forces are the worst offenders. The problem emerges when cases are not prosecuted. So, the problem lies in the criminal collusion of perpetrators and the government.<sup>61</sup>

On the political side, civilians are equally sanguine about keeping the law around even though they are acutely aware of its growing unpopularity. P.V. Ramana observes that most decisions to send armed forces into insurgencies are political decisions. Once orders are received, they must follow them. In 2013, expressing his frustration, P. Chidambaram said: “we can’t move forward as there is no consensus. The present and former Army Chiefs have taken a strong position

---

<sup>58</sup> Interview with P.V. Ramana, Research Fellow, IDSA, New Delhi, September 28, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal, October 8, 2015, New Delhi.

<sup>60</sup> Mir Ehsan and Pranav Kulkarni, “Machil Fake Encounter Case: Army Confirms Life Sentences for its Six Army Personnel”, *The Indian Express*, September 18, 2015. <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/machil-fake-encounter-case-life-sentences-of-six-army-personnel-confirmed/> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>61</sup> Interview with Ajai Sahni at Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, October 6, 2015.

that the law should not be amended and do not want government notification to be taken back.”<sup>62</sup> India’s current Defence Minister, Manohar Parrikar, also made it clear that the army’s deployment in disturbed areas is not possible without this law.<sup>63</sup> The challenge, of course, for both India’s political leadership and its armed forces is to transform AFSPA into a more humane law. Two issues may be worth considering here. First, as discussed earlier, Tripura offers the most recent and best example of revoking AFSPA once an insurgency is successfully curbed and no longer serves a military purpose. Tripura is particularly unique in that not a single case of violation by the armed forces was reported during the 18 years that AFSPA was in force in the state. How did this happen and can it be used as a representative model to be emulated by other state governments? According to former cabinet minister from Tripura, Jitendra Choudhury, “the state viewed insurgency as a ‘political problem’ from the start and decided to fight it politically, administratively and ideologically as there was a belief that the use of arms alone would not defeat the insurgents.”<sup>64</sup> It used development and effective administration, along with COIN, to defeat militancy. But, experiences from states like Kashmir and Chhattisgarh show that variation in the degree of success is to be expected from these operations. A number of local factors, along with specific political and military decisions, can complicate successes on the ground. Decisions to use force and the success or failure in fighting insurgents, therefore, must remain connected to improving prevailing laws such as AFSPA.

---

<sup>62</sup> Walter Fernandes, “AFSPA: Who Rules India?”, *The Hindu*, February 12, 2013. <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/afspa-who-rules-india/article4407851.ece> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>63</sup> Yogesh Joshi, “Parrikar: Army Not only for Sacrifice; Deployment in Disturbed Areas Not Possible without AFSPA”, *Hindustan Times*, May 28, 2015. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india/parrikar-army-not-only-for-sacrifice-deployment-in-disturbed-areas-not-possible-without-afspa/story-QztzMs33ssP4mB7hipicFJ.html> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>64</sup> “AFSPA Goes after 18 Years”, *Frontline*, June 10, 2015. <http://www.frontline.in/the-nation/afspa-goes-after-18-years/article7298297.ece> accessed on August 3, 2016.

It would serve the Indian military better to engage the political and strategic community in this discussion further.

In conclusion, political and military decisions on COIN are deeply rooted and conditioned by organizational and cultural factors. Changes in approaches to military postures on COIN, both in India and the US, require giving serious thought to some of the controversial issues discussed in this chapter. From the type of military postures to existing local, humanitarian and international laws, the importance of organizational culture will continue to strongly condition the COIN landscape of both countries. Organizational cultures on COIN will also reflect tensions in political and military preferences on decisions to use force, a product of different political and military expectations on such matters.

## Military Capability and Decisions to Use Force

This chapter explores principles of American and Indian COIN doctrines that predict the success or failure of military operations against insurgents. While organizational factors are crucial to decisions on the use of force, military capability also exerts considerable influence on such decisions. This capability is a combination of doctrine, force structures and combat readiness. Military capability can significantly affect the outcome of COIN operations because it is organized around a specific set of questions: “when and where to use force”; and more importantly, “how much or how little force to use”? According to Graham Allison, decisions on the use of military force are “situational”. For instance, in the American context, decisions to use force in American foreign policy are influenced by several factors: “strategic interests, commitments, estimated probability of success at various levels of cost and risk, similarities and differences between cases, historical trends, congressional and public moods”.<sup>1</sup> Decisions to use force are also fairly controversial, with not everyone involved in the decision supporting its use. Depending on circumstances, political and military leaders may strongly agree or disagree to the use of force in military operations. Providing an example of American force postures, Graham Allison observes:

During the Kennedy administration U.S. conventional capabilities were built for meeting brushfire threats, increasing active army divisions from eleven to sixteen. The administration emphasized preparation for counterinsurgency. The Pentagon Papers leaves

---

<sup>1</sup> Graham T. Allison, “Military Capabilities and American Foreign Policy”, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 406, No.1, 1973, p. 23.

one with a strong—but perhaps deceptive—impression that it was essentially a matter of time before someone, in some circumstance, would find a winning argument for putting these forces to use, somewhere. The availability of this capability plus advertisements about its effectiveness certainly contributed to the unanimity of Lyndon Johnson’s circle of advisers—with the exception of George Ball. These forces-in-being permitted President Johnson to make major war in Vietnam without the kind of major signal at home that mobilization or a call-up of the reserves would have provided.<sup>2</sup>

Decisions to maintain a ready option to use force are also guided by general public consensus on the tenets of American foreign policy and the president’s own political values. Allison, however, believes that “the absence of competing sources of information and assessment, both about likelihoods in situations where military intervention is contemplated and about military performance, estimates, and requirements”, is probably the most significant limitation facing American military postures.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, making accurate assessments at the systemic level and preparing to consider the consequences of less favourable options cannot, and must not, be understated. Successful COIN operations require a military establishment that must meet five requirements: expectations, doctrine, manpower, equipment and organization. In all five of these areas, the American defence establishment has fallen short of goals either due to failures in correctly identifying the problem or an inability to successfully implement solutions.<sup>4</sup> Eliot Cohen warns that American civil–military relations face an enormous crisis in fighting small wars. A growing distrust of civilian decisions is evident among the military, while political leaders are equally sceptical of the military’s operational abilities.<sup>5</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 31.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>4</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, “Constraints on America’s Conduct of Small Wars”, *International Security*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1984, p. 167.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 169.

The US Department of State is responsible for overseeing the American government's support to COIN efforts. In this capacity, several bureaus and offices perform specific roles in executing COIN strategy. The bureaus include: the Bureau of Political–Military Affairs; the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations; the Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement; the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor; the Bureau of Intelligence Research; the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; and the Legal Advisor's Office.<sup>6</sup> The Department of State also maintains an active civilian response corps, whose members are trained and prepared in conflict prevention and stabilization operations overseas.<sup>7</sup>

### **Doctrinal Evolution**

American decisions to use force, whether in conventional wars or sub-conventional operations, is largely a product of congressional legislation, executive decisions, legacy of Vietnam and the influence of military doctrines—the most influential being the Powell, McChrystal and Petraeus doctrines. Jeffrey Record observes that Vietnam had far-reaching consequences on *whether* force should be used and not *how* it should be used. The war dramatically shaped the relationship between the US Congress and the Department of Defense. Despite structural restrictions on Congress and the Pentagon from preventing a president to send American forces to war, Congress could use its power (War Powers Act) to deny appropriations and stall military operations underway. After Congress passed the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, the Pentagon could significantly impede, through deliberate choice, presidential decisions to use force. The legacy of Vietnam, therefore, was the emergence of a congressional–military alliance that could effectively block risky and irresponsible executive decisions to use force.<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>6</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 2014, Section 1-63, p. 1-16.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., Section 1-64, p.1-16.

<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Record, “Perils of Reasoning by Historical Analogy: Munich, Vietnam, and American Use of Force since 1945”, Occasional Paper No. 4, Center for Strategy and Technology, Air War College, Air University, March 1998, p. 13.

It must also be noted that Congress, through the Defense Reorganization Act of 1986, transferred considerable power to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS).<sup>9</sup>

To understand the evolution of military doctrines shaping America's current COIN postures, a review is useful. The Powell Doctrine, a restatement of the Weinberger Doctrine, became popular in the 1990s with its emphasis on the overwhelming use of force, assuming future American wars would be brief and infrequent:

This doctrine advocated clear political objectives; the employment of overwhelming military force to secure vital interests; little to no restraint on military operations by political leadership; political support prior to military intervention; immediate withdrawal after victory in accordance with a pre-designed exit strategy; and drawing the support of the American public.<sup>10</sup>

As Colonel Philip Lisagor writes, the major disadvantage of the Powell Doctrine is “a pair of zip-lock handcuffs when it comes to dealing with threats such as terrorism and insurgencies today. It sets up to either ‘all in or all out.’”<sup>11</sup> The overwhelming advantage enjoyed by the US military in its use of force meant that non-state actors or small groups had to adopt asymmetric methods to equalize the threat from American forces.<sup>12</sup> Further, placing greater weight on military rather than political objectives of war gave the Powell Doctrine an inherently anti-Clausewitzian character.<sup>13</sup>

In Afghanistan, under the leadership of Stanley McChrystal, American military strategy was fine-tuned to winning the war against the Taliban not by purely eliminating them, but by using the hearts and minds approach to turn ordinary Afghans away from joining Taliban insurgents.

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>10</sup> Colonel Philip Lisagor, “Don’t Bring Back the Powell Doctrine”, *Business Insider*, February 11, 2015. <http://mobile.businessinsider.com/dont-bring-back-the-powell-doctrine-2015-2> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

McChrystal believed that if America could provide freedom of movement, rule of law and basic amenities, the attraction of the Taliban would naturally wither in strength and capacity.<sup>14</sup> While this approach succeeded in reducing civilian casualties by limiting the use of air strikes, its monumental failure was an inability to distinguish between insurgents and regular Afghan populace, exposing American troops to dangerous choices.<sup>15</sup> In 2009, McChrystal welcomed Obama's initiative to increase the number of American troops by 30,000 in Afghanistan in the hope that it would allow the Afghan government to develop an infrastructure which would predict a faster defeat for the Taliban. But, following a scathing critique of the American administration's policies in a *Rolling Stone* article, Stanley McChrystal's subsequent dismissal in 2010 by President Obama became symptomatic of a visible tension in American civil–military relations and the conflict in political and military decisions over the conduct of operations in Afghanistan. The campaign in southern Afghanistan's Helmand province was failing, the US and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) casualties on the battlefield were on the rise and the Kandahar offensive remained delayed.<sup>16</sup> Although not talked about at great length, the legacy of Stanley McChrystal was his impeccable leadership of Task Force 714 in building a strong collaborative, information-sharing network between special operations units and intelligence agencies.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Jim Sciutto, "McChrystal: A New Clarity of Mission in Afghanistan", *ABC News*, December 2, 2009. <http://abcnews.go.com/International/Afghanistan/obamas-afghanistan-strategy-gen-stanley-mcchrystal-rallies-troops/story?id=9224685> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>15</sup> Matthew Green, "Soldiers Question Afghanistan Doctrine", *Financial Times*, June 24, 2010. <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/ed10f4fe-7f17-11df-84a3-00144feabdc0.html> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>16</sup> Scott Wilson and Michael D. Shear, "Gen. McChrystal is Dismissed as Top US Commander in Afghanistan", *The Washington Post*, June 24, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/23/AR2010062300689.html> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>17</sup> Dan Schawbel's interview with Stanley McChrystal in *Forbes*. See Dan Schawbel, "General Stanley McChrystal: Leadership Lessons from Afghanistan", *Forbes*, October 10, 2013. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/danschawbel/2015/07/13/stanley-mcchrystal-what-the-army-can-teach-you-about-leadership/#22bd1fb52ce9> accessed on August 3, 2016.

McChrystal was replaced by David Petraeus, who would craft American COIN doctrine in a way many of his predecessors had not. The Petraeus Doctrine was premised on the philosophy that the army was entering an era where conflict would be protracted and long, perhaps requiring a gradual and lesser application of force.<sup>18</sup> The US Army's National Training Center in Fort Irwin, California, strongly conditioned in virtues of conventional warfare training, began to exclusively focus on COIN warfare: "Rather than practicing how to attack the hill, its trainees now learn about spending money instead of blood, and negotiating the cultural labyrinth through rapport and rapprochement."<sup>19</sup> The officer corps, aware of the gradual erosion in American conventional warfare capabilities, emphatically declared in a widely circulated white paper that:

the Army's field-artillery branch—which plays a limited role in stability operations, but is crucial when there is serious fighting to be done—may soon be all but incapable of providing accurate and timely fire support. Field artillery, the authors wrote, has become a dead branch walking.<sup>20</sup>

Published in 2006, the US Army's COIN doctrine, FM 3-24, acknowledged that interests of the host nation government would not always align with American values. While pressure on the partner government was expected, the doctrine overestimated the ability of the US to employ its tools of influence, financial or moral, to convince the local government of the merits of FM 3-24.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Andrew J. Bacevich, "The Petraeus Doctrine", *The Atlantic*, October 2008. <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2008/10/the-petraeus-doctrine/306964/> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Walter Ladwig, "The New FM 3-24: What Happens When the Host Nation is the Problem?", Council on Foreign Relations, June 10, 2014, available at <http://blogs.cfr.org/davidson/2014/06/10/the-new-fm-3-24-what-happens-when-the-host-nation-is-the-problem/>, accessed on July 3, 2016.

Given the stimulus of these doctrines on American warfare, the core principles of its COIN doctrine and the rationale underlining when and how to use force are examined next. The American COIN manual has undergone two specific iterations since its first publication in 2006. The 2014 revised edition adds significant sections on culture and changes in military tactics to the experience and lessons of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. To provide a sharper focus on military capability and decisions on the use of force, this chapter compares relevant sections from both the original FM 3-24 (2006) and the revised FM 3-24 (2014).

Sections from Chapter 2 of the FM 3-24 (2006) establish the context for operations. As the military participates extensively in COIN, it adopts a wide range of capabilities. Military forces must be prepared to conduct a different “mix” of offensive, defensive and stability operations. The task of fighting insurgents on the ground falls upon the army and the Marine Corps. Within land forces, SOF are particularly valuable to COIN due to their specialized capabilities: civil affairs, psychological operations, intelligence, language skills and regional-specific knowledge. “SOF can also provide very light, agile, high-capability teams that can operate discreetly in local communities.”<sup>22</sup> While the US military forces are predominantly designed for conventional warfare, they are vastly capable of executing COIN operations. Specific capabilities require: dismounted infantry, human intelligence, language specialists, military police, civil affairs, engineers, medical units, logistical support, legal affairs and contracting elements. All of these elements are found in the army; and most are be found in the Marine Corps as well. To a limited degree, they are also found in the air force and the navy.<sup>23</sup> The primary obligation for internal defence rests with the SOF. Land combat forces conduct “full-spectrum operations”, mostly offensive in nature, to disrupt the insurgent’s capability. Defensive operations are conducted to provide area and local security. The standard paradigm is conducting “stability operations” to prevent insurgents from disrupting the lives

---

<sup>22</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 2006, Section 2-15, p. 2-4.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., Section 2-16, p. 3-4.

of the common people.<sup>24</sup> A stability operation is an operation designed to “establish, preserve and exploit security and control over areas, populations and resources” and is vital for long-term success. For this purpose, forces establish, safeguard or restore basic civil services. They act directly and in support of governmental agencies. Much of the ability of the local population and host government to resume the development of their own set of capabilities depends on the success of these stability operations, creating necessary conditions for American forces to disengage.<sup>25</sup> The burden of fighting these conflicts lies with the Marine Corps, the 82nd Airborne and 101st Airmobile Division, a light infantry division, two Ranger battalions, Special Forces groups and numerous infantry units.<sup>26</sup> Despite such a formidable fortress to fight small wars, some of these units serve in multiple missions, are plagued by organizational problems and do not possess specialized mountain and jungle divisions trained to fight insurgencies.<sup>27</sup>

In its 2014 iteration, the American COIN doctrine goes much deeper into evaluating the success and failure of its operations conditioned by circumstance and culture, and richly expands on some of the above-mentioned principles. First, it stresses “unity of command” under a single commander as operationally desirable and “unity of effort” in coordinating and cooperating towards common objectives.<sup>28</sup> Second, on the specific use of force, the doctrine enunciates very clear rules: “do not create more enemies than you eliminate with your action”.<sup>29</sup> Also, escalation of force does not limit the right of self-defence, including the use of deadly force, when such force is necessary to defend against a hostile act or demonstrate hostile intent.<sup>30</sup> Third, in order to create a favourable operational environment, the doctrine makes explicit reference to the success of Iraq’s Anbar operation in

---

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., Section 2-18, p. 4-6.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Section 2-19, p. 4-6.

<sup>26</sup> Cohen, “Constraints on America’s Conduct of Small Wars”, n. 4, p. 175.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 176.

<sup>28</sup> Headquarters, Department of the Army, FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5, 2014, Sections 1-49, 1-51, p. 1-13.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., Sections 1-89, 1-51, p. 1-21.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

which American forces had to engage constructively with the al-Qaim tribes, whose interests worked against Americans and al-Qaeda. Fourth, it places considerable importance on coordination between conventional and special operations capabilities.<sup>31</sup> Fifth, the shape–clear–hold–build–transition framework forms a tactical and operational background for battalion and brigade operations. In the Philippines, a similar strategy was successfully executed against the Hukbalahap guerrillas, though it had a different name then.<sup>32</sup> This operational approach moves along specific phases, with each phase representing a general progression of operations; the goal being to destroy insurgent capacity and empower host nation capacity. In the “shape” phase, changes are made to the local environment to create conditions that would ensure victories in successive phases; in the “clear” phase, an effort is made to remove the insurgent presence in a given area; in the “hold” phase, local population is provided security so that insurgents cannot regain a foothold there; in the “build” phase, security and government capacity to fight the insurgents is increased; and in the “transition” phase, security is transferred back to the host government and its security forces, which, by then, should have built up their capacity to fight the insurgents.<sup>33</sup>

Not only is this doctrine precise and more richly layered, but it is also perhaps the most authentic and sophisticated attempt at grasping the complexity of waging a COIN war. FM 3-24 not just a manual but reads like a thoroughly researched text, urging careful handling of host populations’ cultural expectations, never quite so assiduously elaborated before. The need to use force, therefore, is advanced with caution.

## **Indian Capability**

In India, internal security is the term used to describe acts of terrorism within its borders.<sup>34</sup> The Indian Constitution does not explicitly refer

---

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., Sections 6-15 to 6-21, pp. 6-5–6-6.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., Section 9-5, p. 9-1.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Section 9-7, p. 9-3.

<sup>34</sup> Interview with Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal, former Director, CLAWS, and Adjunct Fellow, Wadhvani Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 8, 2015, New Delhi.

to the terms terrorism or insurgency. Instead, it makes a reference to the “maintenance of law and order”. India’s constitutional provisions incorporate three lists—state list, centre list and concurrent list—in which law and order is designated as a state government subject. Assistance to states in maintaining law and order is provided by the BSF and the CRPF.<sup>35</sup> Internal security is strongly connected to governance and the governance principles are enshrined in the Directive Principles of State Policy under Article 37 of the Indian Constitution, according to which it is the duty of each state to apply these principles in making laws.<sup>36</sup> Under the Indian Constitution, “Public Order” and “Police” are included in the state list (List II, Schedule 7). States enjoy exclusive powers over internal security within their jurisdictions. Under Article 355, the Constitution prescribes that the central government will protect states against external aggression and internal disturbances “to ensure that the governance of every State is carried on in accordance with Constitutional powers, failing which President’s rule can be imposed”, by default, under Article 356.<sup>37</sup> Article 352 advocates the enforcement of an Emergency “if a situation exists or there is an imminent danger of the security of India being threatened by war or an armed rebellion”.<sup>38</sup>

India identifies three grave threats to its internal security: terrorism, insurgency and Left-wing extremism or Naxalism.<sup>39</sup> Counterinsurgency is the primary responsibility of the CAPFs (as discussed in Chapter 3) and not the Indian Army. Prakash Singh, a former BSF Director General with first-hand experience in all of India’s major COINs—Punjab, Nagaland, Assam and Kashmir—argues that security forces is the broad

---

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> N.N. Vohra, “National Governance and Internal Security”, *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol.1, No.2, Summer 2008, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 7

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Opening statement of the union minister, P. Chidambaram, at the Conference of Chief Ministers on Internal Security, at New Delhi, on August 17, 2009; see Press Information Bureau, Government of India, [www.pib.nic.in](http://www.pib.nic.in), quoted in Sushil Pradhan, “Indian Army’s Contribution to Internal Security”, *CLAWS Journal*, Summer 2011, p. 130.

term used for units engaged in COIN duties, which include the army, CRPF and police. *How much force* to be used is a political decision depending on the magnitude of the insurgency. However, policy may be either weakly defined or poorly executed as it tends to shift, change and acquire a different contour with the party in power.<sup>40</sup>

When security forces are called into insurgent-affected areas, the district magistrate or district collector of the state, in consultation with the senior superintendent of police, decides the proper course of action. The system is ad hoc, with no logistics, no transport. The army is called in only when the situation goes out of control and this stage is commonly called “aid to civil authority”.<sup>41</sup> “The term aid implies that even after the deployment of the Armed Forces of the Union, civil power continues to function, suggesting that while upholding the above principles, all actions of the armed forces must contribute to strengthening state authorities.”<sup>42</sup> The Indian Army has no formal discussion of limited war and a large number of experts have urged the invaluable need for greater transparency in COIN operations.<sup>43</sup> Critical of state government policy, N.N. Vohra writes that internal security cannot be met in a satisfactory manner unless states effectively discharge their constitutional duty of maintaining peace and public order. In most situations of internal unrest, state governments have transferred responsibility to the central government. Further, political exploitation of police organizations has severely affected morale, discipline, efficiency and honesty of the security forces.<sup>44</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> Interview with Prakash Singh, former Director General, BSF, October 10, 2015, Noida, New Delhi.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence, *Doctrine for Sub Conventional Operations*, Shimla: Headquarters Army Training Command, 2006, Chapter 2, Section 4, p. 15.

<sup>43</sup> Ali Ahmed, *India's Doctrinal Puzzle: Limiting War in South Asia*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2014. Also, see Ali Ahmed, “Opening Up the Doctrinal Space”, No. 1375, CLAWS, April 29, 2015.

<sup>44</sup> Vohra, “National Governance and Internal Security”, n. 36, p. 12.

Released by the Shimla-based Army Training Command in 2006, the Indian Army's doctrine on COIN is called the *Doctrine for Sub Conventional Operations*. It is guided by an "Iron Fist with Velvet Glove" philosophy, which urges a more "humane and people-centric approach, underscores the need for scrupulous holding of the laws of the land, deep respect for human rights, and minimum use of kinetic means to create a secure environment without causing any collateral damage".<sup>45</sup> The doctrine clearly acknowledges the grave dangers of fighting sub-conventional conflicts where "the distinction between strategic and tactical levels, combatants and non-combatants, front and rear" is blurred, carrying major strategic implications.<sup>46</sup> Among the doctrine's other directives is a focus on reorienting the soldier's mindset from fighting "the enemy" to fighting his "own people"—terrorists hiding among civilians.<sup>47</sup>

Specifically on military operations and the use of force, the doctrine advocates using attrition warfare during initial stages of anti-insurgent operations and "manoeuvre warfare" in the later stages. Manoeuvre warfare essentially seeks to place the military "at an advantage vis-a-vis the terrorists" by predominantly using military power in the final stages of the operation.<sup>48</sup> It implies adopting techniques or methods other than military force to achieve strategic and political objectives.<sup>49</sup> This, married to a strategy built on people-centric operations, "transforms the will and attitudes of the people through a dexterous and integrated application of all resources."<sup>50</sup> Elaborating on rules of engagement,

---

<sup>45</sup> Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence, *Doctrine for Sub Conventional Operations*, n. 42, Introduction, Section 5, p. 3.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, Chapter 1, Sections 4c, 4f, pp. 9–10.

<sup>47</sup> Sandeep Unnithan, "Surgical Strikes: Indian Army's New Doctrine for Sub-conventional Operations", *India Today*, January 22, 2007. <http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/surgical-strikes-armys-new-method-to-deal-scos/1/156565.html> accessed on August 3, 2016.

<sup>48</sup> Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence, *Doctrine for Sub Conventional Operations*, n. 42, Chapter 2, Section 12, p. 22.

<sup>49</sup> Interview with Colonel Vivek Chadha, Senior Research Fellow, IDSA, New Delhi, October 29, 2015.

<sup>50</sup> Integrated Headquarters of Ministry of Defence, *Doctrine for Sub Conventional Operations*, n. 42, Chapter 2, Section 11, p. 21.

the doctrine notes that “the use of force should be judicious and governed by explicit rules of engagement that must hinge on the principle of minimum force besides taking into account the political, legal and moral stipulations”.<sup>51</sup> Objective of security should be to neutralize terrorists rather than merely seeking their elimination. And to reduce collateral damage, operations should be well-planned, coordinated and carried out with precision.<sup>52</sup> Minimum force and reduction in collateral damage is of utmost priority to security forces. For example, India does not use attack helicopters or air power against its own local populations. It was used only once in the early stages of the outbreak of the Mizo insurgency in 1966, but was never used again because of its terrible psychological impact.<sup>53</sup> Additionally, the doctrine calls for the integration of human, signal and electronic intelligence to present a convincing picture of the conflict zone and “lays down guidelines for protecting human intelligence sources, discouraging hasty operations which could endanger the source. It strongly recommends the creation of an interface for sources to transmit intelligence without terrorist sympathisers getting wind of it.”<sup>54</sup>

Several within India’s strategic and military community offer valuable insights on the multifaceted aspects of India’s COIN doctrine, such as military capability; political and military decisions on the use of force; or state approaches to handling the problem. Gurmeet Kanwal observes that India’s current COIN strategy is three points of a triangle: security, development and governance. In the initial stages, security is critical, after which development, governance and justice become necessary. He emphasizes that the country would benefit from a fourth point—“perception management”.<sup>55</sup> Rajesh Rajagopalan writes that

---

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Chapter 3, Section 11b, p. 33.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Interview with Colonel Vivek Chadha, Senior Research Fellow, IDSAs, New Delhi, October 29, 2015.

<sup>54</sup> Unnithan, “Surgical Strikes”, n. 47.

<sup>55</sup> Interview with Gurmeet Kanwal, former Director, CLAWS, and Adjunct Fellow, Wadhvani Chair, Center for Strategic and International Studies, October 8, 2015, New Delhi.

COIN military doctrines “must reflect the prominent, if not, the exclusive use of small-unit rather than large-unit operations because such operations emphasize different skills, weapons and even attitudes”.<sup>56</sup> Since large-unit operations do not work in such situations, diluted and dispersed deployment of military force and independent small-unit operations are vital. This means shifting away from positions that favour conventional, high-intensity war, even though these positions are deeply ingrained in military minds.<sup>57</sup> Articulating the practice of COIN methods, Ajai Sahni describes how COIN operations tend to unfold on the ground:

The first knee-jerk reaction to state collapse is to call the army. Small inadequate forces are sent in because there is zero intelligence and significant collusion between local forces. The limited paramilitary strengths to support police suffer. There is no doctrine on what the quantum of force should be—2 battalions or 200 battalions. The army has been a very obedient instrument and has not sought any assessment of its own on the efficacy of its deployment. When the army goes in, it creates a unique dynamic of power—secures immediate results. Except for Mizoram, no insurgency has been completely neutralized by the army. The army gets into a dynamic where it emasculates the civil establishment and perpetuates its dominance. The army has a structural problem when it comes to counterinsurgency. The police, on the other hand, has a structural advantage. Whenever the insurgencies have been terminated, the army slams down everything, a slow process of activating police is begun in certain theatres. The cycle goes on. The army can only address the manifest violence. It cannot get to the source. The army has no decision making powers in the political system. It is an over-extended army. Counterinsurgency operations are policing operations. All states in this country spend less than 4% on policing. We spend miniscule amounts on permanent capabilities for

---

<sup>56</sup> Rajesh Rajagopalan, *Fighting Like a Guerrilla: The Indian Army and Counterinsurgency*, New Delhi: Routledge, 2008, p. 55.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

response and continue to rely on stop-gap approaches, neglecting local agencies.<sup>58</sup>

Obviously, much needs to be done to refine and tailor the doctrine to meet strategic and local conditions as there appear to be serious gaps in the planning and execution of such operations.

An assessment of military capability has to pay attention to operational readiness of forces, equipment, training and leadership.<sup>59</sup> While the army is trained in conventional operations and there is a COIN school in Mizoram (Warangte), COIN training is still weak, negatively influencing the capability of security forces.<sup>60</sup> Security forces are in possession of equipment not designed for COIN operations. For example, assault rifles are meant for long-range targets applicable to conventional wars and not close quarter battles (CQBs). Some paramilitary forces do not have radios. The leadership is weak, disengaged and uncontrolled. A strong leadership must ensure that soldiers follow rules of engagement on the ground and not indiscriminately kill civilians.<sup>61</sup> And even though the Indian military has the capability to put down any COIN, much of its success depends on “the competency of the forces and how much latitude is given to them”.<sup>62</sup> Here, too, strong leadership with a clear policy can have a significant impact on operations. The lack of clarity in executing successful COIN operations is most evident in fighting the Maoists. On the Maoist problem, the central government has no codified policy because every state minister has a vested interest in advancing his own policy.<sup>63</sup> The extent to which the political class chooses armed action

---

<sup>58</sup> Interview with Ajai Sahni, Director, Institute for Conflict Management, New Delhi, October 6, 2015.

<sup>59</sup> Interview with Rajesh Rajagopalan, Professor, Centre for International Politics, Organization and Disarmament, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, October 8, 2015, New Delhi.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Interview with Prakash Singh, former Director General, BSF, October 10, 2015, Noida, New Delhi.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

and the extent to which it is willing to support security forces are extremely important measures for success of COIN operations on the ground.<sup>64</sup> Without definitive policy or a clear enunciation of COIN best practices, the Indian military is left with a set of principles that are used interchangeably in different theatres. The only successful outlier is the state of Andhra Pradesh where police developed several innovative strategies, such as organizing tournaments and building contacts with old parents of insurgents to seek their partnership and trust.<sup>65</sup>

To counter the rising challenge from terrorism and insurgency, India needs to closely coordinate between intelligence agencies at the centre and state levels. With hardly any data storage system or means of sharing and accessing information, police units across the country are completely disconnected. To reverse this glaring deficiency, the Indian government has created the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network System (CCINS). The system expedites the collection, storage, retrieval, analysis, transfer and sharing of data and information at police stations, state headquarters and the CPO (central police office).<sup>66</sup> Intelligence inputs about possible designs and threats are shared with respective state governments regularly. The Multi Agency Centre (MAC) has been strengthened and reorganized to enable the sharing of intelligence information between state governments on a wide range of internal threats. It has been partly successful in sabotaging quite a few terrorist modules and averting a number of possible terrorist attacks.<sup>67</sup> But what India desperately needs is to enact a number of pending proposals on coordinating border management, and also create a functional National Counter Terrorism Centre (NCTC) as proposed by the MHA.<sup>68</sup>

General problems trailing India's COIN best practices are: "the absence of a clear policy, inconsistencies (on and off switch), not providing

---

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> V.P. Malik, "Internal Security Management: Challenges and Policy Options", *CLAWS Issue Brief*, No. 17, April 2010, p. 6.

<sup>67</sup> Union Home Minister Sushil Kumar Shinde's speech to the Chief Minister's Conference on Internal Security in New Delhi, June 5, 2013.

<sup>68</sup> Pradhan, "Indian Army's Contribution to Internal Security", n. 39, p. 136.

enough forces on the ground, lack of coordination between forces, inadequate sharing of intelligence, inadequate inter-state coordination, sharing of intelligence is a major problem”.<sup>69</sup> Here, recommendations of the Group of Ministers Task Force on Internal Security are especially relevant. First, state police forces must maintain a strong capability, made possible through a rigorous training regimen, transparent recruitment and promotion procedures and improved living and working conditions.<sup>70</sup> Second, a system that favours the prolonged deployment of Central Paramilitary Forces (CPMFs) in duties outside their jurisdiction should be immediately replaced by one that maintains their professional and original functions.<sup>71</sup> Third, the MoD must prevent all delays in providing security forces with necessary logistical support when they require it.<sup>72</sup> Fourth, as the MHA is solely responsible for the maintenance of internal security, it must collaborate at grassroots with state governments in addressing challenges to operations on the ground.<sup>73</sup>

In conclusion, both India and the US demonstrate the presence of a powerful and desirable machinery to fight insurgents, but the way this capability works on the ground depends on clarity and convergence in military and political objectives, the presence of strong political will, a matching of means and ends and an ability to communicate with local populations by deradicalizing disillusioned youth. Force will be necessary, but within limited boundaries of engagement. Only development or governance models will not be sufficient to fight insurgencies successfully. Doctrines can be followed meticulously, but those doctrinal principles will be severely tested on the ground. Ultimately, shifting the asymmetry of power in favour of the state and its agencies will be necessary to succeed in ground operations. How this success will be achieved depends on the effective implementation of various proposals addressed in this chapter.

---

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Government of India, *Report of the Group of Ministers on Internal Security*, 2001, Chapter IV, Section 4.7, p. 42, Press Information Bureau, New Delhi.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., Section 4.8, p. 42.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., Section 4.19, p. 44.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., Section 4.10, p. 42.

## Conclusion

India and the US are heavily engaged in combating insurgent groups of all political stripes. The asymmetric nature of these conflicts gives both countries the shared experience of fighting groups in long and costly conflicts, where rules of engagement do not meet the standard war-fighting principles of conventional war. As explained in Chapter 1, considerable overlap exists between terrorist and insurgent groups. Regardless of political, ideological or religious motivations, both types of groups share a common set of characteristics: they are anti-state, anti-democratic, anti-modernity and anti-rational. Dialogue and compromise is irrational to all such groups; violence the only means for justice; and the ends, absolute. I first undertook the study of COIN in one of the chapters of my book, *The Soldier and the State in India: Nuclear Weapons, Counterinsurgency, and the Transformation of Indian Civil-Military Relations*.<sup>1</sup> While the chapter examined several Indian cases, I was later drawn to thinking about the problem from a comparative perspective. The manner in which such insurgencies undermine democratic foundations of nation states seemed compelling and appealing to undertake as a separate project. The American experience of COIN was again particularly attractive as an effective analytic tool to examine the Indian context. This monograph is a result of that interest. The concluding chapter summarizes the primary themes and arguments of the study.

In studying COIN, researchers and scholars are faced with a wide set of challenges because of numerous overlapping issues between state

---

<sup>1</sup> Ayesha Ray, “The Indian Military’s Role in Unconventional Operations”, *The Soldier and the State in India: Nuclear Weapons, Counterinsurgency, and the Transformation of Indian Civil-Military Relations*, New Delhi: SAGE, 2013, pp.113-132.

and non-state insurgent groups. From the lens of state versus non-state groups, their methods, their political and ideological motivations, to strategies tailored required to meet such threats, the challenge of studying COINs are numerous. The task is even harder when comparing two separate cases. In India, limited access to such information in the public domain makes this task harder. Most documents are classified or unavailable. Given the inaccessibility to information and the limited scope of this study, this monograph only draws preliminary comparisons and contrasts in the American and Indian experiences of COIN. To make the discussion manageable, arguments are advanced along specific themes to elaborate the most pressing issues facing India and the US in mobilizing against these groups. These themes are: historical context; organizational culture; and military capability. Each of the themes provide a starting point to illustrate the environment in which political and military decisions on COIN are made.

## **Themes**

### *Historical Context*

The historical context of Indian and American COINs is radically different. First, the American experience of COIN is primarily located in Cold War rivalries between the US and former Soviet Union and a post-Cold War environment where centre of threats have shifted from fighting communist-inspired insurgents to Islamist insurgents and other non-state rebel groups. American response to emerging world threats is a function of: (i) the changing balance of power in the international system and its desire to maintain and defend itself as the leading global power in the world; and (ii) its deep commitment to defending its liberal democratic foundations against the rise of totalitarian regimes. Both factors explain why the US has and continues to engage in costly wars externally. In contrast, the Indian COIN experience is located in the pre-independence and post-independence periods of the Partition, its turbulent relationship with Pakistan and its dysfunctional relationship with regional states and non-state groups either seeking independence from the Indian state or intending to overthrow it.

Second, American COIN efforts, in principle, are directed at building a state from scratch - removing oppressive regimes, creating new ones, enforcing agreements between different power-sharing groups

and delivering stable and democratic forms of governance—this state building is an outcome of its decisions to engage in wars abroad. Indian COIN efforts are directed at upholding the territorial integrity and national sovereignty of the country, protecting constitutional principles, preventing the state from internal collapse and undermining the destabilizing nature of groups seeking to overthrow the Indian state. Third, while the US has “chosen” its COIN wars, these wars have almost been forced upon the Indian state.<sup>2</sup>

### *Strategic and Organizational Culture*

Decisions on COIN in India and the US are deeply influenced by their respective organizational cultures. Organizational cultures of both countries point to an imbalance, tension or disjuncture in political and military preferences on how and when such decisions should be made. The US military is still trapped in the process of learning and relearning lessons of COIN, often finding it hard to move away from the dominant discourse favouring conventional war strategies. It also appears to be struggling with modelling and implementing effective strategies to counter the rise of jihadist insurgencies. The Indian military has a much stronger record of fighting insurgents, with notable successes in several cases, but struggles with inter-agency coordination, organizational innovation and finding the right equilibrium in conventional and unconventional operations. Its greatest challenge lies in using a combination of political measures and military force, conventional and unconventional strategy and preserving laws that protect the military against insurgent threats, while also preventing human rights violations by security forces.

Despite fairly dissimilar organizational cultures, tensions in Indian and American civil–military relations over COIN operations appear when political and military approaches to the assessment of COIN responses indicate a mismatch. While both militaries are under civilian control, these tensions manifest themselves in key decisions before and during operations, this imbalance, disjuncture or disagreement emerges from

---

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Brigadier Kuldeep Sheoran, Additional Director, CLAWS, New Delhi, November 13, 2015.

a diverse set of expectations in roles and performance. Most governments fighting protracted wars find it hard to come up with an end strategy, which means that their militaries become engaged in an almost permanent conflict with no precise time frame for an exit strategy.<sup>3</sup> Elaborating on the Indian case, G.K. Pillai points to two occasions when disagreements in civil–military preferences are likely to emerge: first, when the army carries out an operation civil administrations are unaware of; and second, when the military conducts an operation where it cannot distinguish between insurgents and local supporters sympathetic to insurgents.<sup>4</sup> One of the tragic effects of long-term insurgencies is that it brutalizes those fighting the state and those opposing it.

### *Military Capability*

Both India and the US possess more than the requisite military capability to fight insurgents. The success of military operations against insurgents is a function of military capability, that is, a combination of doctrine, force structures and combat readiness. The US has mastered a sophisticated set of doctrinal principles to ensure the effectiveness of military capability and has one of the most well-equipped militaries in the world to execute such operations. India, too, has the ability to deal with “full-spectrum” conflicts, and since 1948, has been continuously engaged in conducting low-intensity operations.<sup>5</sup> But as various cases—both in the US and India—suggest, use of force is not the only guarantor of success in fighting insurgents. Military capability in the absence of unclear doctrines, weak political will, lack of strong leadership, or insufficient knowledge of historical, local and cultural contexts, is bound to produce limited results.

---

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Colonel Vivek Chadha, Senior Research Fellow, IDSA, New Delhi, October 29, 2015.

<sup>4</sup> Interview with G.K. Pillai, former Home Secretary, Government of India, November 18, 2015, New Delhi.

<sup>5</sup> Interview with Brigadier Kuldeep Sheoran, Additional Director, CLAWS, New Delhi, November 13, 2015.

## Arguments

Within the context of the primary themes presented in this monograph, a number of conclusive arguments on the nature of COINs in India and the US are advanced next:

1. (i) *The American approach to counterinsurgency is **state building**; in some cases a forced outcome of its chosen external wars. This involves replacing, changing, or transforming an old regime with an entirely new state structure. The broader goal of Indian counterinsurgency approaches is **state preservation** to protect the country's territorial integrity, sovereignty, and prevent the state from internal collapse. Here **state building is a means to that end.***
- (ii) *While state building consists of a military and political component, the US leans more toward the military component while India has generally preferred political settlement to the use of the force.*
2. (i) *The approach to counterinsurgency operations in both India and the United States is a product of their respective organizational cultures.*
- (ii) *These organizational cultures are indicative of diverse institutional approaches to counterinsurgency in which the influence of military and political preferences on the conduct of counterinsurgency operations is significant.*
3. *Principles governing the application of force are different in both countries. The US views its adversary (whether terrorist group or insurgent) as an enemy that can be defeated with overwhelming force. India pursues a more calibrated response to the insurgent with a preference for absorbing the insurgent into the mainstream.*

In addition to the arguments presented, two tables provide further clarification. Table 5.1 compares and contrasts issues that explain the relevance of historical context, organizational culture and military capability in both countries. These issues are: the nature of operations (external or internal); the presence or absence of separatist/secessionist threats; the desire to use political accommodation and use of force or a combination of both techniques; the type of doctrines; the tension in civil–military preferences; the presence or absence of strong political will; and the level of coordination between different security agencies.

**Table 5.1 Context, Culture and Capability in India and the US**

	<b>Historical Context</b>	<b>Organizational Culture</b>	<b>Military Capability</b>
India	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mostly internal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Northeast</li> <li>Punjab</li> <li>Kashmir</li> <li>Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand (Maoist)</li> </ul> </li> <li>External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pakistan</li> <li>Sri Lanka</li> </ul> </li> <li>State building to facilitate preservation</li> <li>Presence of secessionist threats</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Political accommodation + military component</li> <li>Moderate conventional war bias</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong capability undermined by ad hoc arrangements</li> <li>Weak inter-agency coordination</li> <li>Over-stretched military forces</li> </ol>
America	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>External <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vietnam</li> <li>Afghanistan</li> <li>Iraq</li> </ul> </li> <li>State building as an outcome of external war</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dominance of the military component</li> <li>Strong conventional war bias</li> <li>Regime change</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong capability</li> <li>Strong inter-agency coordination</li> <li>Over-stretched military forces</li> </ol>

**Source:** Author

Table 5.2 provides a model for classifying the types of insurgencies in India. The goal here is to establish a typology with which we can measure COIN cases in India better. As stated in Chapter 2 of this monograph, the Indian state exhibits two types of insurgency models: religious/ethnic and separatist/secessionist movements (Kashmir, Punjab,

Nagaland); and non-secessionist/anti-state movements (Maoists). It is imperative to stress that most of India's religious and ethnic movements are also separatist movements seeking independence from India, so there is considerable overlap in these two categories. In contrast, the Maoist/Naxal movement is ideologically driven, drawing its inspiration from totalitarian anarchist and communist principles. The movement does not demand an independent state from India; instead, it seeks to completely overthrow the state using revolutionary principles, replacing it with an authoritarian dictatorship of the proletariat.

**Table 5.2 Typology of Insurgencies in India**

Internal/ External Threats	Religious/ Ethnic Movements	Separatist/ Secessionist Movements	Non-secessionist/ Anti-state Movements
<b>Internal</b>	Kashmir	Kashmir	Naxal/Maoist belt
Kashmir	Punjab	Punjab	West Bengal
Punjab	Nagaland	Telangana	Chhattisgarh
Nagaland	Manipur	Nagaland	Jharkhand
Manipur	Tripura	Manipur	Madhya Pradesh
Tripura	Assam	Tripura	Odisha
Assam	Arunachal Pradesh	Assam	Telangana/Andhra
Arunachal Pradesh		Arunachal Pradesh	Pradesh
West Bengal			
Chhattisgarh			
Jharkhand			
Madhya Pradesh			
Odisha			
Telangana/ Andhra Pradesh			
<b>External</b>			
Pakistan			
Sri Lanka			

*Source:* Author

## The Way Forward

Counterinsurgency operations, whether external or internal, will continue to pose enormous challenges to the security and stability of India and America. Not only are non-state actors notorious in engaging democratic states in long, protracted wars which can last several years, but more importantly, no two cases are alike. They require precise strategies that can adapt to the diversity of conditions presented in COIN operations. The US military boasts a strong organizational apparatus to fight insurgencies and enjoys a significant degree of freedom in such operations without much civilian interference. In fact, many of America's top military brass have actively shaped its COIN doctrines. The greatest impediment for the US in delivering success against insurgents, however, will emerge from disagreements within the army over abandoning conventional war strategies in support of unconventional methods, and the failure of successive political administrations to accurately grasp the historical, political, social and cultural background of its enemies. In terms of policy, America's 2012 Defense Strategic Guidance intends to maintain COIN as a necessary requirement, but one to be used in a limited fashion.<sup>6</sup> It states:

in the aftermath of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States will emphasize non-military means and military-to-military cooperation to address instability and reduce the demand for significant U.S. force commitments to stability operations. U.S. forces will nevertheless be ready to conduct limited counterinsurgency and other stability operations if required, operating alongside coalition forces wherever possible. Accordingly, U.S. forces will retain and continue to refine lessons, expertise, and specialized capabilities that have been developed over the past ten years of counterinsurgency and stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, American forces

---

<sup>6</sup> US Department of Defense, *Sustaining Global US Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century*, January 2012. [http://archive.defense.gov/news/Defense\\_Strategic\\_Guidance.pdf](http://archive.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf), accessed on August 3, 2016.

will no longer be sized to conduct large-scale, prolonged stability operations.<sup>7</sup>

This reappraisal in American COIN approaches will be ongoing—with a shift in focus from “big” stability or nation-building operations to smaller operations.

In India, the military enjoys less freedom in the conduct of such operations, with central and state governments shaping most COIN policy. In fact, the Indian military acts as an instrument of state assistance, often reluctant to fight its own people. But here, too, when war is a continuation of policy by other means and armies become overstretched in the performance of their duties, disagreement or conflict in political and military preferences can be expected as routine.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to India and the US today, and in future, will come from jihadist insurgencies or religiously motivated non-state actors seeking to expand their global power. The ISIS, for instance, already poses a serious danger to world stability because of its stunning ability to morph from a terrorist group into a full-blown insurgent group, its startling success in attracting a wide section of foreign fighters and its theocratic ambitions to redraw the maps of the Middle East and Central Asia to build a caliphate. For America, the threat from jihadist insurgencies will require long-term commitment. Counterinsurgency operations will only attain incremental military successes on the ground. Breaking the larger and deeply connected network of terrorist groups and their expanding influence from Nigeria to Pakistan will require much more than just engaging in costly wars. America's broader response to destroying the strength of jihadist insurgencies will demand, in addition to mounting effective COIN operations, a re-evaluation of its alliance partnerships, breaching international terrorist networks, addressing the causes of radicalization and collaborating with states to prevent attempts at shifting the balance of power in their favour. For India, the problem of addressing jihadist groups will perhaps stay limited or localized to

---

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 6.

its borders in Kashmir, with a stronger strategy in place to deter Pakistan's proxy war. There is evidence of Kashmiri youth sympathetic to ISIS and ISIS flags have made an appearance in protest demonstrations against the Indian state. It is quite likely that in the probability ISIS wishes to expand its base and recruit supporters from South Asia, it will work with existing extremist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Hizbul Mujahideen to destabilize the region. Of course, the magnitude of this threat will demand a continued focus on building strong coalition partners while maintaining sophisticated COIN capabilities.

This monograph is an attempt to examine American and Indian counterinsurgency experiences through the lens of historical context, organizational culture, and military capability. American and Indian approaches to counterinsurgency developed in sharply divergent historical contexts which shaped, to a large extent, political and military preferences on decisions to use force, significantly influencing the outcome of operations. This study is relevant to assess the future trajectory of US and Indian counterinsurgency operations. The monograph works like a primer, outlining some of the pressing questions and controversial debates that will continue to shape the counterinsurgency approaches of both countries.



**Ayesha Ray** is Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at King's College, Pennsylvania, USA, where she teaches courses in International Relations, Conflict, World Politics, and American Foreign Policy. Her research focuses on civil-military relations, conflict, and security issues in South Asia. She is the author of *The Soldier and the State in India: Nuclear Weapons, Counterinsurgency, and the Transformation of Indian Civil-Military Relations* (SAGE, 2013). She has contributed several book chapters and articles in international publications. She has been a Visiting Research Fellow at IDSA, New Delhi (2015), Visiting Fellow at the Jawaharlal Nehru Institute of Advanced Study, JNU (2016), and Guest Lecturer at the Center for International Politics, Organization, and Disarmament at JNU, New Delhi (2016). She has a Ph.D in Political Science from the Department of Government at the University of Texas at Austin, USA, and a Masters and MPhil in International Politics from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.



### **Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses**

No.1, Development Enclave, Rao Tula Ram Marg,  
Delhi Cantt., New Delhi - 110 010

Tel.: (91-11) 2671-7983 Fax: (91-11) 2615 4191

E-mail: [contactus@idsa.in](mailto:contactus@idsa.in) Website: <http://www.idsa.in>

