A Winning Combination: Toward a More Diversified and Successful Counterinsurgency Toolbox

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A WINNING COMBINATION: TOWARD A MORE DIVERSIFIED AND SUCCESSFUL COUNTERINSURGENCY TOOLBOX

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ABSTRACT

The development of modern counterinsurgency doctrine has found that the most successful core objective of such wars is to win the hearts and minds of the insurgency’s population. While the reliability of this population-centric objective may be valid, many theorists and practitioners of counterinsurgency have extended its message: they believe that every aspect of a counterinsurgency—from strategy to operations to tactics—ought to be population-centric in nature. This project endeavors to discover whether such a belief best serves the route to victory in counterinsurgency, or if rather a diversity of methods is preferred for success. It explores two cases of counterinsurgency, the successful Indian counterinsurgency in Punjab and the failed Russian counterinsurgency in Chechnya, both of which employed population-centric, enemy-centric, and anti-population methods of counterinsurgency. Through an analysis of each method used in its historical context and established measures of success, it assesses the reliability and probability of success for each kind of method—be it population-centric, enemy-centric, or anti-population in nature. The analysis of both cases shows that each of these three kinds of methods is a valid tool for use in counterinsurgency—but that their success relies upon the central government’s ability (1) to identify the core population-centric objective of insurgency, the winning of hearts and minds, and (2) to guide the strategic development of operations and tactics, regardless of their basic nature, that will aid in the achievement of this overall goal. The results of this analysis recommend that population-centric theorists and practitioners refrain from the dogmatic pursuit of population-centric methods for every aspect of a counterinsurgency. Instead, policymakers waging a counterinsurgency ought to identify the core population-centric objective of their campaign; and all counterinsurgents ought to think beyond categorically confining terms such as ‘population-centric,’ ‘enemy-centric,’ and ‘anti-population’ to develop creative solutions in support of the main objective.
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# Table of Contents

**List of Maps and Illustrations** ................................................................. vi

**Introduction** ............................................................................................. 1

**Methods, Measures, and Caveats** ............................................................ 4

**A Review of Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice** ............................ 9

*The Ancient Nature of Counterinsurgency* .............................................. 9

Contemporary Population-Centric Counterinsurgency Strategies and Tactics ... 11

*Alternative Approaches to Counterinsurgency and Their Strategies and Tactics* 20

**The Indian Counterinsurgency in Punjab, 1978-1993** .......................... 23

1978-84: A “Law and Order” Problem ....................................................... 23

1984-88: The Hard Lessons of Operation Blue Star and the Anti-Sikh Riots ...... 31


India’s Unconditional Victory and Punjab’s Regrowth ............................ 47

Strategic and Tactical Effectiveness of Indian Counterinsurgency Forces in Punjab ................................................................. 48

**The Russian Counterinsurgency in Chechnya, 1994-2002** ................. 54

1994-1996: The First Russo-Chechen War .................................................. 57

1996-2002, and Beyond: The Second Russo-Chechen War ....................... 60

The Uncertain Ends and Unfortunate Consequences of Tactical Victories and Fragmented Strategies ...................................................... 66

**Indian Victory, Russian Failure, and Synchronicity in Counterinsurgency**

Tactics and Strategy ...................................................................................... 69

Policy Recommendations and Ethical Implications .................................... 72

Concluding Remarks .................................................................................... 74

**Bibliography** ............................................................................................. 77
LIST OF MAPS AND ILLUSTRATIONS

Map of Punjab and Its Surrounding Areas.......................................................... 23
Map of Chechnya and Bordering States............................................................. 54
INTRODUCTION

The insurgencies in Vietnam, Algeria, and Malaya forced the West to recognize a distinction between conventional warfare and counterinsurgency. Having mastered the art of the former, they set about understanding and mastering the latter. Today’s wars in Iraq and Afghanistan only confirm the need to do so. Much of the doctrine that has emerged from this endeavor is dogmatically population-centric and preaches like-minded strategy and tactics. It calls on counterinsurgents to win the hearts and minds of the people whose land and support insurgents attempt to claim and whose sons and daughters they mean to recruit. It defines the population as an insurgency’s center of gravity and claims that a counterinsurgency wins by gaining the goodwill of the population, by winning their ‘hearts and minds.’

This consensus has great merit. However, while the central tenants of population-counterinsurgency doctrine may be correct, and to win a counterinsurgency one must seize the overall objective to win the people’s hearts and minds, the means of doing so may involve bits of doctrine, strategy, and tactics that are not population-centric at all. Modern counterinsurgency literature neglects the possible merits of enemy-centric or anti-population doctrine, strategy, and tactics. Many theorists prescribe the development of intelligence capabilities to use in isolating the population from the insurgents; they generalize the merits of supporting the population and providing them with basic services and working economies; or they endorse the establishment of free democratic elections. Their neglect of alternate or additional successful methods is justified with gross
generalizations that simply targeting enemy insurgents or victimizing the population will not win an insurgency.

This project does not want to argue their point. That is, it will not claim that enemy targeting or population victimization alone will defeat an insurgency. What it seeks to explore is the possible efficacy of enemy-centric and anti-population methods in counterinsurgency, as part of a larger strategy that attempts to win hearts and minds. It proposes that some enemy-centric and anti-population operations or tactics, if implemented in line with a larger strategic context that seeks to eventually win the hearts and minds of the population, can aid the counterinsurgency’s progress. Such operations and tactics can convince both the population and insurgents that (1) the counterinsurgency will not yield to insurgents’ demands, (2) they are willing to victimize insurgents and civilians who support the insurgency if necessary, and (3) a viable military alternative to surrendering to the state no longer exists. If the population and insurgency is convinced of these three points by enemy-centric and anti-population operations and tactics, and the counterinsurgency offers them a viable peace couched in population-centric strategy, the people may surrender their hearts and minds more quickly than otherwise would have been possible.

Two cases that involve the use enemy-centric and anti-population strategies and tactics will be used to identify specific enemy-centric and anti-population doctrines, strategies, and tactics. Through proper analysis, these doctrines, strategies, and tactics will be evaluated for their overall efficacy in winning hearts and minds—and, by extension, counterinsurgencies. The cases chosen are the Indian-Sikh counterinsurgency

To follow is a section on methods and data caveats, in which terminology, data sources, layout, and methods of analysis are explained, along with a brief disclaimer on the reliability of source material used. Then, to provide a necessary context, the evolution of insurgency and counterinsurgency will be discussed. This section will include an acknowledgment of the ancient origins of insurgency, a review of modern population-centric counterinsurgency theory and doctrine, and a presentation of the alternative enemy-centric and anti-population approaches. The third section reveals the history of Indian counterinsurgency in Punjab and provides era-by-era analysis on the doctrine, strategy, and tactics (or lack thereof) employed by the counterinsurgency. This section also lays out which policies and methods were used and which ones were successful in aiding the counterinsurgency efforts toward victory. The fourth section does the same for Russia’s recent counterinsurgency in Chechnya. The two counterinsurgencies will then be compared and contrasted for further analysis on best practices, determining if the successes experienced by India or Russia are unique to the case, or if they may be transplanted and developed to great advantage elsewhere. A similar discussion will be had regarding policy implications, ethics, and whether the lessons learned in Punjab and Chechnya are useful to the counterinsurgency enterprises of the United States and its allies. Finally, concluding remarks will summarize the project’s findings and indicate possible future research on the subject.
METHODS, MEASURES, AND CAVEATS

This project will provide a history and analysis of the Indian counterinsurgency fought in Punjab against Sikh militant extremists and separatists between 1978 and 1993, and of the Russian counterinsurgency fought in Chechnya (and briefly Dagestan) against Chechen militants and their sympathetic foreign allies between 1994 and 2002. As no military or government decision is made in a vacuum, a very brief history of Indian and Russian counterinsurgency experience prior to Punjab and Chechnya is discussed with an aim to providing context.

The analysis will review the doctrine, strategy, and tactics of the Indian and Russian counterinsurgencies in Punjab and Chechnya, respectively. As the Indians shifted their strategy and tactics twice during the Punjab emergency, and the Russians shifted once, each case study has been divided into the eras that occurred between shifts. The three different eras of the Punjab counterinsurgency are 1978-1984, in which the developing insurgency was treated as a law and order problem and allowed to grow almost unchecked to full maturity; 1984-1988, in which the central government finally took action and alienated the Sikh population by dissolving the Punjabi regional government, ordering the infamous invasion of the most holy of Sikh shrines in Operation Blue Star, and inciting the anti-Sikh riots that resulted in the death, rape, and plunder of thousands of innocent Sikh civilians; and 1988-1993, in which the government, military, and law enforcement agencies learned from their previous mistakes and with marvelous synchronicity began to cooperate with one another and develop a winning strategy and set of best tactical practices that led to unconditional victory and re-
normalization in Punjab. The first era of counterinsurgency in Chechnya occurred between 1994 and 1996, during which the Russian military employed brutal repression and revenge tactics against insurgents and citizens alike. This era also saw the Russian government lose the trust and respect of the Chechen people when it reneged on political promises and capitulated readily to Chechen insurgents’ terrorist attacks. The second era took place between 1996 and 2002, when the Russian military, law enforcement, and intelligence agencies learned from the mistakes of the previous era and developed basic strategy and tactics to drive insurgents away from the population and decapitate the insurgency’s leadership. At this time, though, the government still failed to develop a cohesive strategy with which to bring about an endgame and restore normalcy in Chechnya.

For the analysis to be clear and successful, the differences between doctrine, strategy, and tactics must be delineated. While other sources may define these terms differently, they shall be used as follows for the purposes of this project.

Counterinsurgency doctrine is a corpus or work that describes the general nature of insurgency and counterinsurgency and the best rules for waging a successful counterinsurgency. As discussed in more detail below, the United States’ and other Western countries’ counterinsurgency doctrine generally agrees that an insurgency’s center of gravity is the population. While doctrine can provide guidelines for how to secure the population and achieve victory, it does not guarantee success. Counterinsurgency is the ‘graduate level’ of warfare, though, and doctrine acts as a primer to students, practitioners, and policy makers of warfare to get them thinking about
the issues. It prepares their minds for the creative and critical thinking that will be demanded of them if or when an insurgency arises.

Strategizing can be described as the employment of doctrine or general lessons learned to (1) think critically about the logistical, cultural, and economic details unique to the given counterinsurgency and (2) develop policies and operations tailored to the situation at hand. In general, grand strategy comprises the political objectives and initiatives developed through this process, e.g., the policies to negotiate with terrorists or not, to seek unconditional victory, to address the underlying causes of insurgency such as poverty or political strife. Strategy, on the other hand, bears a more military or law enforcement connotation. It comprises planning and objectives developed for each operation on the ground, e.g., the objective, elements, and planning that went into Operations Blue Star and Black Thunder in Punjab and the various military operations in Chechnya. Strategy can also refer to the planning and development of structures that are established to enable the smooth and successful process of these military, paramilitary, and police operations, e.g., a standard intelligence system of sources and methods, analysis, and distribution.

Tactics are individual practices employed both during individual operations and on a day-to-day basis by soldiers and law enforcement officers attempting to control the region of insurgency. They can include the systematic burning of victims in the street or the use of racial or religious profiling, but they can also include more humane measures, such as regular neighborhood patrols to make citizens feel safe. Doctrine and strategy should first define the tactics used and second condition counterinsurgents, from the most
elite decision makers to the most lowly unit commanders, to think about what their tactics may achieve in the long run.

The analysis of each case study will identify and assess the success or failure of the doctrine, strategy, and tactics employed by the counterinsurgency. Success will be measured in terms of qualitative reports available on fluctuations in the goodwill of the population caused by changes made to doctrine, strategy, and tactics. It will also be measured by similar reports on the state of the insurgency—its recruitment and retention abilities, its guerrilla and terrorism capabilities, the increase or decrease of successful deployment of these capabilities, and the reported morale level of counterinsurgent forces themselves. The qualitative accounts used are of first-hand accounts and memoirs; compilations of mass interviews of civilian victims, insurgents, and counterinsurgents; scholarly journal articles that have attempted to synthesize reliable data; human rights reports; and film documentaries that have been subjected to critical review.

While these qualitative reports may be unreliable—the human factor in them being prone to bias or falsehood—duplication of the facts they report have been found in second and third sources and documented whenever possible. Also, in the cases of the counterinsurgencies in Punjab and Chechnya, qualitative reports have yielded more reliable information than most of the available quantitative reports. It is in the best interest of both India and Russia to report statistics that make them appear to victorious at almost every juncture of their counterinsurgency efforts: they want to seem competent in the eyes of their voting constituents, and therefore tend to skew statistics to promote this outcome. Insurgents also encourage the report of inflated casualty statistics, for they can
use these statistics to make martyrs of themselves and rally the sympathy and support of the population. Statistics that suggest human rights abuses or the enmity of the insurgency’s population have also been kept quiet by India and Russia, so as to limit the spread of the insurgency population’s grievances, to prevent the loss of morale among the counterinsurgency’s home population, and to prevent the loss of favor and support from international partners. Human rights abuse statistics reported by insurgents and their sympathizers have the opposite weighting problem, having been inflated to encourage the grievances, morale loss, and international condemnation that India and Russia have sought to prevent. The research below attempts to compensate for these factors by using the most unbiased sources available and balancing accounts from one side of the story with the other.

The only other subject to be explored before launching into the history of the Indian and Russian insurgencies in Punjab and Chechnya is the nature of counterinsurgency itself. A firm grasp on the basic nature of insurgency, the theories of population-centric doctrine and its recommended strategies and tactics, and the alternatives, will cement the foundation needed to conduct a proper analysis. Based on this foundation and the lessons learned from the experiences in Punjab and Chechnya, a judgment will be made on how useful or ruinous the doctrine, strategy, and tactics of enemy-centric and anti-population counterinsurgency can be.
A REVIEW OF COUNTERINSURGENCY THEORY AND PRACTICE

The Ancient Nature of Counterinsurgency

Armed forces have employed insurgency and counterinsurgency for centuries. Though they did not use the terms ‘insurgency and ‘counterinsurgency’ to describe their methods in the past, they studied its lessons and to varying extents incorporated them back into their preferred strategy and tactics of warfare.¹ For this reason ancient and medieval experiences provide a useful context for discussions on modern insurgency and counterinsurgency: they assure any student of modern warfare that putting down uprisings and rooting out terrorists is an old problem that has flummoxed commanders throughout history and has required research, intelligence, and the aggressive execution of creative solutions for success. The solutions of the distant past cannot be confused for those required today, though. As the U.S. Counterinsurgency Field Manual recognizes, many of the United States’ current enemies mix “modern technology with ancient techniques of insurgency and terrorism.”² The same can be said for the enemies of other modern nation-states, including India and Russia, the subjects of this project’s investigation. The field manual, the most advanced and complete dissertation on

¹ See, for example, the discussion of how Mithridates studied the insurgent tactics of Greek hoplite armies documented by Xenophon, as well as those used by Alexander in Afghanistan in 330 BC and the Scythian nomads against Darius and the Persians in 512 BC, and employed what he learned victoriously against Lucullus in 68 BC, in Adriene Mayor, The Poison King: The Life and Legend of Mithridates, Rome’s Deadliest Enemy (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 306-309. Another fine example is that of the terrorist and near-insurgent tactics waged by Christians during the rule of Julian the Apostate’s rule in the 4th century AD, and the scholar-emperor’s decisions to leave off martyring Christians and to rather set up charities on the Christian model, hoping to make them bigger and better and thus win over the hearts and minds of the people more than any Christian church could do. For discussions on how Julian made these decisions and how they were carried out, see John Julius Norwich, Byzantium: The Early Centuries (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 92-96; Benedict XVI, Deus Caritas Est (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2006), 29.
counterinsurgency in circulation, admits to the ancient origins of the problem but does not dwell on the past. Rather, without sacrificing the integrity of its project, it surveys the general nature of insurgency, establishes how it exists in the modern context, and uses this definitive understanding as the departure point for explaining how to wage effective counterinsurgency operations. For this reason, while a nuanced appreciation of the current project requires awareness of historical insurgency and counterinsurgency literature, it will not be discussed any further here.

In the same vein, this project may forego an intense treatment of scholarship dealing with the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’ wars between colonial powers and native insurgent populations, which summarized the colonial powers’ experiences and lessons learned. It suffices to say that the experiences of this era contributed to the way counterinsurgency was conducted during the Cold War, which is

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3 It should be noted that many respected scholars point to the French Revolution as the origin of modern insurgency and counterinsurgency. For example, Shy and Collier argue that the French Revolution gave rise to “the people in arms,” which at one point in 1793 came very close to realizing the modern concept of revolution and insurgency when extremist factions demanded the creation of “revolutionary armies,” armed bands of self-directed citizens who pursued ‘traitorous’ aristocrats. These revolutionary armies could have been directed by Robespierre to fight from the shadows and seize power from the Committee of Public Safety and the National Assembly. The Committee used turned Robespierre’s proposal for revolutionary armies against him, though, bringing an end to his ambitions. Shy and Collier also believe that imperialism, industrialism, and the reactionary ideologies that arose in response to these developments combined with Robespierre’s concept of revolutionary armies, and they gave rise to what would eventually be articulated in Mao Tse-tung’s insurgent revolution in China. Mao would distill his experience in On Guerilla Warfare, an insurgency primer that insurgents still use today. John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, “Revolutionary War,” 815-862 in Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age, Ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 822, 824-825, 838-841. See also Clausewitz’s discussion on how insurgent action is sustained or defeated. Carl von Clausewitz, “The People in Arms,” 479-483 in On War, Eds. and Trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

where the population-centric doctrine so central to the United States’ current policy-making and discussions finds its beginning.

**Contemporary Population-Centric Counterinsurgency Strategies and Tactics**

Three essential theorists emerged from the Cold War era: Colonel David Galula, who wrote and theorized on his experience as a French officer in the Algerian War of Independence; Sir Robert Thompson, who did the same on his experiences in the Malayan Insurgency; and General Sir Frank Kitson, who wrote of his experiences in Malaya, Oman, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland.

Galula defines insurgency as a primarily internal war in which an armed group seeks to wrest power from a local ruling power. Only insurgents can start a war of insurgency, “for counterinsurgency is only an effect of insurgency.” Yet insurgents find it in their best interest to pursue legal means of development before turning to illegal means of challenging the local ruling power, leaving little margin for legitimate preemption:


6 As Davis and Jenkins point out, terrorists and insurgents know by experience and historical cases that once they commit a violent act, the government’s ultimate goal is to eradicate them and/or their enterprise. Paul K. Davis and Brian Michael Jenkins, *Deterrence and Influence in Counterterrorism: A Component in the War on al Qaeda* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2002), [http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1619.pdf](http://www.rand.org/pubs/monograph_reports/2005/MR1619.pdf) (accessed 23 March 2010). While Davis and Jenkins use this observation to conclude that deterrence is unlikely to affect terrorist or insurgent action, one may also conclude that this knowledge will encourage terrorists and insurgents to put off illegal and violent action so long as they are able, to build their networks and garner strength as much as they are able before the point at which their target government(s) will seek to destroy them and their enterprise. Further, would-be terrorists and insurgents first seek legal methods of resolving their grievances and achieving their ambitions because the opportunity cost of making themselves enemies of the state is so high. Only if the probability and gains of success are high enough to outweigh this cost do people tend to wage insurgency. See discussions of this tendency in Paul Collier, “Ethnic Civil Wars,” *Harvard International Review*, 28, 4 (2000), 839-853; Herschell I. Grossman, “A General Equilibrium Model of Insurrections,” *The American Economic Review*, 81, 4 (1991), 912-921; Richard A. Posner, “Equity, Wealth, and Political Stability,” *Journal of Law, Economics, and Organization* 13 (1997), 2; Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, “A Theory of Political
organizations that *may* evolve into illegal insurgent groups. For this reason, counterinsurgents find little legitimacy for preempting the growth of a legal group that *may* become an illegal insurgency. However, as a first line of defense they can limit the conditions that would most likely facilitate or encourage the rise of an insurgency.  

Economics literature seems to have been the most successful at defining and recommending how to limit the variables and conditions that facilitate the rise of insurgency. Collier and Hoeffler believe that the availability of finances and recruits facilitates insurgency. The former may be measured by how much the population or outside supporters are willing to give, the latter by the cheapness and availability of labor. That is, if the insurgent movement cannot offer potential recruits more of a living than the state-sanctioned economy, they are unlikely to succeed in recruitment. Governments should do all they can to put the legal and economic infrastructures in place to limit potential insurgent groups’ acquisition of these resources. Fearon and Laitin also recommend preventive measures such as combating widespread poverty and political instability, and training one’s military and police forces for the rough terrain where insurgents will likely hide if they emerge.

Once an insurgency has begun, though, the state must understand counterinsurgency, what it is and how to fight it, in order to maintain power. To do so,


7 Galula 3.

8 Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, “Greed and Grievance in Civil War,” *Oxford Economic Papers* 56 (2004), 563-595. To read more on how the government should satisfy the economic needs of the population to negate any profit margin he would gain from joining the insurgency, see footnote 6.

the state must recognize that “counterinsurgency cannot be defined except by reference to its cause.” In other words, counterinsurgency can only be defined by the nature of the insurgent group and the counterinsurgents’ responsive adaptation to it.

For this reason, Galula encourages counterinsurgents to recognize the weaknesses on which insurgents can prey, the terms in which insurgents develop their strategy and tactical maneuvers. The possession of this knowledge provides counterinsurgents with the next step for fighting an insurgency, the shoring up of weak points that, if exploited by the insurgents, will only give them an upper hand in the early stages of their formation.

Galula offers four such weaknesses. First, a lack of national consensus supporting the current regime provides an opportunity for the insurgents to win over the national consensus or at least portions of the population that do not support the regime. Second, irresolute counterinsurgent leadership allows the insurgency to grow unchecked as the regime struggles to decide what to do about them. Third, a counterinsurgency will fail to do what is necessary to defeat the group it faces if it knows nothing of its nature as it evolves, despite a fierce determination to win. Finally, if the four state mechanisms that control the population—the political structure, the administrative bureaucracy, the police, and the armed forces—are not on their guard against infiltration and attack from the enemy, the counterinsurgency risks losing the population’s support quickly.11

These weaknesses should be manipulated into strengths. Counterinsurgents ought to win over the national consensus and secure popular legitimacy for their regime. They

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10 Galula 1.
11 Galula 17.
should elect or install resolute, imaginative, and intelligent leaders. Third, they ought to set up extensive intelligence collection and analysis methods in order to learn about the nature of insurgencies and groups at high risk to become insurgencies. They should also develop mechanisms to protect their political structure, administrative bureaucracy, police, and armed forces from infiltration and undermining by insurgents. The latter of these strength-building activities might include the establishment of a counterintelligence service to vet members of the state support structure, or the incentivization of civil servants, police, and soldiers to remain loyal.

Galula also demands that counterinsurgents take into account “not only the nature and characteristics of the revolutionary war, but also the laws that are peculiar to counterinsurgency and the principles deriving from them.”  He lists four laws for success in counterinsurgency:

1. Support the population, clearing insurgents from their midst.

2. Gain this support through an active minority, using them to win over the neutral population.

3. If control of the population is lost, regain it before renewing advanced support. Political, social, and economic acts of goodwill will not win over the population if the insurgents control their hearts and minds.

4. Counterinsurgents must be willing to concentrate efforts, resources, and personnel over a long period of time in order to successfully put down an insurgency.

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12 Galula 52.
13 Galula 52.
14 Galula 53.
15 Galula 54-55.
In the service of the first three of these requirements for victory in counterinsurgency, Galula advises “success as early as possible in order to demonstrate that [the counterinsurgency] has the will, the means, and the ability to win.”

Thompson also offers five strategic principles for successful counterinsurgency operations:

1. The government must have a clear political aim.
2. It must function within the law.
3. It must have an overall plan.
4. It must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.
5. In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency, the government must secure its base first.

Galula supports the strategic prescriptions of counterinsurgency with eight operational steps to victory. These steps are to be conducted area by area until the insurgents are wholly eradicated from region or state infected by insurgency.

The first step is to destroy or expel the insurgent forces from the selected area. Second, static unit must be deployed to the area. Remnants of the guerrilla movement will survive there, so the static unit ought to conduct small-scale operations and ambushes to eradicate them, never losing sight of the main objective to win the support of the population. These first two steps were first referred to as the “clear and hold”

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16 Galula 55.
17 Galula 55.
18 This summary of Thompson’s five strategic principles of counterinsurgency, described at length in Defeating Communist Insurgency, is borrowed from Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare, Eds. Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2008), 14.
19 Galula 75.
20 Galula 77.
phases of counterinsurgency operations by Robert Thompson. Third, the population should be contacted and controlled by establishing and legitimizing authority over them, physically isolating them from the insurgents, and gathering intelligence on the insurgent remnants still living amongst the population. Fourth, the insurgency’s political organization must be destroyed. This step can only be taken successfully when enough intelligence is gathered and resources committed to capturing, killing, or winning over all insurgents still located in the selected area. If it does not succeed, the remnants regain strength by recruiting new members from the population, and the step must be repeated. Fifth, local leaders should be placed in monitored “positions of responsibility and power,” that they may organize the people to join the struggle against the insurgents. This step can only be taken if step four is complete. While a free election may not produce the best possible leaders, “the counterinsurgency must accept them with the publicly announced proviso that these new local leaders are temporarily in office until definitive elections when peace has been restored all over the country.” Next, the local leaders need to be tested. They should be given concrete tasks to assess their ability to complete them in a timely and effective manner.

While Galula admits that some leaders may be found worthless, he offers no advice on how to install better local leaders. One is left to assume that the counterinsurgency must hope for a perfect storm of events that lead to the election of a

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22 Galula 81.
23 Galula 86-87.
24 Galula 89.
25 Galula 90.
26 Galula 90.
strong, reliable leader – or to assume that the counterinsurgency must remove the
unsavory leader from power to make room for a more acceptable one. Signs that an
elected local leader has been successful and that the other five steps are still bearing fruit
include an increase in intelligence offered by the population to the local leader or the
counterinsurgents, and no regresses that would require step four to be repeated.

When a sufficient number of worthy local leaders have emerged, the
counterinsurgency should build up and support a new or preexisting political party to
organize these leaders, institutionalizing their rule for more legitimacy and the formation
of stable administrative and security structures. “At the beginning, regional associations
can serve temporarily for the purpose.”

The eighth and final step is to win over or suppress the last guerrillas. This step is applied state-wide. Galula recommends vague
“psychological” operations to achieve it. He also recommends somehow forcing them to
be on the move by controlling the entire population, forcing them to become “roving
bandits” who can be tracked and caught as they try to cross lines guarded by
counterinsurgent forces.

Thompson generally agrees with Galula’s operational prescriptions. Kitson only
departs on one major point: he gives a high degree emphasis to the importance of
intelligence unprecedented by either of his contemporaries. He claimed that the
successful collection and analysis of intelligence was the key to victory in
counterinsurgency. If “the problem of defeating the enemy consists very largely in
finding him,” he wrote, “it is easy to recognize the paramount importance of good

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27 Galula 93.
28 Galula 93.
information.” After the first three steps recommended by Galula, Kitson recommends collecting background information on members of the population, developing it into contact information, and using it to convince these locals to share information. The collection of background information is a responsibility held by operational commanders. They obtain it from all possible sources, including the state’s intelligence organizations, their own soldiers, locals, and captured or surrendered insurgents. Then the commanders are charged with the task of creatively synthesizing and analyzing all the information collected to “narrow down possible whereabouts of the enemy, the purpose being to make deductions which will enable him to employ his men with some hope of success as opposed to using them at random in the hope of making contact.”

For all that these recommendations seem wonderful on paper, Galula never saw steps five through eight successfully actualized in Algeria. One wonders how achievable they are in practical terms. Despite this uncertainty, the *U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* practically summarizes the population-centric prescriptions of Galula, Thompson, and Kitson. Its doctrine insists that the core objective of counterinsurgency is to obtain the support of the population. It also sides with Kitson on the importance of intelligence, best practices in collecting it, and how best to use it. It describes the relationship between operations and intelligence in counterinsurgency as symbiotic. “Intelligence,” it says, “drives operations and successful operations generate additional intelligence. […] Because intelligence and operations are so closely related, it

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30 Kitson 96.
31 Kitson 97.
is important for collectors to be linked directly to the analysts and operators they support.\textsuperscript{32}

This population-centric approach to counterinsurgency has become U.S. doctrine. Operations and tactics that flow from its generalized wisdom are condoned. Once the initial insurgency-ridden area is cleared of obvious militants, typical population-centric operations include the organization and construction of basic services for the population, such as water and sewer systems, electrical grids, telecommunications, marketplaces for commerce, and the government infrastructure to support and mitigate disputes that these systems may precipitate. Population-centric tactics shy away from any possible victimization of innocent civilians and tend to seek intelligence on enemy insurgents at every turn. Neighborhood patrols aimed at isolating and protecting the population from the insurgency and investigating possible insurgents still living amongst the civilian population are examples of this kind of tactic.

Enemy-centric and anti-population operations and tactics are ill received by the more dogmatic population-centric theorists, who believe that they cannot possibly serve the core objective addressed by Galula, Thompson, Kitson, and the \textit{U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual}. The strategic and operational prescriptions advised by these four keystone sources have become the basis on which several counterinsurgency scholars have based their work, believing the operations and tactics should flow directly from their ideas.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual} 118-119.
\textsuperscript{33} For the most well-recognized population-centric doctrinal articles, see David Kilcullen, “‘Twenty-eight Articles’: Fundamentals of Company-level Counterinsurgency,” \textit{Military Review} 86, 3 (May-June 2006), 103-108; Kalev I. Sepp, “Best practices in counterinsurgency,” \textit{Military Review} 85, 3 (May-June 2005), 8-
Alternative Approaches to Counterinsurgency and Their Strategies and Tactics

While population-centric counterinsurgency is the most widely recognized approach in the West and the only kind of counterinsurgency that can boast a robust, well-articulated doctrine, it comprises a mere subset of the universe of possible counterinsurgency strategies, operations, and tactics. As noted above, states and empires have sought to quell insurgencies for centuries. An array of options has been available to every counterinsurgency of previous generations, and among them have been strategies and tactics far outside the realm dictated by population-centric doctrine.

This project’s analytic case studies of Punjab and Chechnya investigate the instances of modern enemy-centric and anti-population counterinsurgency in both regions. Definitions of enemy-centric and anti-population counterinsurgency will enable the identification of strategies and tactics in each category, which in turn can be measured for the failure or success in aiding counterinsurgency efforts.

For the purposes of this essay, enemy-centric counterinsurgency involves the targeting of insurgents, their lines of supply, and their lines of communication. Where a population-centric approach focuses upon isolating the population and winning its support, the enemy-centric alternative seeks the source of the insurgency—the insurgents themselves. It seeks to disincentivize, capture, or kill members of the insurgency. Grand strategies that fall into this category range from government policies to establish face-saving, legal routes by which insurgents may surrender, to policies to kill suspected insurgents.

12. For the most comprehensive compilation of current population-centric doctrinal literature, see also articles found in the Military Review Special Edition Counterinsurgency Reader (Fort Leavenworth: Combined Arms Center, Oct. 2006).
guerrillas and terrorists on sight. Operational strategies may involve the planning and development of reliable intelligence sources and methods that will provide the identities of insurgents and their aids and abettors. Tactics that fall into this category may be as simple as the proper way to flush a suspected insurgent out of a village, e.g., by seeking them at their residence or harassing villagers until one of them surrenders the suspect.

Anti-population counterinsurgency, on the other hand, plays opposite the population-centric approach. As the insurgency’s center of gravity, the population is held responsible for insurgents’ actions. The counterinsurgency proceeds to harass and torture the population. Counterinsurgents who employ such methods hope they will either (a) convince the population that such harassment is the insurgency’s fault, thereby causing the population to turn against the insurgency and pressure it to halt its violent agenda or (b) convince the insurgency to surrender by holding the population hostage and threatening to do worse to it if the insurgents do not lay down their arms. Strategies and tactics that proceed from the anti-population approach will aim to harm civilians. As these people are often considered innocent bystanders, such strategies and tactics are likely to involve gross abuse of human rights.

The Punjab case from 1978 to 1993 showcases strategies and tactics from all three of the above-mentioned categories of counterinsurgency. The Russian employed many of them in Chechnya from 1994 to 2002, as well. By identifying the tactics and strategies used throughout these cases and showing which of them contributed to or detracted from victory, an assessment can be made as to whether or not counterinsurgency doctrine
ought to include certain enemy-centric or anti-population strategies and tactics in the toolbox of counterinsurgency best practices.
THE INDIAN COUNTERINSURGENCY IN PUNJAB, 1978-1993

More than a century before the trouble in Punjab, the Indian Army began learning lessons in counterinsurgency that would inform how it waged such wars in the modern era. This influence extended to the counterinsurgency waged against Sikh militants in Punjab from 1978 to 1993, giving way to two camps of counterinsurgency standards. One believed that heavy-handed attacks on a population would put down an insurgency. The other called for a more nuanced, understanding approach that sought to win the support of the population. Over time, the Indian counterinsurgency in Punjab learned to abandon simple heavy-handedness for a range of methods aimed to win over the population.

Map of Punjab and Its Surrounding Areas: Extracted from a map produced by the Central Intelligence Agency in 2001, provided by the courtesy of the University of Texas at Austin, viewable at http://www.lib.utexas.edu/

1978-84: A “Law and Order” Problem

The single most identifiable trait of the first six years of Indian counterinsurgency in Punjab was that it was virtually nonexistent. That is, local and national authorities alike
identified the rise of Sikh militancy and the deterioration of government control of the area as a “law and order” problem. Until early 1984, many refused to seriously entertain the idea of a rising Sikh insurgency. The local police forces were inadequately trained to the point of near uselessness, a quality well-known to the federal authorities, Indian Army included. Yet the federal authorities did little to prevent the rise of insurgency, either. Two reasons explain the central forces’ inaction: first, they too were ill prepared for counterinsurgency operations in Punjab; second, while the central Indian government agreed that it would never grant Punjab independence, politicians were able to agree on little else with regard to the matter, least of all the decision to send in the Indian Army or central paramilitary units. The local and central authorities sat on their hands and all but ignored the Sikh militants until they had developed into a full-blown insurgency.

Government and law enforcement did nothing to mitigate its causal origins, which were political, economic, and social in nature. Politically, the insurgency began to take form when tensions between the two main Punjabi political parties, Akali Dal and Congress, reached such drastic heights that they created a political void ripe for a new, militant group to enter. Elites from both the Akali Dal and Congress parties struggled for political supremacy, blaming one another for the woes of the people rather than conducting constructive projects to address the widespread grievances of the population. This dynamic created a political void into which Sikh religious extremists

entered and, with promises of delivery to the Sikh people, used to build a constituency, recruit members, and eventually grow into a working insurgency.

In addition to the general dynamic created by the parties, the Congress party provided a more specific start to the insurgency. In an effort to split the vote of the religiously oriented Akali Dal party followers, the Congress party recruited, groomed, and politically promoted one Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale, a little known religious cleric who would betray his creators and become the charismatic leader of the Sikh insurgency during its early years. With the Congress party’s support and encouragement, Bhindranwale worked to undermine the Akali Dal. As his popularity rose, however, he attracted a following from members of the lower class of Punjab’s agrarian society, who believed that following him would relieve their economic ill fortune. University students also joined him. They faced high unemployment rates toward the end of the 1970s and the early 1980s, and his spiritual and socioeconomic messages appealed to their circumstances. Over time, Bhindranwale had enough support from the Sikh population that he could stand apart from the Congress party and fill the actionable void left by Punjab’s dueling political parties. Peaceful at first, the momentum of the group sped up as more members joined, until the Congress party had lost control of its proxy.

In April 1978, Bhindranwale’s movement committed its first known acts of violence. He and a group of his followers confronted a demonstration of the liberal


37 Telford 974-976, 983-986.
38 Telford 977-981.
Hindu-Sikh sect Nirankar at Amritsar, which escalated from an exchange of name-calling and harangues to a street fight in which the police fired shots, killing eighteen of Bhindranwale’s supporters.³⁹ Blaming the government and emboldened by the support he received from the Sikh masses concerning his followers’ deaths, Bhindranwale officially turned to violent means of achieving his political demands. The insurgency had begun.

The group’s earliest method was the regular publication of a ‘hit list’ of targets, which included both Narankar and Hindu leaders—the former to avenge the eighteen who had died, the latter to pressure the government to accede to the insurgents’ demands.⁴⁰ These lists caused growing terror and concern among local political elites as the Sikh insurgents proved very effective at assassinating the people on them. To consolidate the powerful position this tactic granted his group, Bhindranwale affected a second element of strategy: not only did he go on the offensive with his lists, but he built several lines of defense by circulating rhetoric on real and imaginary injustices suffered by the Sikhs to win over the people, and by infiltrating gurudwaras, or Sikh temples, as a means of protection.⁴¹ Winning the support of the population allowed Sikh insurgents to depend on hiding amongst it if needs be; gaining sway over the temples augmented their influence over the people by lending them a holy aura and also provided a physical, fortress-like defense against possible attempts at capture or assassination by the authorities.

³⁹ Marwah 92.
⁴⁰ Marwah 92.
⁴¹ Marwah 92-93.
Yet for six years, the authorities did almost nothing. They lacked the training and experience to conduct a counterinsurgency, and their attempts to treat the conflict as a law and order problem, being reactive rather than proactive to criminal assassins, proved ineffective. For one, “Sikh extremists adopted tactics that suited local conditions. They move[d] around the countryside and congested areas in towns and cities on motorcycles and tractors, making it difficult for security forces to apprehend them.”42

Second, little to no literature suggests that local or central authorities did much to alleviate the social and economic burdens of Punjab’s lower class during the first years of the conflict. They may have limited the insurgency’s pool of recruits if they had provided the lower class individuals with a stake in society more appealing than the alternative life as an enemy of the state. Such far-sighted efforts were not initiated until much later.

The few attempts the central government did try to remedy the problem at this time only backfired, alienating the Indian Sikh population at large. First, Haryana police were ordered to search all Sikhs on their way to Delhi during the 1982 Asian Games to prevent violent disruptions of India’s proud moment as international host.43 Had the government had the foresight to search every traveler, or had not used reportedly rough or denigrating methods, the Sikh people may not have felt singled out as second-class citizens, driving even more of them into the arms of Bhindranwale and his followers.

A second Sikh-alienating event, one of the most in the first six years of the insurgency, also occurred in 1982. That year, the central government dissolved the

42 Marwah 93.
43 Marwah 94.
Punjabi regional government, at that time led by Akali Dal. The dismissal forced the central government to start addressing the problem directly: there was no longer a regional government to serve as scapegoat. However, the central Indian government was far from developing a cohesive strategy that would address both the immediate and underlying causes of the insurgency. Also, the move gave the Sikh militants the opportunity to produce more anti-Hindu and anti-government propaganda. At the time of its dissolution, the Punjabi regional government had been led by an Akali Dal majority. Dismissing it only “confirmed the narrative of Hindu-inspired, Congress-implemented discrimination against Sikhs,” which was growing ever more popular in Sikh-dominated Punjab.

In terms of enforcement, local forces also lacked the will to enter the gurudwaras where many of the insurgent-assassins fled after completing a mission. They were afraid that doing so would offend the devout Sikh community. A ready example of this unwillingness to act can be seen in the reaction to Sikh insurgents’ assassination of the head of the Punjab police, A.S. Atwal, in April 1983. After Atwal’s murder, the police force dithered about, unwilling to enter the Golden Temple, where the militants had consolidated power, to collect evidence and bring the perpetrators to justice. The local authorities would not risk breaching the temple walls without the central government’s approval—the local government having been dissolved the previous year—and as the central government was still indecisive about what to do in Punjab, express approval was

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44 Marwah 96.
45 Marwah 96. See also Jugdep S. Chima, “Controlling the Sunni Insurgency in Iraq: ‘Political’ and ‘Military’ Strategies from Successful Counterinsurgency in Punjab-India,” Small Wars and Insurgencies, 18, no. 4 (Dec. 2007), 622.
46 Marwah 95
never given. The failure to react to Atwal’s assassination not only convinced insurgents that they could continue their targeted killings with impunity: it also impressed upon the Punjab people that the “rule of law in Punjab was sacrificed on the altar of political fear and expediency.” This overwhelming recognition of a security vacuum undoubtedly increased the panic in the area and encouraged members of the population to take sides.

In all, the insurgency grew out of a political vacuum that one charismatic leader and his self-interested thugs exploited to their political advantage. The central Indian authorities recognized the ineffectiveness of the Punjab police to handle such a situation, but out of ignorance or political expediency they did nothing to augment Punjab’s law enforcement and peacekeeping abilities. Sarab Jit Singh, a key officer during the operations that occurred later in the insurgency and an expert on the entire conflict, sums up the situation aptly:

The police force, which had become obsolete in its composition and impact, due to the lack of intelligent development to keep pace with newer methods to combat crime in the modern world, could not withstand the initial onslaught of the militants. Inevitably, it became demoralized. […] Mounting tensions between Hindus and Sikhs could not be effectively countered in such an uncertain ambience. […] The Hindus began looking to [Prime Minister Indira] Gandhi as their saviour. So when the state government of Darbara Singh, a Congress Chief Minister, was dismissed in October 1983, the foundations of Operation Blue Star had been laid.

This situation had developed in less than three years at the cost of 125 killings. After the dismissal of the Darbara Singh Government, to the great embarrassment of the Government of India, the number of killings skyrocketed to 379 (20 security personnel, 237 Hindus and 122 Sikhs) during the first five months of 1984. The compulsions of electoral politics required that the government should put an end to this unhappy situation a month or so before the parliamentary elections due in early 1985. But, to bring it under control, the government obviously could not see a way out

47 Marwah 95.
other than handing over the situation to the army. Operation Blue Star was the result.\textsuperscript{48}

Here, the counterinsurgency took a different turn. Until Operation Blue Star, the central government and the forces it could have brought to bear had kept their distance. They preferred to sit back and allow Punjab a relative amount of autonomy with which to remedy its “law and order” problem. However, the local government was composed of two fractious parties whose elites were incapable of seeing past their own clever stratagems and constituencies. They did not devote the time and effort necessary to rally the people against the Sikh extremists; nor did they secure funding and training for the local law enforcement authorities, who might have brought the militants to an early end if the proper training, personnel, and equipment had been available during the insurgency’s initial development. By the time the insurgency was entrenched, Bhindranwale’s hit lists had become a common phenomenon, and the existence of insurgency in Punjab was no longer denied, local politicians were too afraid to do anything about the insurgency.

At this point, the central government ought to have stepped in to support the local Punjab government and do what it could to preserve the population’s faith in it. They also should have supplied the necessary funding, arms, equipment, and training to revamp the Punjab police force so they could develop intelligence collection capabilities on the insurgents and use this intelligence to target the enemy properly. Instead, the central government did away with Punjab’s Sikh-supported Akali Dal regional government, alienated the entire Sikh population with religious profiling, and

immediately jumped to the conclusion that a military solution ought to be sought against Indian citizens.

1984-88: The Hard Lessons of Operation Blue Star and the Anti-Sikh Riots

Not all Indian counterinsurgents had the experience to consider what reactions a militant approach would generate, given the specific cultural sensitivities of the Sikh community. Instead, the central authorities took the utter failure of local police forces to prevent militant build-up in the Golden Temple as an indication that the Indian Army must be deployed to clear it. As the Army moved into Punjab, the local police and paramilitary forces came under its command, a source of no little friction. The military commanders in control of the situation, therefore, had neither familiarity with the people of Punjab nor sources and methods of actionable intelligence on the ground. This lack of information meant disaster for their early operations in 1984, including Operations Blue Star and Operation Woodrose, a follow-up attempt to flush Sikh insurgents from the countryside.

Specifically, the lack of intelligence during the planning stages of Operation Blue Star doomed this first invasion of the Golden Temple before it had even begun. First, officers failed to grasp the willingness of insurgents to sacrifice themselves for their cause. They also failed to make the connection that the temple militants were led logistically by Maj. Gen. Shahbagh Singh, a former member of the Indian Army who would anticipate the Army’s movements and prepare to counter them. For example, the army expected to overwhelm the Sikh insurgents with superior firepower before moving

50 Marwah 98.
51 Marwah 99.
into the temple grounds. The Indian Army mounted a preliminary feint attack to draw
fire and expose the positions of any mounted guns ahead of time. Their plan worked.
They did draw fire, and they were able to fire upon and destroy the locations this
maneuver had provided. However, the insurgents had expected just such an attempt and
had only fired a few of their mounted weapons. When the Indian Army began to move
its selected units into the complex, the guns kept in reserve were fired upon them,
complicating the simple operation they had expected.52

Even once they had maneuvered the mounted guns and entered the temple, the
troops lacked intelligence on the layout of the temple and had to devote valuable time
negotiating its fortifications.53 The failure to obtain such basic information was
inexcusable, given the fact that the Golden Temple had regular hours open to the public.54
The Army could have sent someone into the temple undercover or asked a local to sketch
its layout ahead of time. The fact that they did not reveals a disturbingly low usage of
mental faculties, much less systematic intelligence, while planning the military’s debut
operation in Punjab.

What they did plan was a three-phased operation. Well before dawn on 6 June
1984, military forces would enter the Golden Temple and secure at least the northwest
wing. Second, they would ‘mop up’ these areas, separating worshippers from combatants
and either killing or accepting the surrender of the latter. Once the initial area was
completely secure, they would continue using same method throughout the temple

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52 Marwah 98-99.
53 C. Christine Fair, “Military Operations in Urban Areas: The Indian Experience,” India Review, 2, no. 1
(Jan. 2003), 66.
54 Brar 3, 28, 33, 39.
complex, area by area, until they had secured the entire facility. According to Lt. Gen. K.S. Brar, the plan lacked more specific definition.\(^{55}\)

Only the first phase of the attack was executed on schedule.\(^ {56}\) ‘Mopping up’ each area of the temple was more complex than the military had believed, though. As noted above, they had underestimated the insurgents’ will to fight and even die for their cause. The hand-to-hand combat that ensued was intense and confusing. Since they chose to attack in the middle of the night and the extremists had put out their lights, the military was forced to fight in darkness.\(^ {57}\) Knowing that no one managed to obtain a map of the Golden Temple ahead of time should prepare the reader for the revelation that they also failed to bring night vision goggles to a night operation. Further, while fighting hand-to-hand for their lives in the dark, they were unable to separate innocent worshippers from insurgents as planned. To make matters worse, militants occasionally retook parts of the temple that they accessed by way of underground passages.\(^ {58}\) The existence of these passages represents the sort of useful detail a map would have provided.

In the end, the Indian Army had managed to kill Bhindranwale and a considerable number of his followers, and they had seized control of the Golden Temple. However, while this feat may have seemed like victory at the time, the way the military conducted operation turned the Sikh population against the Indian government. Central authorities reported that 4,712 people were killed during the operation, including a large number of

\(^ {55}\) Brar 77-80.
\(^ {56}\) Fair 66.
\(^ {57}\) Fair 66.
innocent Sikhs who had been at prayer. The Army had imposed a curfew on 3 June 1984, three days before the operation, cutting Punjab off from the rest of the country, disabling its telecommunications systems, expelling journalists, and preventing any transportation into or out of the province. Many civilians had little warning of the invasion ahead of time. Knowing later that such a warning could have saved their lives surely infuriated the population. Also, without any press coverage of the event, people were forced to conjecture exactly what had happened. The remnants of the insurgency were only too ready to provide them with the story. 1982 had already convinced many Sikhs in Punjab that the government had no respect for their religion or government. Supported by the sight of 4,712 corpses and some one hundred houses burning along with much of the shrine, Sikhs also became convinced that the Indian Army and the government that gave it its marching orders had little to no respect for Sikh holy places, their property, or their individual lives.

After Operation Blue Star, the insurgency regrouped and renewed recruiting efforts. It benefited from Bhindranwale’s martyrdom with rising popular support. With new recruits and increased support, Sikh extremist violence rose dramatically. By the end of 1984, they had killed 359 people, including 20 policemen, whereas they had only killed 75 people in 1983. By 1986, deaths rose to 520, 42 of which were policemen. Between 1986 and 1988, insurgents also re-infiltrated the Golden Temple, made it their headquarters, used it to store arms and explosives, and made it the symbolic seat of

59 Marwah 99.
62 Marwah 100.
power for the newly declared independent Punjab or, as they called it, ‘Khalistan.’ Again, government and military decision makers looked the other way, and the few gains that had been made during Operation Blue Star were lost.63

In addition to increasing their demands—before Operation Blue Star the call for independence had never been officially made—they started using sensational acts of terrorism. These attacks included the bombing of an Air India jumbo jet in 1986 and the assassination of the Indian Army’s chief of Staff during Operation Blue Star, Gen. A.A. Vaidya.64 Yet police, paramilitary, and the regular military still refused to adapt their methods to preventing such events.

Operation Blue Star also triggered the assassination of beloved Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards on 31 October 1984.65 Indira Gandhi’s assassination in turn sparked the anti-Sikh riots of early November 1984. Government leaders failed to learn from Operation Blue Star soon enough to understand that the targeting of Sikh citizens under less than transparent circumstances will only further anger and alienate them. Instead, Indira Gandhi’s funeral and highly publicized mourning activities were accompanied by young men who passed by her casket, shouting, “Khoon ka badla khoon se lenge!” or “Blood for blood!”66 According to both Sarab Jit Singh and the Nanavati Commission report, senior members of the then-ruling central government Congress party organized the use of these slogans and instigated the

63 Marwah 100.
64 Marwah 100.
65 Marwah 95; Singh 327.
66 Singh 327.
anti-Sikh riots that occurred, mostly in and around neighborhoods in Delhi, from the early morning of 1 November 1984 to the evening of 3 November 1984.67

Accounts of the riots show that starting on 1 November 1984, trucks full of angry young Hindu men entered Sikh neighborhoods. Eyewitnesses claim that many of them seemed to know where they were going: they entered Sikh homes and businesses, killed or beat the Sikh men they found there, dragged them into the street, doused them with kerosene, and lit them on fire. Again and again, as though someone had provided them with a method to ensure all their male Sikh victims died, they dragged them into the streets, and burned them. And again and again, they stripped the women of their clothing and forced themselves upon them, gang raping and battering them, some unto death. The ages of Sikhs did not matter.68

Reports show that police forces neglected to come to the rescue of the besieged Sikh communities. Most stood by and watched. Either they feared the rioters, dreaded retribution from government elites who heard of police interfering with their plans, or were glad to witness a gruesome form of entertainment. Some aided and abetted the


68 Reports and accounts of the anti-Sikh riots of November 1-3 can be found in the Nanavati Commission Report; Vijendra Singh Jafa, “Counterinsurgency Warfare: The Use and Abuse of Military Force,” in Terror and Containment Perspectives of India’s Internal Security, ed. K.P.S. Gill (New Delhi: Gyan Publishing House, 2001); Madhu Kishwar, “Gangster Rule: The Massacre of the Sikhs,” in Religion at the Service of Nationalism and Other Essays (Delhi: Oxford UP, 1998). Kishwar’s essay in particular is especially graphic, wherein he directly quotes many of the riot victims he interviewed in person and cites one abuse report after another that had been filed with the government and buried beneath corruption.
From 1984 to early 1988, the central government sent a large armed force into Punjab that lacked both intelligence and a nuanced cultural understanding of the Sikh
people. Instead of building up and training the local forces and reinstating a new
government to manage the situation, they blundered without intelligence through a
massive military operation in the most holy shrine of the Sikh religion, offending the
Sikh community and losing the hearts and minds of the population in Punjab. Then,
instead of reacting reasonably to the violent reaction to Operation Blue Star, government
officials organized mass riots of revenge on innocent Sikh civilians throughout the
country, further alienating the people. While the authorities as yet lacked the capability
to fight an insurgency in Punjab, they also lost what little gains the trust of the population
might have afforded them.

Reaching this low point meant that unless India wanted to grant Khalistan its
independence, every level of the counterinsurgency effort—from the lowest to highest
echelons of the police, paramilitary, army, and government—had to learn from the
mistakes committed since 1978. Barring the admittance of defeat, the only option left to
the authorities was massive overhaul and improvement.

1988-93: Operation Black Thunder and the Synchronizing of Strategy

Operation Blue Star taught officials that in order to defeat the Sikh insurgents, civil and
military institutions needed to cooperate and coordinate their efforts.\textsuperscript{72} They also needed
to develop a systematic, well-sourced, and strategic intelligence network.\textsuperscript{73} The
intelligence gathered from such a system would provide a nuanced, local understanding
of the problem. The local police and paramilitary forces, in cooperation with state
military personnel, would use this detailed understanding to brainstorm area-specific

\textsuperscript{72} Brar 41-42, 59.
\textsuperscript{73} Brar 59.
operations meant to target high-profile insurgents, convince the Punjab population of the banality of the insurgents, and persuade the population to side with the state.

By this time the military had also realized that it needed to rely on Punjab’s local law enforcement authorities to achieve victory. As it were, they were already overstretched, simultaneously managing two additional counterinsurgencies.\textsuperscript{74} To mitigate some of the burden these multiple conflicts placed on the Army, many counterinsurgency responsibilities were delegated to state-run paramilitary forces. However, these forces, which included the Central Reserve Police Force and the Border Security Force, lacked the manpower, proper training, and equipment to wage a successful counterinsurgency on their own.\textsuperscript{75} They had been trained for large-group, conventional operations rather than the small, tactical formations demanded by counterinsurgency.\textsuperscript{76} This gap in training did not prepare small units for the close, hard fighting of urban operations. It also meant that small unit leaders had no previous experience to fuel initiative and confidence while reacting to rapidly changing insurgent situations; nor were they conditioned to be imaginative in spotting and capturing insurgents.

The state realized that it needed to establish a nuanced understanding of the population, a reliable system of intelligence collection and analysis on the insurgency, cooperation between local police, paramilitary forces, and the Army—and all of this they needed to achieve without unduly increasing the burden on the Army. The solution, they

\textsuperscript{74} The Indian Army committed to a counterinsurgency abroad in Sri Lanka from 1987 to 1990, and in the late 1980s the rebellion in Jammu and Kashmir demanded their attention.
\textsuperscript{76} Marwah 98.
found, was to retrain, reequip, and support the local police force, hand over the majority of control to their newly competent officers, and encourage widespread cooperation and support from the paramilitary and Army units already in the area.

The change was dramatic to say the least, as cooperation between these three forces had been nearly nonexistent since the beginning of the insurgency, and each had lacked strong, decisive leaders to push for change in the status quo. This environment had produced multiple security forces that did the minimum possible work while shifting blame for the Sikh insurgency to other organizations. Nevertheless, local police began to adapt and improve, and paramilitary and military forces followed its lead, once the experience and willful personalities of J.F. Ribeiro and K.P.S. Gill arrived on the scene.

After the central government appointed Ribeiro and, later, Gill to lead the Punjab police, the determination, solid leadership skills, and experience of these two men produced a thorough revamp of the entire police force. Not only did the state and central government give them the funding and resources to increase the members on its force, but it supplied new or better weaponry, communications, and transport equipment in order to increase its basic capabilities. An increase in officers enabled an increase in police presence in problem neighborhoods; and an increase in the quality of officers, instilled by National Security Guard training, meant that citizens felt safer with them.

Weapons, equipment, and training were augmented by a new Concealed Apprehension Technique (CAT) system that was developed and successfully

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77 Marwah 98.
78 Marwah 101.
79 Marwah 102.
implemented to improve intelligence collection capabilities. The CAT system took captured or surrendered insurgents and common criminals; turned them to the counterinsurgent cause; and used them as moles and informants to collect intelligence, kill or capture militants, and prevent and disrupt would-be insurgent operations.  

The improvement in leadership, training, weapons, equipment, and intelligence led to a revitalized Punjab police force, whose success denied insurgents the opportunity to cultivate operations. Their improvement also heightened the morale and abilities of the paramilitary and state military, which learned to cooperate and coordinate operations with the culturally nuanced and intelligence-savvy local forces. The progress that all forces made during this period, having learned from past failures, brought success to the pivotal Operation Black Thunder in 1988, as well as the joint Operations Rakshak I and II in 1990 and 1991.

Operation Black Thunder specifically was one of the most critical turning points in the war, shattering the idealistic image of the insurgency that many Sikhs had come to support. It began when the Indian government called for a second invasion of the Golden Temple in 1988. This time, though, instead of sending the Army to do the job, it gave the task to the National Security Guard (NSG), a force that drew from police, paramilitary, and army forces and received its orders directly from the Union Home Ministry. With its high pay and prestigious reputation, the team recruited the best of the best. They prepared for the invasion of the gurudwara in accordance with their caliber. They used

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80 Marwah 102.
81 Marwah 102.
82 Marwah 100.
the Indian Air Force to do reconnaissance on the temple and discover the locations of its mounted guns. They also sent a senior intelligence officer into the temple disguised as a devotee to collect information on its layout and possible weak or strong points that invading troops could exploit to secure it.⁸³

In April of that year, the NSG launched Operation Black Thunder. This time, they acted during the day, negating the possibility of fighting in darkness. Before entering the temple grounds, they used heavy fire power to destroy the mounted guns discovered by the Indian Air Force. They then employed experienced snipers to cover the commandos who entered the complex. The commandos stormed the temple, the layout of which they had studied ahead of time. They systematically secured each section one at a time before moving on to the next. This phased plan of attack was devised to surprise the Sikh militants, whom the NSG suspected were preparing for a frontal assault, and the tactic worked. Also, to prevent confusion, only a small contingent of commandos entered to clear the area before the rest were sent in to hold the secure areas.⁸⁴

Surprised and pinned into a corner with no hope of a military recourse, the militants allowed innocent citizens to leave the gurudwara. The NSG then turned off the militants’ supply of electricity and water, met the insurgents who tried to escape with sniper fire, and patiently waited for the breakdown of their will to resist. Most insurgents did give up, surrendering to the commandos, but a dedicated force made a dash for the Harmander Sahib, the most holy inner sanctum of the Golden Temple, at the last moment.

⁸³ Marwah 100.
⁸⁴ Marwah 101.
While the Punjab police chief wanted to storm this sacred place, the NSG commander in charge of the operation wisely decided to block its exits and wait out the militants inside. Soon, all two hundred insurgents who had used the temple as a fortress surrendered. The defeat destroyed the insurgency’s aura of invincibility.\textsuperscript{85} Their willingness to violate the 
Harmandar Sahib in the service of their own desperate bid to survive and remain in control of the temple also revealed to the Sikh faithful that the insurgency’s true loyalties were not of a religious nature—which had been the linchpin of their propaganda scheme from the beginning.

Operation Black Thunder turned the tables on the insurgency. Until then, the media in Punjab had been terrorized into submission by the Sikh insurgency, but when the journalists and news anchors from the rest of the country were invited to report on the operation, they were only too willing to come and do so.\textsuperscript{86} Their coverage revealed to Indians everywhere, Sikhs included, the criminal and sacrilegious acts that the insurgents had been conducting before the siege and their shameful behavior during it.\textsuperscript{87} The holy pretensions of the insurgency lost its credence to the population at large. They were seen as criminals who only used religious and nationalist rhetoric to further their own self-aggrandizing ends.

The operation also turned Sikh factions against one another, resulting in several self-cannibalizing turf wars that made counterinsurgency forces’ intelligence collection and enemy-targeting operations easier.\textsuperscript{88} Past experience had taught the

\textsuperscript{85} Marwah 101.
\textsuperscript{86} Marwah 95.
\textsuperscript{87} Marwah 95.
\textsuperscript{88} Marwah 95.
counterinsurgents to gather intelligence for planning ahead of an operation, to respect the
Golden Temple’s most sacred spaces, to allow the safe exit of innocent civilians, and to
bear the patience to wait for most insurgents’ surrender. Their learning paid off as the
insurgency lost control of the population and descended into vicious in-fighting that only
sped them to destruction. By 1992 and 1993, law enforcement agencies had arrested
several hardcore Sikh insurgent leaders. The decapitation of each militant faction’s
leadership, combined with constant pressure from the counterinsurgency and loss of
population support, caused many insurgents to surrender. It also dissolved the incentives
of most would-be insurgents among the population. 89

In addition to a rapid turn-around of police, paramilitary, and military success in
strategy and tactics, the government began to coalesce around a cohesive strategy.
Politicians rose to power who agreed that the best way to defeat the insurgency in Punjab
was to win the hearts and minds of the population and address the underlying causes of
insurgency. At the economic level, “the state and central government stimulated agrarian
and industrial development in Punjab in order to create more employment, which helped
wean youth away from the path of extremism.” 90

The central government also did its part by passing or revising laws that made
counterinsurgency easier under the Indian Penal Code. To ease law enforcement’s legal
burdens in the surveillance, capture, interrogation, and killing of identified Sikh
insurgents, India created and changed such laws as the National Security Act of 1980; the
Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act of 1987; the Anti-Hijacking Act of

89 Marwah 103.
90 Marwah 102.
1982; the Religious Institutions (Prevention of Misuse) Ordinance of 1988; the Armed Force (Punjab and Chandigarh) Special Powers Act of 1983; and the Punjab Disturbed Areas Act of 1983. These laws cut through the backchannels and red tape authorities had been forced to negotiate at the beginning of the insurgency and made their jobs much easier.

Finally, the government resolved to hold free elections in Punjab in 1992. They hoped that a positive turnout would cement their legitimacy in the eyes of the people and pave the road to regional normalcy. The Sikh turnout was indeed popular, despite calls for a boycott. The process demonstrated to the Indian government, the police, and fellow Sikhs that the people of Punjab were weary of violence and ready for peace. When Akali Dal leaders returned to mainstream Punjab politics in mid-1992, they were accompanied by a sense of normalcy, which only increased through 1993. The Akali elites wished to revive the democratic process. They knew that if they refused, the political system would begin to revive without them with the assistance of the government in Delhi, leaving them marginalized. So, as fear of retribution from Sikh militants ebbed, the legitimate Akali Dal resurfaced in Punjab politics and took control once more, wiser than they had been before 1978.

As the elections took place and democracy made its return to Punjab, the insurgency entered its final months. The few “remaining militants became so desperate that they started hitting soft targets, such as cinemas, buses, trains, and railway stations.

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92 Marwah 97.
93 Chima 624.
They even started targeting families of policemen [many of whom were also Sikh]. These tactics further alienated the Sikh community.⁹⁴ With a population now invested in the revived democratic process and a police force capable of deterring and tracking down the remaining terrorists, the last of the insurgency finally surrendered or was captured, killed, or driven out of Punjab to dwell on failure. By the end of 1993, India declared the counterinsurgency in Punjab victorious, an assessment that has stood the test of time.

The victory would not have been possible without the dramatic changes that were made between the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 and Operation Black Thunder of 1988. Nor would it have been possible without the cooperation of each level of law enforcement, military, and government during this time, making sure that the changes happened in concert with one another. The police received new leadership, equipment, and training and developed a game-changing system of intelligence. The paramilitary and military were ordered to shift to cooperative and support roles and thus benefited from the improvements and intelligence of the police. The government addressed the economic grievances of the region and thereby gave youths a stake in society that negated the appeal of the insurgent lifestyle. They also reformed the legal system to support the law enforcement authorities on the ground in Punjab and, when the time was right, revived the region’s democratic process. All of these improvements were accomplished in marvelous synchronicity with one another, feeding off each other’s successes and

⁹⁴ Marwah 103.
convincing the people of Punjab that they could trust the central government and its police and military representatives.

Most importantly, the government cohesion that appeared in the insurgency’s final era is due much of the success of each of these parts. The central government realized that to reverse the abysmal performance record of the Punjab police, it needed a firm leader to guide it; so Ribeiro and Gill were successively appointed to the position. It also finally chose to heed the wisdom that a nuanced, local understanding of the situation is required to successfully put down any insurgency. Realizing this fact, the policy decision was made to encourage cooperation amongst local police, paramilitary, and military forces. The third part of the government’s newfound grand strategy concerned the underlying causes of insurgency: they planned and executed initiatives that successfully addressed the failing economic situation in Punjab, revised the laws that had in part allowed the insurgency to grow out of hand in its initial stages, and when the time was right restored democracy. By accomplishing all of these things at once, the central government won back the population’s trust, convinced the people and most of the insurgents that they could not win a revolution, and gave them a face-saving and peaceful path to resolution.

**India’s Unconditional Victory and Punjab’s Regrowth**

Though the counterinsurgency won the hearts and minds of the people and eventually returned Punjab to its previously peaceful state, one must note that India yielded to none of the insurgency’s demands, not even the ones that had been adopted from previous political grievances. In the end, India had so bludgeoned the Sikh people with war that it
was enough to offer a peaceful return to the status quo. The people of Punjab gained little more than slightly less turbulence between the local Akali Dal and Congress parties. This unconditional peace was enough for them, though, and has been so ever since.

They have even made the best of their circumstances: “with the end of this forgettable and unfortunate chapter of terrorism, the state yet again stands on the edifice of progress and prosperity.”

**Strategic and Tactical Effectiveness of Indian Counterinsurgency Forces in Punjab**

The early years of the insurgency witnessed an almost complete lack of attention from the central government of India. The relegated the problem to local Punjab politicians and law enforcement officers. The local political parties were little help, though. Blinded by their squabbles with one another, they considered the growing insurgency a law and order problem rather than the rise of an organized militant threat. Politicians did little to counter the anti-government propaganda generated by the insurgency, and the management of growing violence devolved on the police. Untrained in counterinsurgency, ill equipped to manage the tasks it required, and under staffed to do much more than react to the early assassinations, the police practiced enemy-centric tactics that were so weak that they produced no convincing long-term strategy for putting down the insurgency.

When the central government finally recognized the problem as an insurgency instead of a law and order problem, its strategy was to punish the people of Punjab. The government in Delhi found first that the democratically elected officials of Sikh-

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95 Chadha 218.
dominated Punjab were unable to put down the insurgency on their own, second that the insurgency was comprised of Sikh extremists, and third that the Sikhs’ most holy of temples had been unable to resist infiltration by insurgents. Its response to these findings was to do away with or purge Punjab society’s institutions of elements the government found undesirable. They dismissed the government entirely and denied the troubled region its previous democratic freedoms, they practiced religious profile and discrimination against the Sikh population in general, and they initiated plans for Operation Blue Star. Hypothetically, these purges would provide the space in which the central government could remove the cancer of insurgency and restore normalcy to the region.

Unfortunately, the Sikh people did not take kindly to the anti-population strategy that had been adopted. The choice to remove the religious Akali Dal government elevated suspicions of Delhi’s prejudice against Sikhs, and the search tactics used at checkpoints against profiled Sikhs only served to confirm such suspicions. Then, with the occurrence of Operation Blue Star in and the tactical decision to do so at night without first allowing innocent civilians to exit, resulting in many of their deaths, most of the population believed the insurgency’s claims against the government: they had no respect for the Sikh religion and meant to undermine it, violently if necessary. The anti-population and revenge strategy adopted when politicians incited the anti-Sikh riots after Indira Gandhi’s assassination did nothing to improve relations between the Sikh people and central authorities. The unified choice in tactics by the rioters—dousing Sikh boys and men with kerosene and lighting them afire in the middle of the street, then gang
raping each of the women—only made the episode more vivid in Sikh minds and enhanced their belief in insurgent propaganda: that the Hindu-dominated central government hated Sikhs and would stop at nothing to drive them into submission.

At this low point, when insurgents’ attacks skyrocketed, the government realized that eliminating the insurgency would not be possible while the population continued to support the enemy and protect them from the state. Here it made the critical decision to adopt the central tenant of population-centric counterinsurgency doctrine and convert from an anti-population grand strategy to one inherently population-centric. India had never formerly recognized an official counterinsurgency doctrine before this time, and it did not until its publication of *Doctrine for Sub-Conventional Operations* in 2006.96 However, before and during the Sikh insurgency several Indian scholars and practitioners had published articles on the subject in military publications. They had attempted to theorize the common qualities of urban counterinsurgency campaigns and its best practices.97 Also, India was well acquainted with the successes and failures of the British in Malaya and colonial India and the advice on intelligence capabilities from Gen. Frank Kitson. In *theory* it knew that the main objective of a counterinsurgency should be the control and support of the population.

Only after the first two costly eras of the insurgency did the Indian government find it in their best interest to coalesce around this population-centric objective and promote strategies and tactics that would achieve it. Until that time, India appears not to have followed any set counterinsurgency doctrine. Its policies were contradictory and

96 Banerjee 189.
unsure of the war’s ultimate objective. Once the political elites were able to agree on the main objective—control and support of the population—its efforts ceased to include anti-population plans and tactics and began to employ population-centric and enemy-centric methods. Each operation and tactic was aimed to the obtain the control and support of the population.

Most of the programs initiated to win over the people and limit the insurgency’s recruitment pool—revisions in training and sensitivity requirements, neighborhood patrols, economic stimuli, and the reintroduction of free elections—employed population-centric strategies and tactics and contributed to the synchronized counterinsurgency victory.

Some of the methods of success were enemy-centric in nature, though, such as the CAT intelligence system. It was population-centric insofar as its results—the capture and killing of insurgents—made the population safer from the extremists it brought to justice; but the strategic intent of the CAT system was enemy-centric. It served the overall population-centric goals of the counterinsurgency, but its primary function was to target and eliminate the enemy. All enemy-centric tactics employed in its service were also aimed toward this eventual end.

So one might conclude that population-centric doctrine supplied the main strategic objective, and from this objective there proceeded successful population-centric and enemy-centric strategies and tactics. These strategies and tactics were successful because they were conducted in the service and spirit of the overall policy objective.
They are therefore ripe for consideration as fair options by other counterinsurgencies who plan to use them in the service of the same objective.

So far as anti-population strategies and tactics are concerned, one might suggest that while the anti-population approach implemented during the 1984-1988 era achieved few results when they were enacted, perhaps the fear of being victimized remained with the Sikhs even after the police, military, and government underwent rapid changes to protect them. The combination of residual fear and relief from the radical change may have conditioned the people of Punjab to be more than happy for a return to the status quo between 1992 and 1993. They may have demanded no concessions from the central government because they had been utterly convinced during the anti-population period that the insurgency lacked a viable military option against Indian forces and, if demands for change were not relinquished, the Indian government would be more than capable of resuming it victimization of innocent Sikhs. This final suggestion regarding anti-population is far from proven by this project, to say nothing about its ethical limitations. However, the possibility does deserve further research at a later time. Anti-population methods, if they occurred at an earlier time during a counterinsurgency that has since reoriented itself as population-centric, may better ensure an unconditional victory at the end of the war.

This project cannot prove this conjecture, however. What it does show is that population-centric and enemy-centric operations and tactics, when employed toward the population-centric objective of the control and support of the population, tend to deliver positive results. Dogmatic population-centric doctrine that neglects to credit the possible
utility of enemy-centric strategic operations and tactics should therefore consider reframing its argument, mindful of these conclusions.
THE RUSSIAN COUNTERINSURGENCY IN CHECHNYA, 1994-2002

The utter failure of the Russian counterinsurgency in Chechnya from 1994-2002, which also employed a range of population-centric, enemy-centric, and anti-population methods, caveats the limited extent to which such recommendations on enemy-centric counterinsurgency operations and tactics ought to be made.

Russia’s experiences in Karabakh during the internal war in Azerbaijan and Armenia between 1987 and 1994 and during the war in Georgia between 1989 and 1993 affected the way the government and military approached militancy in Chechnya when it first arose.98 The domestic nature of these conflicts and Russia’s success in guiding them to satisfactory ends—or at least to more stable ones—likely contributed to the country’s faulty perception of how best to put an end to Chechnya’s bid for independence in 1994.

98 A thorough empirical account and analysis of the causes of war and lessons learned in Karabakh and Georgia in the late twentieth century can be found in Christoph Zürcher, “Wars in Georgia” and “The War over Karabakh,” in The Post-Soviet Wars: Rebellion, Ethnic Conflict, and Nationhood in the Caucasus (New York: New York UP, 2007). All discussion on these two conflicts has been drawn from this well-balanced source.
Both previous internal wars had taught them, however wrongly, that Soviet or Russian troops were far superior to the armed bands of rebellion that rose up in the satellite states; and sending Russian troops to seek a military solution to rebellion eventually brought about a cessation of violence. By sending troops into the area to control the satellite state’s population and government institutions, Russia could also reform the political situation there, propping up the leaders and laws it believed would manage the conflict to Moscow’s greatest advantage.

When a mob-like militia took control of the KGB building and other government institutions in Grozny on October 5, 1991, followed by a rapid rise in shootings, murders, carjackings, hostage takings, and hate killings of Russian residents in Chechnya, Russia perceived the rebellion as similar to the ones in Karabakh and Georgia. Moscow demanded that control of Chechnya be returned to the proper authorities, but the country elected a new leader, President Dudayev, who declared Chechnya’s independence on November 2. Adhering to lessons from its other recent rebellions, Russia’s President Yeltsin flew several hundred commandos to Grozny to bring the situation under control. Russia underestimated the will of Dudayev and the force his popular support enable him to bring to bear, though. Dudayev’s National Guards surrounded the Russian commandos in the middle of Grozny, whom Yeltsin ordered not to fire for fear that they would harm innocent civilians. The Russians surrendered and were sent back to Moscow.

100 Murphy 12.
101 Murphy 13.
In a successful attempt to convince Moscow of the Chechen determination, and to
curry favor with President Dudayev, a young militant named Shamil Basayev added
insult to injury by hijacking a Russian TU-154 passenger jet on November 9, threatening
to blow up the plane if Russia did not lift the ‘state of emergency’ it had declared in
Chechnya. While Yeltsin did not capitulate, the Supreme Soviet demanded a lift in the
state of emergency, and Basayev was allowed to return home safely.

At this time, Russia retreated to Moscow. Its efforts in Chechnya devolved to
waging peaceful negotiations with Dudayev and attempting to establish a friendly
relationship with his administration. By this time, however, the young Basayev’s
popularity had grown to rival Dudayev’s, and his taste for militant action prompted him
to gather and train a small army. Basayev’s band of warriors grew stronger and,
because of its mistrust of Russia and favor with Dudayev, poisoned Russian relations
with the Chechen political administration. Further, covert support of a Chechen
opposition movement failed to wrest control of the country from Dudayev and his fellow
nationalists. Unwilling to lose control of Chechnya and believing that no other option
existed to reclaim power from the Dudayev administration and the Basayev-led army,
Russia launched a military operation to “disarm illegal armed formations” and “restore
constitutional order” in the troubled satellite state on December 11, 1994. So began
the first Russo-Chechen War, in which the armed rebels of Chechnya were forced to flee

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102 Murphy 13
103 Murphy 13.
104 Murphy 14-17.
105 Murphy 17.
106 Murphy 18.
the city of Grozny and take up the task of insurgency, and the Russian army found itself in the middle of a counterinsurgency campaign.

**1994-1996: The First Russo-Chechen War**

The Russians’ invasion of Chechnya in December 1994 was decidedly conventional. They sent in 23,800 men, 80 tanks, and 208 APC/IFVs, and 182 artillery pieces. At this time, the Russians did not know they were fighting a counterinsurgency. The military did what it had been trained to do, driving tanks into Grozny to occupy and secure it against possible resistance. The training and discipline of the troops deployed to Chechnya’s capital must not have been well trained or disciplined, however, for they disregarded proper combined arms tactics. The armed tank divisions drove into Grozny ahead of infantry support, and as a result the Chechen military waiting for them there was able to ambush and destroy 102 or 120 vehicles in the 131st Motorized Brigade. This battle for Grozny continued for several weeks, until in January the Chechen resistance fighters fled the city. Having failed to perform a basic encirclement of the city, the Russians were helpless to halt their escape. They took control of the city, clearing it of rebels by late February, but the fact that the resistance still lived on outside of Grozny meant Russian troops still suffered their attacks: Basayev’s army conducted daylight

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108 Payin, 24.
barrages of military convoys and supply lines, and at night they took to sabotage and hit-and-run attacks.\textsuperscript{110}

These attacks continued, and the status quo did not change until the summer of 1995. The Russians had destroyed huge swaths of Chechnya on their way to the capital. After the fight for Grozny from December 1994 through February 1995, much of the infrastructure and basic services (e.g., running water, heat and electricity) had been obliterated. While promises to rebuild these structure and services were made, they have yet to be fulfilled.\textsuperscript{111} Public order also broke down and was never fully restored.\textsuperscript{112} Russian troops’ lawless and brutish tactics to control the city only exacerbated this problem. During the fight for Grozny itself, innocent civilians were caught in the crossfire between Federation and Chechen militants; whole streets of Grozny were razed to the ground; and reports of rape and pillage flooded the region.\textsuperscript{113} Anti-population methods were employed as a matter of fact during and after the initial invasion of Grozny, and as a result Russia lost the war for the population’s hearts and minds almost before it had begun. As time wore on and the presence of insurgency became more apparent to the government, it still refused to rally behind a consistent counterinsurgency

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\item Payin 26-27.
\item Kramer 210.
\item Murphy provides factual accounts of the atrocities perpetrated by the counterinsurgents against the Chechen population throughout his text. For a less militant account, see Anna Politkovskaya, \textit{A Small Corner of Hell: Dispatches from Chechnya}, trans. Alexander Burry and Tatiana Tulchinsky (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).
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\end{flushright}
objective. They seem to have thought that sending in the army to achieve a military solution by any means necessary was the best course of action.

So it continued until Shamil Basayev decided to use terrorist tactics to end the war for good. By the summer of 1995, the Russian failure to secure the support of the population and halt contact between citizens and members of the resistance had allowed Shamil Basayev to organize his army and prepare for a major terrorist attack in Moscow proper, codenamed Operation Jihad. On June 14, 1995, he and 142 of his best fighters concealed themselves in covered trucks and bribed their way into Russia. At the last minute unable to drive all the way to Moscow, they detoured to the town of Buddenovsk and took its hospital hostage. Basayev contacted the media to heighten the effect of the hostage crisis and began executing patients in the windows of the building, where footage could be taken and broadcast across Russia. He also held any rescue attempts at bay by using pregnant women from the maternity ward as shields: Yeltsin dared not to order any rescue attempts for fear of the political ramifications if a pregnant woman were filmed being caught in the crossfire. Between a rock and a hard place, President Yeltsin was forced to negotiate with the insurgents, agree to withdraw Federation troops from Chechnya, entertain peace talks in two years’ time, and grant safe passage for Basayev and his men back to the border.

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114 Murphy 20-21.
115 Murphy 22-23.
116 This agreement, known as the Khasavyurt accord, called for talks to resolve the final status of Chechnya before the end of 2001. Until that time, Chechnya was to enjoy a state of quasi-independence—a state that was interrupted by Chechen insurgents’ invasion of Dagestan in August 1999 and resulted in the resumption of hostilities between Russia and Chechnya. Kramer, “Guerrilla Warfare, Counterinsurgency and Terrorism in the North Caucasus: The Military Dimension of the Russian-Chechen Conflict,” *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 57, No. 2 (March 2005), 209.
The Russians were thus proven weak and susceptible to the demands of terrorists, and the Chechen insurgents were welcomed back to Grozny by the overwhelming support of the population. Russia’s inability to develop and employ a counterinsurgency strategy in lieu of seek conventional military victory, and the lack of discipline with which it pursued this goal, using enemy-centric and anti-population methods alike to root out rebel insurgents from the population, left no space to imagine attacks by the insurgents outside of conventional means. They Russians did not expect a terrorist attack in response to their military decimation and occupation of Chechnya. It was left unprepared to either prevent the attack in Buddenovsk or react to it in time enough to prevent the hostage situation that lost the war. These oversights legitimized the insurgency in the eyes of Chechen nationalists everywhere, and the withdrawal of Russian forces a few months later was greeted with relief and enthusiasm. The victory also solidified the confidence of Basayev and his cohorts, who began planning a continuation of the insurgency, expanding the borders of Chechnya into another Russian territory soon after the cessation of hostilities.

1996-2002, and Beyond: The Second Russo-Chechen War

The few efforts Russia made to win back Chechen support between the First and Second Russo-Chechen wars did reflect a better grasp of counterinsurgency strategy. Before and during the Second Russo-Chechen War, it attempted to eliminate underground newspaper and anti-Russian propaganda websites, hoping to secure the population’s support by negating the anti-Russian propaganda of the insurgency. This strategy was enemy-centric

117 The entire story of the 1995 Budennovsk hostage crisis can be found in great detail in Murphy, 20-24. See also Kramer, 246.
and negatively productive insofar as it sought only to target and limit enemy propaganda: very rarely did it produce its own counterpropaganda or perform public acts of goodwill on behalf of the Chechens, which may have had a positive effect. Their attempts were also countered by the “Goebbels” of Chechnya, master propagandist Movladi Udugov. From 1994 onward, Udugov successfully convinced most Chechens to embrace Basayev and his Wolves of Islam (the name the militants had given themselves), or at least to mistrust and frustrate the Russians.\textsuperscript{118} As a matter of policy, Russia’s meager response from 1996 onward was either to ignore Udugov’s press releases, attempt to dismantle the printing presses and websites by which he circulated them, or make promises to work with the \textit{people} of Chechnya for a solution—promises that the population found empty.\textsuperscript{119}

In addition to the Federation’s failure to communicate and the insurgents’ relative success, the Russians also failed as a learning organization while the Chechens evolved at a rapid rate. The evolution of the insurgency is most attributable to the Saudi-born “Black Arab” Khattab, who brought Wahabbism to the militant movement and several foreign Islamic extremist recruits who supplied weapons and training to the insurgency.\textsuperscript{120} With Khattab and his bands of militant Islamists, Basayev and the Wolves of Islam planned and invaded Russia’s territory of Dagestan in August 1999 in the name of Allah and the establishment of a caliphate. They had been transformed as a fighting force and were ready to renew an insurgency against Russia. Russia again sent

\textsuperscript{118} Murphy 79-85, 128-131.  
\textsuperscript{119} Murphy 129-130.  
\textsuperscript{120} Murphy 4, 39.
conventional troops into Dagestan to drive out the invaders, and they ordered the troops to continue their journey, retaking Grozny as they had in December 1994.\textsuperscript{121}

Again, Russian forces were buffeted by hit-and-run tactics. The insurgency’s training between wars had increased the repertoire of its abilities and the numbers of its recruits, though, and Russian soldiers reported that the Chechen militants used new tactics and maneuvers: they conducted bombings, hostage takings, and kidnappings in Moscow and St. Petersburg several times;\textsuperscript{122} they ambushed Russian convoys in the mountainous regions of Chechnya with regularity, degrading Federation morale and projecting the appearance of success to the Chechen people;\textsuperscript{123} they planted mines at night that took the lives of hundreds of Federation soldiers;\textsuperscript{124} and they even learned to reverse-engineer a few self-guided missiles they had captured and used them to take down Russian transport helicopters, killing hundreds more.\textsuperscript{125}

The government simply did not learn from the insurgents’ evolution. It sent more troops and continued the same conventional tactics they had employed since 1994. Ground forces deployed to the mountain regions where military leaders believed insurgents were hiding. Their orders were to kill or capture insurgents and secure the innocent civilian population.\textsuperscript{126} Unfortunately, these orders were given to troops who bore all the qualities a commander desires \textit{not} to have in his fighting force: they were under-trained, overworked, underpaid, and woefully short on supplies. This state of

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{121} Kramer 212.
\textsuperscript{122} Kramer 240-254.
\textsuperscript{123} Kramer 222-226.
\textsuperscript{124} Kramer 226-230.
\textsuperscript{125} Kramer 233.
\textsuperscript{126} Kramer 213.
\end{footnotes}
affairs led to their corruption, demoralization, and lack of discipline—a factor that improved the insurgency’s operational success and convinced the people of Chechnya that though Russia would keep sending more troops, there would be no end to the bloody conflict. In more than one instance, corrupt soldiers were found selling their weapons to insurgents. Defections became commonplace. Lack of discipline—coupled with the atrocities soldiers suffered at the hands of insurgents, and the inability of Russian commanders to maintain tight control over their soldiers through properly organized lines of command and communication—yielded an indiscriminate victimization of the population.

Additionally, the military operations themselves suffered from a lack of training for counterinsurgency. Mark Kramer, writing in 2005, primarily blames the lack of results on troops’ lack of training. He highlights the example of helicopter crashes in the second war: “the average annual flying time for helicopter pilots fell by roughly 90% in the 1990s,” meaning that pilots were spending only 14-28 hours in annual flight training before deployment. This lack of training greatly contributed to the “success that Chechen guerillas achieved against Russian helicopters and aircraft during the first three years of the war.” Similar accounts of military failure due to lack of training abound—

127 Kramer 217-222.
128 Kramer 222. See also “Greetings from Grozny,” which captures detailed interviews from victims of Russian anti-population methods in Chechnya. Rape, pillage, and random hate crimes were common, but also reported were the routine collections of lists of ‘suspected’ insurgents by officers. These lists included boys as young as thirteen or fourteen, whom officers drove away never to return, leaving the male-female population ratio of the country grossly imbalanced.
129 Kramer 235.
130 Kramer 234.
a problem that could have been remedied by increased government control and pressure on the military to perform.

The redeeming facets of the Russian counterinsurgency campaign began to emerge between 1998 and 1999, when individual agencies and military units began to realize that the central government was not going to form a grand counterinsurgency strategy. Since the government would not agree upon sound objectives—such as the control and support of the Chechen population and the elimination of the insurgency—Russian commanders and intelligence personnel experienced with the Chechen conflict on the ground began to organize counterinsurgency methods, operations, and tactics that would at least contain the immediate problem and target enemy leaders for elimination.

The military commissioned and trained an extensive contingent of bomb disposal units, which assisted in the IED and mine war. By February 2000, more than 1,000 minesweeping personnel were assigned to inspect uncontrolled territory for explosive devices and diffuse them before allowing troops to cross the territory.\footnote{131 Kramer 227.} Military officers also continued to abuse the population and patrol city centers arresting anyone suspected of working with the insurgents.\footnote{132 See the interviews with Russian soldiers in “Greetings from Grozny.”} While this method and the anti-population tactics it employed won little support from the population, it achieved the military’s immediate strategic intent: to eliminate insurgents from the areas under their control.

The Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) also sharpened their counterterrorism and intelligence capabilities after the waves of terrorist attacks in Moscow and St. Petersburg. They began building networks of informants in Chechnya, using connections
with the criminal world, bribes, and more creative tactics to gain information on insurgency leaders and insert spies into the insurgents’ camps. The first success they had with this reform was the capture of Raduyev, one of Basayev’s lieutenants. How they captured him remains a state secret, but the rumors circulated (perhaps by the Russians themselves) about how he may have been working with FSB for some time already, dealt a severe blow to the insurgency’s cohesion. Insurgents began not to trust one another, which only increased the opportunities for intelligence officers to exploit mistrust and convince insurgents to confess to the whereabouts of key militant players. Such mistrust led to the intelligence that Khattab’s mother sent monthly care packages to him via an anonymous post office box. Once they had discovered the location and number of the post office box, they intercepted the monthly package, replaced it with one infected with botulism toxin, ensured that Khattab’s courier retrieved it, and waited. Within a few days, news of Khattab’s untimely demise reached Russia. Video footage of his corpse, which the Russian government claimed to have found on a dead insurgent’s body, was broadcast on Russian television news networks for weeks afterwards.

After the death of Khattab, which occurred in early 2002, and the mysterious disappearance of Basayev around the same time, the insurgency lost its most charismatic leadership and, as a result, much of its traction. Attacks ceased to occur on a daily or weekly basis, and soon began to happen once a month or less. However, control of Chechnya still requires the presence of Russian troops, who have continued a systematic

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133 Murphy 156-161.
134 Murphy 164-165.
135 Murphy 166.
oppression of the war torn state’s inhabitants.\textsuperscript{136} The insurgency remains very much alive, as well, garnering new recruits from a frustrated youth only too willing to join the anti-Russian campaign. This continuous effort is evidenced by the propaganda still published by the insurgency’s website and by the Chechen insurgency’s acts of terror on Russia soil that still occur in 2010.\textsuperscript{137}

The Uncertain Ends and Unfortunate Consequences of Tactical Victories and Fragmented Strategies

The Russian failure to put down the insurgency in Chechnya seems to be due to a lack of a cohesive government counterinsurgency strategy. The only cohesive objective that the central government seems to have adopted throughout the course of the insurgency was that of obtaining military victory. Consistently, Moscow has believed that by sending troops to the area, securing the region, and eliminating insurgents and their leaders, the resistance will eventually realize the futility of its actions and surrender. This belief denies the basic tenants of counterinsurgency—that in order to win, once must secure the

\textsuperscript{136} Murphy 241; see also the concluding commentary in “Greetings from Grozny.”

control and support of the problem region’s population and undermine the effectiveness and legitimacy of the insurgency—and even when Moscow grew convinced of the existence of insurgency in Chechnya, it failed to shift its grand strategic paradigm accordingly.

Instead, individual agencies and military units shifted their own operations in a disjointed effort to control the population. They developed enemy-centric and anti-population operations and tactics with the strategic intent of limiting the counterinsurgency’s effect in the short run. The military cordoned and patrolled the population, deterring them from supporting the insurgency with ‘abduction lists’ and harassment. They also developed a program that produced a thousand or more bomb experts who could recognize and diffuse of IEDs and mines in the Chechen countryside, saving hundreds or thousands of Russian soldiers’ lives and limiting the effect that such bombings had on the military’s morale. The FSB, too, developed intelligence methods to track the insurgent-terrorist leaders to their source and develop creative ways of disposing of each of them in turn.

While these methods have worked in the short term and brought an overall decrease in insurgent attacks, the insurgency has not been defeated. Were the military and intelligence services to cease their efforts now, Russia might shortly find the Wolves of Islam an able-bodied institution. A continuous and costly vigilance is necessary to ensure Chechnya does not again become home to a fully blown area of insurgency seeking to expand its reach into Dagestan and other Russian satellite states.
Were the government to develop a cohesive counterinsurgency strategy, rather than taking a conventional approach to the problem, it might act as oversight and leader to the military, intelligence agencies, and other institutions who might be able to contribute to solving the problem. If it were to develop a grand strategy for counterinsurgency and an aim to gain the support of the population, it could develop cross-agency and cross-discipline strategies, operations, and tactics to support the main objective. Chechnya may be rebuilt, and eventually Russia might be able to claim good riddance of the insurgents. Until that time, though, Moscow must depend upon piecemeal methods of intelligence gathering, population oppression, and skirmishes with insurgents in order to prevent the immediate problem from becoming any worse than it already is.
Both Punjab and Chechen insurgencies appealed to the rhetoric of nationalism and religious extremism, and both were waged as separatist movements from a state or federation that claimed control over them. Both were movements employed a mix of terrorist tactics and guerrilla hit-and-run fighting styles against military forces. Both gained support from the population through nationalist and religious extremist rhetoric. One of the main differences between these two insurgencies was that while the Sikh insurgents concentrated in Punjab’s urban center in and around the Golden Temple, the Chechen Wolves of Islam also made a home of Chechnya’s forests and hills once they were turned out of Grozny.

This difference does not negate the most important conclusion that a combined look at the Punjab and Chechen cases offer. Military operations in the wooded and mountainous terrain of Chechnya may have necessitated a different fighting style by the Russian counterinsurgents than the Punjab urban terrain demanded of Indian forces. Each force is similar, though, in the fact that its ability to wholly adapt to the given terrain of insurgency was dependent upon the ability of its central government to identify their main objective in counterinsurgency and provide direction and support to the military and other agencies and initiatives in support of this objective.

Indian police and military forces were finally able to adapt to the needs of counterinsurgency in Punjab because the government recognized what was needed: intelligence and population-supportive patrols were required from the police, so it sent the police force the leadership, training, and equipment to develop these capabilities. The
military needed to approach the situation from a nuanced, local perspective, so the
government encouraged it to cooperate with local police more and to revise its methods
accordingly. Further, once the main objective was isolated, the government was able to
pinpoint underlying causes of failure, i.e., an outmoded penal code and economic
distress, and address them with reform and stimulus packages.

The synchronized approach the government was able to take in directing these
initiatives, fostering strategies, operations, and tactics that all aimed to achieve the
primary objective—whether or not the strategies and tactics were population-centric or
enemy-centric themselves—produced a synergy among all law enforcement parties
involved that helped capture and kill dozens of high profile insurgents and win over the
population. This progress provided the space needed for a re-introduction of regular
government processes and a return to normalcy. More succinctly, the government’s
adoption of a core strategic counterinsurgency objective allowed it to drive all other
counterinsurgency elements to adopt strategies, operations, and tactics essential to the
success and eventual victory of the campaign.

The Russian central government’s inability to decide upon a core
counterinsurgency objective, rather than a conventional one driven by notions of a purely
military solution, is largely at fault for the continued existence of the Chechen
insurgency. The military has adapted to the problems it faces in the war, and the
intelligence agencies have developed the capability to identify and track insurgency
leaders once they attack, but neither of these units cooperate very well: neither of them
are aiming to do more than prevent day-to-day attacks by the insurgents. Only when the
government decides upon a cohesive objective and drives for a synchronized, well-rounded approach to accomplish it, can Russia hope to be rid of its Chechen nuisance.
POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS AND ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

The policy recommendations for Western powers, specifically the United States, that flow from these cases are of necessity limited. The counterinsurgencies in Punjab and Chechnya were, after all, internal wars. The United States and most of its NATO allies are prone to external, or foreign, wars of counterinsurgency. Also, certain ethical considerations must be observed by the United States that Russia and India tend to have ignored in the past. For example, human rights abuses such as those committed during the anti-Sikh riots of 1984 or the first invasion of Grozny in 1994 would never be tolerated in the United States, by legal authorities or the media and general public. The central recommendations of this project do not condone human rights abuse, though; nor do they offer wisdom in counterinsurgency that is any less applicable to external wars than it is to internal ones.

The first of these recommendations pertain to the dogmatic pursuit of population-centric counterinsurgency. The cases demonstrate that the central tenant of population-centric doctrine—that the main objective of counterinsurgency is to obtain the control and support of the population, and also to undermine the legitimacy of the insurgency—is probably the best possible one for which a government can aim. Beyond this admission, however, both cases show that even moderate success is possible with population-centric, enemy-centric, and anti-population methods. The key is for the government to direct each element of the counterinsurgency to develop strategies, operations, and tactics that will support the main objective. These methods may be population-centric, enemy-centric, or anti-population in nature, but their intent will serve the central population-
centric goal to control and support the population of the insurgency. Dogmatic theorists who adhere to the main objective of population-centric counterinsurgency should no longer believe that such an objective necessitates the exclusive use of population-centric methods. Rather, they should creatively reflect on alternative kinds of strategies and tactics that cannot be categorized a population-centric per se, but that do serve the purpose of an overall population-centric core objective.

Additionally, the policymakers themselves should ensure that when waging a counterinsurgency, the government stands behind a clear and cohesive core objective appropriate to the nature of counterinsurgency. Doing so will only aid one toward the kind of victory India witnessed in Punjab. Failing to do so will surely result in the kind of indecisive, omnipresent conflict Russia has experienced in Chechnya.
CONCLUDING REMARKS

This project has demonstrated that while the central tenants of population-counterinsurgency doctrine may be correct, and to win a counterinsurgency one must seize the overall objective to win the people’s hearts and minds, the means of doing so ought not to be limited to purely population-centric methods. Rather, through rigorous training, creative planning, and encouraged initiative, counterinsurgents ought to employ methods—be they population-centric, enemy-centric, or anti-population in nature—that will contribute to the overall core strategic objective of the war. India’s success in Punjab was marked by both population-centric and enemy-centric operations and tactics. The Sikh people’s eventual willingness to cooperate with the Indian forces also may have been sped to a relatively early conclusion by the anti-population methods used at the beginning of the counterinsurgency and the Sikhs’ fervent desire to prove to the Indians that such methods need not be used again. All of these elements combined to win the overall population-centric objective, the people’s hearts, minds, loyalty, and cooperation. Victory was achieved, therefore, with a range of population-centric, enemy-centric, and anti-population methods.

This lesson shows that counterinsurgency theorists and practitioners alike ought to take care when planning operations and tactics: they may adhere to the core objective of population-centric counterinsurgency, the winning of the insurgent population’s hearts and minds; but they ought not to dogmatically limit their route to achieving that goal to population-centric operations and tactics. Counterinsurgents must think creatively and seize the initiative to devise and employ any means that can service the overall objective.
These methods may simply target the enemy; they may be aimed to provide acts of goodwill to the people; they may intimidate the insurgents or those members of the population who aid them. What is important, though, is that dogmatism in warfare be abandoned and upon establishing the core objective, fighters and policymakers embrace creative solutions for achieving it regardless of the labels—population-centric, enemy-centric, anti-population—attached to them.

Caution must be adopted, however, for in order for these methods to work, the central government must agree upon the core objective of the war and hold to it. It must act as a leader and executor of the war, directing the armed forces, relief workers, private sector investors, and bureaucracy on how best to perform their own part toward the achievement of winning hearts and minds. It must recognize that success in counterinsurgency is a sum of its parts: each element must succeed in its own way using a variety of methods aimed toward the overall objective, and each of these methods must be in cooperation with one another, feeding each other’s success unto victory. Without this central guidance, all of the necessary elements for the achievement of the overall objective cannot be ensured. As has been the case in the Russo-Chechen wars of insurgency, various elements have developed means for combating terrorism and insurgency on a day-to-day basis. However, the government refuses to adopt a counterinsurgency objective for success and plan for the various ways in which to achieve that success. The insurgency has gone undefeated, and Russia still expends energy on trying to fight it.
Policymakers must be aware, therefore, that a core objective is needed in counterinsurgency. Law enforcement and military personnel cannot simply be unleashed without guidance upon an area of insurgency and expected to do well, regardless of the methods they adopt. The government must devise a core objective for victory and perform the role of guide and leader for the forces working to achieve it. In order to perform well in counterinsurgency, neither the scholars nor the soldiers of a nation can be dogmatic about their methods. Be their work population-centric, enemy-centric, or anti-population, they ought to do it with creativity and ingenuity, aiming to accomplish the central goals of their state.


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