India and Counterinsurgency
Lessons learned

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Contents

- reducing foreign sources of assistance to insurgent forces through diplomatic and political activities;
- improving local governance, especially the institutions responsible for the rule of law and the administration of essential services and infrastructure;
- enhancing the contributions made by social and economic development projects, including improving education, building infrastructure and laying the groundwork for sustainable economic investment in the troubled region;
- exploiting the powerful advantage that periodic and fair elections provide over the claims of the insurgency movement; and
- utilizing a human rights mechanism to provide accountability for the actions of security forces.

These lessons reflect the conclusions reached in other Indian COIN campaigns in Nagaland, Punjab, and Jammu and Kashmir, and the principles contained in India's *Doctrine for Sub-Conventional Operations* (Indian Army 2006).

Conclusion

The Indian COIN campaign in Mizoram represents a milestone in India's experience with COIN. Through this campaign, India managed to end an insurgency through an integrated strategy involving security and political actions that isolated the insurgency from the people and brought leading insurgents into the political mainstream as officials and politicians. The Indian COIN campaign made mistakes, especially in the early phases of the conflict, but, as with insurgencies in other parts of India, security forces and political officials learned and adapted sufficiently to defeat the insurgency. The peace Mizoram enjoys as a result of the resolution of the insurgency is the prerequisite for the political, economic and social progress that hopefully will characterize the next chapters of the history of the proud Mizo peoples.

3   Insights from the Northeast
Counterinsurgency in Nagaland and Mizoram

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Introduction

The insurgencies in Nagaland and Mizoram in the state of Assam were India's first experiences with separatist insurgency. They required an untested government and military to adapt to a form of political warfare with which they had little experience. Through trial and error, India developed an approach to political violence in the Northeast that would guide its response to future insurgencies. In particular, the northeastern experience highlights the critical role played by a government's legitimacy in winning popular support, as well as the need for dissatisfied elites to realize their ambitions by working within, not against, the existing political system. India's approach was also characterized by nation building and bolstering governing capabilities in under-administered areas. Lessons from India's confrontation with ethnic-based insurgencies in Nagaland and Mizoram have applicability for U.S. allies that face similar threats, such as Thailand (Pattani United Liberation Organization) and Pakistan (Baluchistan National Liberation Front).

For the United States, reflecting on India's experience with counterinsurgency (COIN) provides an opportunity to draw lessons from a fellow democracy's experience in "small wars." This opportunity is important because a 2005 RAND study emphasized the organizational tendency within the U.S. military to not absorb historical lessons when engaging in COIN operations (RAND Corporation 2005: 7).

This chapter is organized into four sections. The first section focuses on the insurgent organizations, emphasizing the motives of the armed groups and cleavages between the insurgents and their supporters. The second section explores political aspects of the Indian COIN efforts in the Northeast, including the provision of a non-violent path to achieve political change. The third section focuses on controlling territory in disputed areas, including deployment of security forces and building local government capacity. The fourth section examines India's efforts to isolate the insurgents from their bases of support.

Understanding the opposition

To develop an effective COIN strategy, understanding the character of the insurgency is critical. Failure to comprehend the nature and goals of the

insurgency can result in COIN efforts poorly suited to the task at hand. Sun Tzu's aphorism "know thy enemy" is true in COIN, but it is difficult to achieve. Insurgents sometimes use misleading rhetoric to attract a broader base of support; in other cases, insurgents may change goals in the midst of a conflict or include several sub-groups with differing goals.

Insurgencies are not monolithic

Insurgent movements are not always unified organizations whose members are dedicated to achieving a single goal. In reality, among the support base and active guerrillas a variety of motivating issues and levels of commitment can exist. Like any organization, insurgent movements can be rife with internal tensions, competing sources of power, and disagreements about strategy and tactics.

In the case of the Mizo National Front (MNF), the leadership employed nationalism to define the movement and to rally support for Mizo separatism.[1] However, whether this nationalist/separatist appeal was the sole motivation for supporting the insurgency is not clear. In looking at the failures of administration and governance that provoked dissatisfaction among the Mizo population, we see elements of *reformist* goals—seeking enhanced economic and political stature for the Mizos, but not necessarily outside the Indian state (O'Neill 2005: 26). A second type of motivation is what O'Neill (2005: 27–8) terms *preservationist*. There was a real sense that Mizo culture, language, and identity were under threat from Assamese domination (e.g. the state language policy) and immigration by non-Mizo peoples.

In the case of the Naga insurgency, cleavages manifested themselves in the tribal structure, with insurgent groups initially operating in single tribal bands. Naga-wide, there was disagreement over how much autonomy to seek, ranging from a separate identity within India to independence. As with the Mizo case, separatist sentiments were bolstered by preservationist concerns about the future of Naga identity and way of life within India. Chapter 1 notes the importance of recognizing and exploiting such cleavages—particularly tribal identities—by responding to and ameliorating local concerns. The recognition of competing demands and priorities allows the government to co-opt and accommodate moderate elements by responding to their concerns without surrendering to the demands of the radicals.

Many insurgents can be accommodated

The notion that all insurgents are die-hards, irrevocably opposed to the government, is a misperception. The historical record suggests that, through accommodation, many insurgents can be politically swayed or economically induced to rally to the government's side.[2] In the two cases studied here, the Indian government exploited the presence of cross-cutting goals among elements of the insurgency to craft a population-centric COIN strategy that

attempted to split the insurgents from their supporters. Although the goals of insurgent leaders cannot always be accommodated, grievances that motivate both the rank-and-file insurgents and their supporters frequently can be met (O'Neill 2005: 171–2).

Insurgent leaders promised their followers that independence would benefit the Mizo and Naga peoples. The Indian government countered by demonstrating the benefits of remaining within India through devolution of government, increased spending in the territory, and civic action that responded to sources of discontent. These efforts, together with statehood and special protections for the local people, helped split the radicals in the two movements from those whose goals were more reformist or preservationist.

The politics of counterinsurgency

The aim of any COIN campaign is to restore peace. Internal conflicts require a different notion of victory than conventional warfare because the government rarely defeats a protracted insurgency outright. In some cases, as their support base weakens the rebels melt back into society. In other cases, political accommodation is reached. Most likely, however, success means reducing the conflict to a "manageable level of threat" (Spiegel 2006, quoting U.K. Defense Secretary John Reid). For the government side, victory is usually a "qualified success" and should be taken to mean the end of the political threat. Total elimination of the insurgents is rarely achieved.

Avoid demonizing the insurgents

In a democracy, restoring peace requires that the state achieve reconciliation with its rebellious citizens and integrate them back into society. If the government chooses to denounce the insurgents as traitors or enemies, it limits its ability to use political tools to resolve the conflict.

The Indian government's COIN approach seeks to eliminate the insurgency, not the insurgents. Implicit in the Naga and Mizo cases is the notion that the government primarily viewed the insurgents as confused or misled citizens rather than enemies of the state. This view does not deny the legitimacy of the grievances that motivated the resort to armed violence, but it underscores why the government wanted the rebellious peoples reconciled to the state rather than defeated by it. The belief was that "people fighting in the Naga areas for what they considered their freedom could not be treated on par with ordinary criminals in the settled parts of India" (Gopal 1979: 29). That attitude shaped the COIN attempt to minimize the use of force and maximize political compromise. As Nehru instructed the Chief Minister of Assam, "[w]e shall ... use our armed forces to the fullest extent necessary. But we have always to remember that the real solution will require a political approach and an attempt to make the Nagas feel that we are friendly to them and that they can be at home in India" (Hazarika 1994: 360).

Provide an avenue for political change within the system

Authorities ranging from Che Guevara to Samuel Huntington have noted that popular revolutions are not successful against democracies (Guevara 1985; Huntington 1968: 275). The robustness of democratic systems flows from the means they give citizens to achieve political change in a non-violent manner. An insurgency is a political struggle, so an effective COIN plan should incorporate means for discontented citizens to address their grievances by working within the political system rather than against it. Popular participation in the state's political process is a cornerstone of its legitimacy. If discontented citizens are willing and able to achieve their aims via the political process, they have little cause to take up arms. This dynamic explains, in part, why Jeff Goodwin and Theda Skocpol have said that the "ballot box is the coffin of insurgency" (1989: 495).

Recognizing insurgents as citizens rather than enemies, India put a premium on reconciliation and created opportunities for the Naga and Mizo peoples to achieve their aspirations by working through the Indian political system. In both cases, political parties organized by former insurgents contested and won elections, which co-opted local elites into the political process and gave them and their supporters a stake in the country's future. The Indian government responded to the Naga desire for autonomy, short of secession, by first creating an autonomous Naga Hills–Tuensang Area in 1957 and later granting full statehood within India. Similarly, to bolster the Mizo Union and the moderates in the MNF against hardliners, the Indian government created avenues for Mizo elites to achieve their political aspirations within the Indian Union. Mizoram first was made a Union Territory in 1972 and later became a state in 1986. Elections in Nagaland and Mizoram reflected high levels of popular participation, indicating acceptance and legitimization of the Indian political system.

Be prepared to make concessions

Political concessions are typically required during a COIN campaign. The government may need to make them to the insurgents or to win support from a crucial segment of the population. For the government to employ political concessions effectively, political leaders must have their own vision of an acceptable end state and a keen understanding of the motivations and goals of the insurgents and their supporters.

Having articulated its own political "red lines" (i.e. no secession), the government of India displayed political flexibility in responding to the Naga and Mizo insurgencies. Particularly notable was the creation of new states to provide for local rule, the restriction of immigration from other parts of India to ameliorate local concerns about cultural preservation, and, in the Mizo case, the removal of an elected state government and installation of an insurgent leader in order to broker a peace deal. Not all countries may possess India's flexibility and willingness to redefine internal borders and political arrangements in this manner, but its success is worth noting.

Focus attention on building the state's legitimacy

Destroying the legitimacy of the government is a principal focus of the insurgents' efforts as they seek to create an alternate authority structure in the disputed territory. As a result, a besieged government needs to demonstrate the right and the ability to govern its citizens. Integrity and legitimacy cannot be decreed; they must be demonstrated over time to reinforce the popular perception that the government's authority is genuine. In many societies, proficient, elected leadership is a significant factor in persuading the populace of the legitimacy of the government and its ability to meet their aspirations. A government's legitimacy derives from its ability to provide for its population's economic, political, and security needs. Stability and legitimacy go hand in hand: Legitimate governments can generate the popular support necessary to overcome internal conflicts. As Shekatkar points out in Chapter 1, India built its legitimacy in Nagaland over time by developing the local government, fostering democratic institutions, and providing the stability and improved administration necessary for economic development.

Create a constituency for peace

To win support and consolidate the peace, India's government provided the new states of Nagaland and Mizoram with economic assistance to spur development and "buy off" potential insurgents with jobs and rising standards of living. Roads and bridges were built in inaccessible areas, schools and hospitals were opened, and many villages received electricity and piped water for the first time. These income transfers and development projects attempted to integrate backward regions into the national political-economic system. At the same time, because funding from the central government forms the supermajority of government revenues in both states, such aid is also a means to create a constituency for peace by providing local elites and average citizens with economic incentives for remaining part of India. Similarly, the formation of new state governments in Mizoram and Nagaland created the need for an entire class of local bureaucrats and public officials whose power and office depended on the continuation of peace and stability. Such an approach must be carefully executed. Some critics contend that, in a rush to establish stability in conflict zones, the Indian government entered arrangements that produced "sham democracy" in areas of the Northeast where local elites and former insurgents continue to extract rents from the local population via the institutions of government. Nevertheless, when local elites and the populace have economic and political interests in avoiding conflict, lasting peace in an area is more likely.

Demonstrate the political resolve to outlast the insurgents

When undertaking COIN operations, the government must convey that it is committed to the conflict for the duration.[3] Cultivating an impression of

resolve is critical for winning popular support. As Paget points out, "no one likes backing a loser, particularly in an insurgency" (1967: 176). A reputation for resolve increases the likelihood of obtaining civilian support and undermines the insurgents' belief that they can "wait out" the government. Deriving from the Maoist experience, there is a perception that protracted conflict favors insurgents. In reality, most insurgencies fail. Although the cost of deploying large numbers of soldiers, police, and paramilitary forces for years is not insignificant, a government is often better positioned to bear this cost than the insurgents are to maintain their guerilla lifestyle. As Shekatkar notes in Chapter 1, the Indian government believed that time and resources were on its side when dealing with the Nagas. Throughout the Naga and Mizo conflicts, the Indian government maintained an uncompromising position on national unity and indicated that it was committed to preventing secession. Neither case has had a speedy resolution: The Mizo insurgency lasted for two decades, while the Naga violence has continued for more than five.[4] India's approach has not aimed to achieve a quick decision, but rather to send a consistent message that the government has the patience, the determination, and the resources to outlast the insurgents.

While the political measures described above are an important part of a government's COIN strategy, they are not sufficient to end internal violence. At some point in the conflict, the government must reassert its authority in the contested area.

Controlling disputed territory

In responding to insurgent violence, a government must reestablish its authority in the conflict zone. This task requires a variety of measures, including deploying security forces to protect the local population and developing the capability to exert administrative and law enforcement jurisdiction over the disputed territory. Achieving these outcomes requires the government's civil, military, and police agencies to act in concert toward a unified goal.

Focus on the civilian population as the center of gravity

The natural inclination is to view insurgents as the primary focus of COIN efforts—concentrating resources on defeating them or securing their defection. This approach is a mistake. The center of gravity for COIN is the civilian population. Gaining and maintaining popular support, or at least acquiescence, must be the primary objective of all civil and military efforts; attacking insurgents is secondary. Securing popular support requires persuading the population that the government is the best vehicle to achieve their interests and preserve their well being.

As a result, providing for the security of the civilian population is key to any COIN effort. Unless they are protected from guerrilla reprisals, civilians may not support the government. As Paget noted, "the Government must convince

the population that it can and will protect its supporters against the insurgents, for no one likes being shot as a reward for loyalty" (1967: 176). Political and economic efforts to address grievances and raise living standards will do little to win popular support in an insecure environment: "The people who have watched the insurgents painstakingly construct their political infrastructure and punish those who oppose them will not expose themselves to support the regime merely because government troops have temporarily occupied the area and dug a well" (Krepinevich 1986: 12).

In Nagaland and Mizoram, insurgents preyed on the local population. Villages were "taxed" by insurgents for money and food, while young people were forcibly recruited to act as fighters or bearers (Anand 1980: 96; Palit 1984: 266). In addition to battling the security forces, the insurgents waged a campaign against rivals and "dissenters" within their own community, targeting local officials and civilians loyal to the government for kidnap or execution (Anand 1980: 96; Palit 1984: 266). In this environment, civilians opposed to the insurgents could not risk publicly defying them.

In both cases, the Indian government deployed security forces on a large scale to stabilize the situation, repulse the insurgents' attempts to hold territory, and foster the image that the state, not the insurgents, had the initiative. India arranged its forces on a COIN grid, a variation on the French *quadrillange* strategy where garrisons are established in communities across the entire territory while highly mobile units patrol the areas between garrisons to keep pressure on the insurgents and deny them sanctuary.[5] Indian security forces achieved area dominance through a saturation of army posts and personnel.[6] Typically, a battalion was assigned to cover roughly 30–5 square miles, which was subdivided into company-sized areas of operation. In Mizoram, each company was further divided into two sub-posts of twenty men each. These sub-posts were located next to a village so security forces could bolster the confidence of the local inhabitants.[7]

This saturation strategy allowed Indian security forces to establish their presence among the population. Securing the people cannot be accomplished from remote cantonments. It requires living and working among the citizenry. This presence facilitates development of networks of relationships that aid in the collection of human intelligence. Regular patrols, particularly on foot, allow security forces to engage with the population, bolstering confidence in the government and enhancing the counterinsurgents' situational awareness. Constant patrolling is a fundamental means by which security forces establish a presence in a given area and maintain pressure on the insurgents—denying them the initiative.

Create a network of local self-defense units

Creation of local militias or self-defense units is an important means of extending security to the civilian population. Training and equipping part-time militia forces can aid efforts to separate the insurgents from the civilian

population and can serve as a vehicle for political organization of the population at the village level. In providing a means for loyal segments of the population to defend themselves, the government obliges citizens to make a public declaration of opposition to the insurgents. This approach can shrink the political space in which the insurgents can operate because citizens' militias establish a government presence in the village. Once recruited, militia members have a stake in the conflict because they are defending their own homes and livelihoods. When defending their homes, militia members may be more discriminate in their use of force than regular security forces, thereby avoiding alienating the local population through excessive collateral damage. Furthermore, civilian militias know their village better than any outsider. This knowledge makes them an invaluable source of information about local grievances, the effectiveness of the government's COIN efforts, and perhaps the identity of local insurgents. The establishment of effective self-defense units has the additional benefit of freeing security forces from manpower-intensive static protection duties, enabling them to concentrate more forces on engaging insurgents.

In Nagaland, the Indian government recruited loyal Nagas to protect their home villages from the insurgents. Known as the "Village Guards," these self-defense forces were led by junior officers seconded from the Indian Army and operated under the control of the local police (Stracey 1968: 136–7). Given their local knowledge and the presence of former guerillas among their ranks, insurgents considered the Village Guards a greater danger to them than regular security forces (Palsokar 1991: 33). Their inherent advantage of pre-established social networks, close contact with the local population, and the ability to free security forces for active operations make raising local militia forces key to the main COIN effort.

Use measured force

Once discontent has metastasized into armed violence, the government must employ force as part of its COIN strategy. However, when security forces employ force, they must do so in a manner that supports the government's political aims, such as pressuring insurgents towards a negotiated settlement. In the Naga and Mizo cases, viewing the insurgents and their supporters as citizens whose support was to be won meant that the government needed to employ minimum force. Although important to success in COIN, restraint is not often considered a virtue for conventional armies. Therefore, upon deployment of security forces to Nagaland, the first order issued by the Chief of Army Staff proclaimed:

> You must remember that all the people of the area in which you are operating are fellow Indians ... Some of these people are misguided and have taken to arms against their own people, and are disrupting the peace of this area. You are to protect the mass of the people from these

disruptive elements. You are not there to fight the people in the area, but to protect them. You are fighting only those who threaten the people and who are a danger to the lives and properties of the people. You must therefore do everything possible to win their confidence and respect and to help them feel that they belong to India.

(Roychowdhury 1986: 142)

This realization is important because, in COIN, gains come slowly but setbacks can occur in a moment, particularly when conducting "war amongst the people."[8] For success in COIN, the government must appreciate how little the military alone can accomplish, as well as recognize that force cannot grant a state legitimacy when dealing with alienated citizens.

With the exception of the Indian government's initial response to Operation Jericho, COIN operations in Nagaland and Mizoram were generally characterized by the lack of employment of heavy weapons. Relying on personal weapons, rather than artillery or air-delivered munitions, counterinsurgents were better able to employ force in a discriminate manner. As a result, the Indian government reduced the collateral damage its forces inflicted on civilians and their property, which could otherwise have undermined backing for the government.[9] Use of minimum force is not without dangers. The lack of fire support can increase risks to military and police personnel. However, on balance, the potential risk at the tactical level is offset at the strategic level by avoiding unnecessary harm to the civilian population. Although it can be difficult for some commanders and soldiers to accept, the imperatives of defeating an insurgency will, at times, take precedence over force protection.

Develop police and administrative capacity

A growing body of academic literature identifies a lack of local governance and administrative authority as key proximate causes of the emergence of insurgent violence (Fearon and Laitin 2003; Kalyvas 2006: 216; Wickham-Crowley 1992: 35). Particularly troublesome are rural areas and rough terrain, such as mountains, swamps and jungles, where poor communication or transportation infrastructure may limit the government's reach (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 80; Hironaka 2005: 42–6). Prior to the outbreak of violence, the penetration and quality of governance in the Naga and Mizo Hills were low. Neither territory had been significantly administered by the British, so the independent Indian government inherited little authority in those areas. What little governance the state of Assam provided was marred by corruption, economic weakness, and administrative neglect, particularly in the management of the outbreak of the *mautam* (rat plague) and the subsequent famine in Mizoram (Chapter 2). Thus, in both cases, significant political space existed for insurgent movements to emerge and rival the authority of the Indian state.

Reestablishing the government's authority in a rebellious territory is not simply a matter of deploying security forces; it also requires bolstering the

capacity of the local administration to establish law and order and provide essential services to the population.[10] Extending the government's reach into ungoverned or rebellious territory is important to restoring normalcy because increased government capacity has a positive impact on the outcome of COIN campaigns (Fearon and Laitin 2003: 88–9; Hironaka 2005: 53–80).

In particular, attention should focus on developing a competent local police force, because police are best suited to disrupt insurgents while protecting the population (Ladwig 2007b: 286–7). Detecting and severing the links between insurgent groups and the supporters the insurgents rely on for shelter, transport, and information require investigatory police work. Furthermore, the police are a part of normal civil society in a way that the military is not. As a result, local police knowledge and connections are a key source of the human intelligence that is critical for successful COIN operations:

> Intelligence operations that help detect terrorist insurgents for arrest and prosecution are the single most important practice to protect a population from threats to its security. Honest, trained, robust police forces responsible for security can gather intelligence at the community level.
>
> (Sepp 2005: 9)

Consequently, insurgent movements often attempt to infiltrate or disrupt local police forces.

Not only did the police and civil authorities in Mizoram lack the capacity to discharge their duties, but they were also penetrated by insurgents. Following establishment of Mizoram as a Union Territory, bolstering the capacity of the civil government and the police became a part of the COIN effort. The Mizoram police force was reorganized and new standards of discipline were implemented. Under the guidance of the Union Home Minister, the civil administration was reconstituted and veteran civil servants with a background in managing internal disorder were appointed to senior positions in the Mizoram administration.

The interjection of experienced, energetic administrators from other parts of India was important for two reasons. First, the Northeast had traditionally been a "punishment posting," which meant that the supermajority of senior administrators in the region were of below-average ability (Marwah 1995: 245). Furthermore, unlike local Nagas or Mizos, "outsiders" did not have to worry that "collaboration" with the Indian government would put their friends or family in nearby villages at risk of insurgent retaliation.

Promote close cooperation between civilian and military agencies

To succeed in COIN, a state must bring all the elements of national power—political, military, economic, and social—to bear on the task. The absence of any of these components can jeopardize the undertaking. As Galula argued, "the expected result—final defeat of the insurgents—is not an addition but a

multiplication of these various operations; they all are essential and if one is nil, the product will be zero" (1964: 87).

Herein lies a significant challenge: How does a government integrate the various responsible agencies and organizations in a coordinated campaign? Some point to the approach used by General Templar in Malaya, who was temporarily given proconsul-like powers to command the civil administration and the military.[11] Yet, even within British experience, the Templar approach is more the exception than the rule. The principle of unity of command (or, perhaps more realistically, unity of effort) is even more important in COIN than in conventional warfare, but achieving it is a more difficult matter.

At the strategic level, the agencies supporting COIN operations must agree about the objectives of the campaign and the means to achieve them. Past history suggests that coordination and management structures will be required to prevent "stovepiping" from occurring. Executive-level synchronization is not enough, however. Civil–military–police operations also require coordination at the district level and below to ensure that all efforts are directed toward the desired political outcome.

In both Nagaland and Mizoram, multiple agencies participated in COIN operations: the Indian Army; the Assam Rifles and central police organizations, which came under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs; the intelligence agencies; and the state police and state administration, as well as some police battalions from other states. Coordinating such varied organizations in a unified effort would appear to be a challenge under the best of conditions. Theater-wide, unity of command was achieved by placing police and military units under the control of a single, usually Indian Army, commander. At lower levels of operation, Shekatkar suggests in Chapter 1 that the COIN grid in Nagaland allowed elements of the security forces to achieve unity of command in their specific areas of operations.

When it came to unifying the efforts of the security forces with civil agencies, however, the Indian government had difficulty overcoming barriers to interagency cooperation. The security forces were under civilian control, yet compartmentalization rather than integration across civil and military agencies was the rule of the day. As a result, COIN operations were characterized by "[t]he multiplicity of authorities, different policies, segregated planning, separate operations, frigid echelons and uncoordinated response" (Anand 1980: 146). As the Indian experience demonstrates, the imperative of unity of effort, though widely acknowledged, is often more honored in the breach. When embarking on a COIN campaign, a government must give sufficient attention to establishing management structures that can facilitate the integration and continuity of civil and military COIN programs.

Isolating the insurgents

An insurgent's dependence on a population for support, information, supplies, or merely an operating environment points to the need for COIN forces to

sever the link between insurgents and the populace. As the U.S. Army and Marine Corps *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* notes, "it is easier to separate an insurgency from its resources and let it die than to kill every insurgent" (U.S. Army and Marine Corps 2007: 41). This task, although never easy, can be accomplished in a number of ways. The least invasive method to cut off the guerrillas is to develop high-quality intelligence, which allows for identification and elimination of the insurgent's support network. Failing that, other techniques, involving varying levels of coercion, may be implemented. This section examines the use of intelligence, population control measures, amnesty programs, and restriction of external support used in Nagaland and Mizoram.

Good intelligence: the sine qua non of counterinsurgency

As Kitson points out, "[i]f it is accepted that the problem of defeating [an insurgent] consists largely of finding him, it is easy to recognize the paramount importance of good information" (1971: 58). The challenge for the government is to protect the loyal, persuade the uncommitted, and punish the seditious, which can be difficult if it cannot distinguish between insurgent and non-combatant. A key intelligence advantage for many insurgents is that they are fighting on their home turf.[12]

Therefore, effective COIN forces must develop intelligence networks, particularly human intelligence, in their areas of operation to offset the insurgent's intelligence advantages, and ideally neutralize them (Lynn 2005: 25). The availability of reliable intelligence is an important proxy for the overall success of a COIN campaign. As the government makes progress against an insurgency, more and better intelligence resources should become available. In the Naga and Mizo cases, the government's initial lack of intelligence assets, lack of understanding of the local people, and unfamiliarity with the terrain were notable advantages for the insurgents. As Shekatkar points out in Chapter 1, in the Naga case the lack of awareness about the insurgents or their demands led the government to underestimate the difficulties it would have in putting down the insurgency. Intelligence in COIN is population-centric: The counterinsurgents must develop an understanding of the people, the insurgents, and the issues driving the insurgency.

The civilian population is the best source for timely and dependable intelligence. This fact makes it extremely important that security forces display rectitude in their dealings with the people—the availability of intelligence is often inversely correlated with the level of force counterinsurgents employ. The willingness of civilians to cooperate with the government is also affected by their perception of whether the government will succeed and, more importantly, whether the government can protect them from insurgent reprisals (Maranto and Tuchman 1992: 249–64). Captured guerrillas, or those who rally to the government's side, can provide valuable information about insurgent tactics, the location of insurgent base camps, and the identity of key leaders. Locally recruited members of the security forces can also be a valuable

intelligence resource. In the Naga insurgency, the Assam Rifles and the police forces from neighboring states, which drew their personnel from northeastern India, had knowledge of local customs and languages that the army lacked.

If local forces cannot be raised in sufficient quantity, the security forces deployed in a given area will have to remain in place for a lengthy period of time. The knowledge of local languages and customs necessary to develop human intelligence can be cultivated during extended deployments as units become experts in their assigned sector—developing relations with local political leaders, government officials, and prominent civilians. Constant rotation of soldiers on short-term tours practically guarantees, however, that the local knowledge necessary to separate insurgents from the populace will not develop. With three-year tours of duty, Indian forces deployed in Mizoram had significant opportunities to develop an awareness of and contacts in their areas of responsibility (Chapter 2).

The ability to gain grassroots information enables security forces to identify the contact points between insurgents and their bases of support in the population. These support bases, not the insurgents themselves, must be eliminated or won over in order for the government to succeed. As Thompson reminds us, "[t]he mere killing of insurgents, without the simultaneous destruction of their infrastructure, is a waste of effort because their subversive organization will continue to spread and all casualties will be made good by new recruits" (1966: 118).

This issue is apparent in the Mizo case, where the MNF's subversive organization had thoroughly penetrated the civil government, which provided insurgents with intelligence on the government's COIN operations. In addition, for the majority of the conflict, the insurgents collected taxes from the civilian population and executed government informers with impunity. As Chadha notes in Chapter 2, "[t]he MNF remained central to every segment of Mizo society, including political and administrative bodies and cultural and student organizations" (p. 36). Not only did threats of retaliation prevent ordinary Mizos from informing on the insurgents, but the Mizo underground's reach was also so extensive that, six years into the conflict, it assassinated a new reformist inspector-general of the police using collaborators on his staff. A systematic effort to destroy an insurgency's support infrastructure requires counterinsurgent forces to cultivate extensive human intelligence resources because the underground network that exists among the civilian population is not susceptible to technology-focused intelligence collection methods.

Employ carefully targeted population control measures

In COIN campaigns, the government often must take invasive measures to separate insurgents from their civilian support base. Such measures can include constant surveillance, issuing identity cards, establishment of checkpoints, limits on movement, and so forth. During the conflicts in Mizoram and Nagaland, for example, the territories were under a near-permanent curfew that authorized security forces to use deadly force against anyone after nightfall.

A more coercive measure undertaken in the Naga and Mizo cases was the relocation of civilians from remote villages into areas that allowed the government to provide better security and social services to them. Although analysts are divided about the impact the regrouping strategies had on the ability of the insurgents to gain access to supplies and intelligence, consensus exists on the negative impacts of the displacement.[13] In many instances, the regrouped villages were located far from the villagers' fields, which made them reliant on the government for food. Moreover, neither tribal society was based on a market economy, so the loss of economic independence caused by relocation imposed hardships on the social fabric of the affected people.

These hardships were particularly acute in Mizoram, where more than 200,000 people (65 percent of the population) were forcibly relocated (Chadha 2005: 345). Being forced from their homes alienated the Mizos, and served as a recruiting tool for the insurgents. Attempted regrouping in Nagaland had a similar effect on civilians, who believed that the Indian government was attempting to break up their society by removing them from their ancestral homes.

As these relocation episodes demonstrate, coercion of the civilian population that appears to achieve a positive result in the short term can engender resentment and animosity, which can jeopardize the COIN effort in the longer term by driving people into the arms of the insurgents. At first glance, the regrouping schemes may have appeared to deliver an unqualified benefit— improved security and social services—yet failure to appreciate the economic and social impact on the tribal societies made them an unqualified disaster. Some form of population control is necessary to weed out insurgents from the populace. However, careful thought must be given to each proposed measure, as well as to its long-term effect on the target population.

Win over insurgents rather than capture or kill them

Amnesty programs are a cheap way to separate the rank-and-file insurgents from their leaders and reduce the number of armed rebels. As Sun Tzu noted, the supreme military skill is to subdue the enemy without fighting. Not only may former insurgents be a valuable source of intelligence, but, in some cases, they also may be inducted into security forces to hunt down former comrades. In combination with civic action and economic development programs, amnesty can provide a gateway for insurgents to improve their circumstances without the hardship of guerrilla life, not to mention the risk of death or imprisonment. Moreover, defections from the guerrilla ranks can be a serious blow to the morale of insurgents who remain in the field.

To maximize "uptake," the terms of amnesty must be culturally appropriate to avoid connotations of surrender or defeat. The goal is to rally rebels to the government's side, not to dishonor them. Giving former rebels a stake in society and a status that makes up for their lost position with the insurgents is an important part of their reintegration, as is ensuring that rank-and-file guerrillas are free from reprisals once they come over to the government's side.

In both cases, the Indian government initiated amnesty programs and even inducted former insurgents into paramilitary security forces. During the Mizo conflict, the government announced several amnesty programs. Although not every amnesty offer met with success, the practice of pairing the promise of lenient treatment with continuous pressure on the remaining insurgents was sound.

Amnesty proved most successful after the insurgents suffered setbacks. For example, the loss of Bangladesh as a sanctuary in December 1971 triggered defections among Mizo insurgents. In the Naga case, the government offered blanket pardons of "all crimes committed against the state in the past" including murder (Yonuo 1974: 224–5). Insurgents who laid down their arms and accepted the 1975 Shillong Accord could be inducted into the Nagaland Armed Police or the paramilitary Border Security Force (Anand 1980: 241). In both cases, former insurgent leaders became legitimate political leaders—once they accepted the principle of remaining part of India.

Amnesty creates challenges. First, amnesty offers have to be carefully timed to avoid emboldening insurgents by overly magnanimous offers that may be perceived as government weakness. Second, such offers can provoke domestic backlash because some may recoil from giving a free pass to murderers and terrorists. Nevertheless, amnesty programs have proven to be a cost-effective way to reduce the number of insurgents, and such programs should be a component of any COIN strategy.

Cut off external support

Insurgents have an advantage when they can operate with impunity across borders, particularly when a sympathetic regime provides aid and sanctuary (Byman *et al.* 2001). Moral, political, or material assistance from outside the country can provide the critical assistance necessary to sustain a guerrilla movement in the face of aggressive COIN operations. As a result, COIN forces must interdict cross-border supplies to guerillas and access to base camps in neighboring countries (Record 2006).

External support played an important role in sustaining the Naga and Mizo insurgencies. East Pakistan provided the insurgents with training and weapons while allowing the establishment of base camps in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. Following the 1962 Sino-Indian war, China increased its patronage of rebel movements in the Northeast as well. Not all sanctuary is intentionally provided by the foreign government. The Nagas exploited the presence of related tribes on the other side of the Indo-Burmese border to gain sanctuary and passage to China because the Burmese government exercised little control over that region.

As the Naga and Mizo cases demonstrate, loss of external support can harm an insurgent movement. The loss of sanctuary in East Pakistan after Bangladesh gained independence in 1971 damaged the effectiveness of both insurgent groups. In the same timeframe, diplomatic efforts to persuade the Burmese government to close its territory to the rebels met with some success, and joint Indo-Burmese military operations intercepted and disrupted insurgent bands

attempting to cross the border. The combination of the loss of secure cross-border bases explains, in part, the decision of numerous Mizo and Naga insurgents to abandon their armed struggle in the mid-1970s.

Reducing external support to insurgents can, however, be difficult. Prior to 1971, the Indian government made little headway in diplomatic efforts to reduce external support for the Naga insurgents because Pakistan and China exploited the insurgency to weaken India. Attacking insurgent bases across the border could have provoked international condemnation and/or interstate conflict. Despite the difficulty involved, creative combinations of diplomatic and military pressure abroad, as well as internal interdiction efforts, need to be employed to deny insurgents access to external support.

Once insurgents have been denied access to sources of internal and external support, they will be weaker and more vulnerable. Simultaneously, having developed local intelligence assets, the security forces can apply relentless pressure on the guerrillas, who can no longer hide among the civilian population. With the insurgent movement in disarray, this situation creates a window of opportunity for a political settlement with the rebels or allows the government to employ political and military efforts to break the back of the insurgency.

Conclusion

India, as a non-European democracy, has undertaken COIN operations in settings not significantly colored by decolonization or the East–West struggle of the Cold War. Thus, India's experience in Mizoram and Nagaland provides an opportunity to examine the utility of COIN principles outside of the contexts traditionally associated with their development. These particular insurgencies have the added value of capturing an unproven government's initial reaction to the challenges of internal rebellion. The success achieved by the Indian government in responding to separatist violence in the Northeast may have relevance for U.S. allies that face separatist challenges.

The fundamental contest between the Indian state and the insurgents concerned the legitimate right to govern. The lack of local government capacity played an important role in facilitating the outbreak of armed violence, while the development of local administration assisted in bringing that violence under control. Importantly, while the Indian approach emphasized developing stronger governance in under-administered areas, the Indian government showed flexibility in devolving authority to elected state governments. Co-opting dissatisfied elites in the Mizo and Naga societies was an important means by which the Indian government divided the insurgents from their supporters and enhanced the legitimacy of the Indian political system.

In these two cases, some non-political means of separating the insurgents from their supporters proved less successful. Population control measures, particularly resettlement, engendered support for the insurgency, and efforts to curtail external assistance to the rebels achieved little until Bangladesh broke away from Pakistan in 1971. Intelligence shortfalls are a perennial problem for

COIN, one which the Indian government eventually overcame by employing locally raised security forces and instituting long-term deployment of Indian Army personnel. Intelligence gathering was facilitated by security forces that employed minimum force and attempted to treat the local civilian population with respect—two practices that are not always instinctive for conventional forces undertaking internal security missions.

One insight gleaned from these cases will be all too familiar to the United States: the constant need to "reinvent the wheel" when it comes to COIN. Like many nations preparing simultaneously for conventional and irregular security challenges, the Indian armed forces had focused on the former at the expense of the latter. When the Indian Army was committed to internal security duties in Mizoram, it was unprepared for COIN operations, despite the fact that the insurgency in neighboring Nagaland had been underway for more than a decade. The hard-won lessons from the Naga Hills had to be relearned in Mizoram, a phenomenon that Shekatkar suggests has been the rule rather than the exception in India's history with COIN (see Chapter 1). The establishment of the Counterinsurgency and Jungle Warfare School in 1970 created an institution to capture the lessons learned from insurgencies in the Northeast and provide pre-deployment training for Indian units undertaking COIN operations. This facility has been important for institutionalizing the Indian military's COIN experience. Hopefully, the current proliferation of schools and institutes within the U.S. military focused on irregular warfare will not vanish once the imperatives of the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan fade away.

Notes

1 For discussion of the use of violence to solidify ethnic identity, see Byman (1998).
2 For an argument that would-be insurgents can be coerced or co-opted into supporting peace, see Greenhill and Major (2006/7). Similarly, Maranto and Tuchman (1992) argue that the insurgents' potential support base in the population is responsive to the incentives offered by the government or the insurgents.
3 For example, the British government's insistence on setting a withdrawal date is principally responsible for its "loss" to insurgents in Aden, despite its material and political advantages (Fishel and Manwaring 2006: 25, 256). This imperative applies to situations where a government confronts insurgents on its own territory. In situations where a state is assisting an allied government in COIN operations, the dynamics of signaling resolve or commitment can be significantly different for the outside power (Kahl 2008; Root 2007).
4 A brief survey of "concluded" insurgencies in the latter half of the twentieth century supports this point. The Vietnam War lasted 17 years; the Portuguese fought the MPLA in Angola for 13 years; the Salvadorian Civil War lasted 12 years, as did the Malayan Emergency; both the Hukbalahap Rebellion in the Philippines and the Algerian War of Independence lasted 8 years. Fearon (2007: 4) reports that, since the end of World War II, the average duration of internal conflicts has been 10 years, with half lasting more than 7 years.
5 For descriptions of the *quadrillange*, see Horne (1977: 1965–9) and O'Ballance (1967: 64–6).
6 McCuen (1966: 119–24) argued that this type of deployment, backed by mobile quick-reaction units, is the proper response to low-level guerrilla warfare

because the security forces can simultaneously protect and interact with the local population.

7 The difficulties of terrain and the size of the security forces meant that blanket coverage of remote villages was not fully achieved (Palit 1984: 269).

8 The phrase "war amongst the people" comes from Smith (2005: 1).

9 As Vann remarked about COIN, "[t]his is a political war and it calls for discrimination in killing. The best weapon for killing would be a knife, but I'm afraid we can't do it that way. The worst is an airplane. The next worst is artillery. Barring a knife, the best is a rifle – you know who you're killing" (Sheehan 1989: 317).

10 As Thompson argued,

> An insurgent movement is a war for the people. It stands to reason that government measures must be directed to restoring government authority and law and order throughout the country, so that control over the population can be regained and support won. This cannot be done unless a high priority is given to the administrative structure of the government itself, to its institutions and to the training of its personnel. Without a reasonably efficient government machine, no programs or projects, in the context of counterinsurgency, will produce the desired results.
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> (Thompson 1966: 51)

11 For a discussion of the management structures employed to coordinate the COIN campaign in Malaya, see Ladwig (2007a).

12 As Fearon and Laitin postulate, "the key to inducing the local population not to denounce the active rebels is *local knowledge*, or information about who is doing what at the village level. Local knowledge allows the active rebels to threaten retribution for denunciation credibly" (2003: 80).

13 Compare the views expressed by Verghese and Thanzawna (1997: 86) with Chadha (2005: 346).