



Research Article

## Winning Hearts, Not Just Battles: Political Legitimacy and the Dynamics of Counterinsurgency

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### Abstract

Counterinsurgency denotes one of the most important forms of modern warfare. Since most of the insurgencies operate in such an environment where political institutions are weak, society is fragile. Therefore, this paper argues that COIN operations are not only the outcome of military dominance but also largely depend on good governance and political reforms. To this end, this paper has examined various classical theories of COIN, like David Galula and Thompson, as well as the modern doctrine of Clear-Hold-Build and Heart and Minds. Apart from theoretical analysis, this study uses various case studies, including the Malayan emergency, the United States of America's intervention in Vietnam and the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. By analyzing these theories, this paper examined how the balance between coercive and non-coercive approaches helps policymakers to achieve their goals.

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## INTRODUCTION

Counterinsurgency (COIN) remains one of the most complex and contested domains of modern warfare. Unlike conventional conflicts that depend on territorial control and military superiority, COIN revolves around legitimacy, governance, and the contest for winning the allegiance of populations. The term “counterinsurgency” could be defined as a set of military, political, economic, and psychological measures undertaken by a government to defeat an insurgency. Whereas insurgency is an organised movement seeking to overthrow or challenge established authority through subversion and armed conflict.<sup>i</sup> In essence, COIN is a battle for governance rather than mere dominance, where success depends not solely on military means but on establishing credible political authority.

Insurgency mostly survives in such environments where the state’s legitimacy is weak, institutions are fragile, and populations feel alienated from the political order. As David Galula observed, “the population is the prize” in insurgent wars.<sup>ii</sup> In other words, the ultimate determinant of success lies in securing public trust rather than annihilating the enemy. Historically, COIN operations have oscillated between two approaches: the approach of coercion or emphasising military superiority and attrition of insurgent forces, and the non-coercive approach, emphasising legitimacy, governance, and local empowerment.<sup>iii</sup> The conflict between these approaches has shaped the outcomes of all the major insurgencies since the mid-twentieth century.

There is a lot of literature on the COIN strategy available, from classical theorists like Mao Tse-tung and Galula to modern approaches such as “Clear-Hold-Build” and “Hearts and Minds” A persistent research gap still remains. Much of the scholarly and practical dimension still emphasises the tactical dimension of COIN while underplaying its political foundations.<sup>iv</sup> For instance, the U.S. doctrine highlights the importance of legitimate means, but in practice, many operations in Vietnam and Afghanistan showed a disproportionate reliance on coercive measures, reflecting the enduring difficulty of transforming theory into practice.<sup>v</sup> This article is an attempt to bridge that gap by asserting that successful COIN operations are primarily based on political endeavours. Though military force is necessary but insufficient without legitimate governance and public opinion.

This paper relies on the thesis that the outcome of any counterinsurgency policy is political legitimacy rather than kinetic operation. This study uses a comparative historical approach based on four key case studies:

1. **The Malayan Emergency (1948–1960):** based on an integrated civil-military-political model
2. **Vietnam and the Soviet-Afghan War:** based on COIN failure due to over-militarisation
3. **Afghanistan:** based on modern hybrid COIN challenges
4. **India’s Left-Wing Extremism (LWE):** a long-term internal insurgency outcome of the failed governance and development.

## Conceptual Frameworks of Counterinsurgency Operations

Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations are the result of various military practices, political experience, and ideological confrontation. Conceptual framework of counterinsurgency operations has evolved from the classical doctrines of Mao Tse-tung and David Galula to modern adaptations such as the “Three-Block War” and “Clear-Hold-Build.”<sup>vi</sup> Thus, COIN has shifted from a mere tactical endeavour to a complex civil–military strategy. The nature of COIN however, has been changed lot from its inception but still raises some questions like what determines success in COIN? Whether it is based on the application of military force or the legitimacy of governance? Therefore it is essential to explore the foundational and modern frameworks that underpin the theory and practice of counterinsurgency, emphasizing the balance between coercion and persuasion.

## Classical Theories of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency

It has been considered that the root of COIN lies in the revolutionary idea of Mao Tse-tung during China’s Communist revolution.<sup>vii</sup> Mao propagate a three-phase theory of insurgency (1) the organizational phase, where insurgents tries to hold themselves through political infrastructure and mobilize the local population; (2) the guerrilla warfare phase, based on hit-and-run tactics; and (3) the conventional warfare phase, where the insurgents transform themselves into a full-scale military confrontation.<sup>viii</sup> Mao was of the view that 80 percent of insurgency is built up politically and 20 percent militarily.<sup>ix</sup> This propound a lasting principle which says that military operations must serve a broader political purpose.

The western thinkers like David Galula and Robert Thompson in response to Maoist insurgency theory has developed counterinsurgency principles based on population control and legitimacy. Galula in his work *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* has proposed that insurgency and counterinsurgency are inter related<sup>x</sup>. The insurgent wants to overthrow the state’s legitimacy while the government strives to rebuild it. He further said in his “Eight Maxims of COIN” that population security, intelligence gathering, local governance, and gradual reform are the base of conceptual framework of COIN which later become the part of U.S. army COIN doctrines such FM 3-24.<sup>xi</sup> Galula emphasizes that “the population is the prize,” encapsulating the centrality of winning hearts and minds over battlefield victories.<sup>xii</sup>

In the same way Sir Robert Thompson, has articulated five principles of COIN in *Defeating Communist Insurgency*. His principle was based on the British experience in Malaya. These principles include a clear political aim, function within the law, secure population centers, prioritize intelligence, and create an effective civil administration.<sup>xiii</sup> Both Galula and Thompson was of the view that the insurgency is the result of political crisis. Therefore required a civil–military coordination, not simply a military operation. Thompson helped in implementing the Briggs Plan in Malaya (1948–1960).<sup>xiv</sup> This plan has

exemplified a holistic approach by integrating governance, resettlement, and psychological operations.

### Modern Counterinsurgency Frameworks

By the late 20th century, classical COIN theories has witnessed new challenges from non-state actors, and asymmetric warfare. To adapt according to new challenges militaries has redefined COIN in broader, multidimensional terms. U.S. Marine General Chrls Krulak in 1990s has introduced the “Three-Block War” concept, emphasized the complexity of modern operations.<sup>xv</sup> According to this concept a single platoon could be engaged in three simultaneous activities: humanitarian aid in one block, peacekeeping in the next, and military operation in third block. This framework underscored the flexible nature of modern COIN emphasize on adaptability, decentralized leadership, and sensitivity to local population.<sup>xvi</sup>

U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual (FM 3-24) (2014) formalized the “Clear-Hold-Build” strategy.<sup>xvii</sup> This strategy is based on the lessons of Malaya and Vietnam experience. The first terminology “Clear” indicated removal of insurgent presence; “Hold” referred to win the population; and “Build” means restoring the governance. Although Clear, Hold-Build policy seems simple but this model exposes inherent tensions. For instance success in the “build” phase required acceptance of common public and political legitimacy which is in direct confrontation of military operations.<sup>xviii</sup> Similarly Petraeus and Amos observed that COIN is like “armed social work.”<sup>xxix</sup> In other words insurgency could be curb by combining kinetic operations with development and diplomacy.

Information operation is another modern evolution in the field of insurgency. With the advent of media and digital platforms, information space has become new battlefield to influence perception.<sup>xx</sup> Example of COIN operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and India’s Left-Wing Extremism (LWE) shows that strategic communication, psychological operations, and digital counter-narratives have become the integral elements of COIN.<sup>xxi</sup> This new idea is reflected in Kilcullen view that insurgencies have become the “wars of ideas” fought through networks and narratives not with bullets.<sup>xxii</sup>

### The Debate: “Minimum Force” vs. “Annihilation”

The important debate about COIN lies between the concept of restraint and the logic of total annihilation. Classical theorists like Thompson and Galula emphasized “minimum necessary force”.<sup>xxiii</sup> They are of the view that excessive force will alienate the local population and thus undermines legitimacy. On the other hand historical examples such as Vietnam and the Soviet-Afghan War reflected the use of “maximum force”.<sup>xxiv</sup> This approach aimed at total annihilation of the insurgent force, often come with counterproductive results. The British experience in Malaya showed that the use of restrained force has been more successful than the use of excessive force. Thus U.S. and Soviet experiences demonstrates the futility of excessive use of firepower without maintaining the politically stability.<sup>xxv</sup>

On the contrary of classical doctrines, modern COIN doctrines rely on the proportionate use of force within a political

framework. Modern COIN doctrine does not seek the total destruction of the insurgent but the restoration of stable governance.<sup>xxvi</sup> As Kilcullen (2010) observed that “tactical success through kinetic operations could not yield permanent stability rather it erodes political legitimacy.”<sup>xxvii</sup>

### Synthesis

The important debate about COIN lies between the concept of restraint and the logic of total annihilation. Classical theorists like Thompson and Galula emphasized “minimum necessary force”. They are of the view that excessive force will alienate the local population and thus undermines legitimacy.<sup>xxviii</sup> On the other hand historical examples such as Vietnam and the Soviet-Afghan War reflected the use of “maximum force”.<sup>xxix</sup> This approach aimed at total annihilation of the insurgent force, often come with counterproductive results. The British experience in Malaya showed that the use of restrained force has been more successful than the use of excessive force.<sup>xxx</sup> Thus U.S. and Soviet experiences demonstrates the futility of excessive use of firepower without maintaining the politically stability.<sup>xxxi</sup>

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### Case Studies

#### The Classic Model: Successful COIN (Malaya)

The Malayan Emergency (1948–1960) is the perfect example of a successful counterinsurgency campaign. This operation has been conducted by the British colonial administration against the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) and its armed wing, the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA). This campaign demonstrates that the sheer military strength is not the key to defeating insurgency until the consolidation of political legitimacy and administrative control. Thus Malayan experience has become a holy hymn for subsequent COIN doctrines, emphasizing the principle that “winning the people is winning the war .”<sup>xxxiii</sup>

#### Historical Context and the Nature of the Insurgency

After the World War II, Malaya faced severe economic constraint, ethnic division, and political instability.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The Malayan Communist Party (MCP) mostly had support base among ethnic Chinese community.<sup>xxxv</sup> They drew their inspiration from Marxist–Leninist ideology. MCP wants to overthrow the British colonial rule and establish a communist ruled state. The MCP launched armed attack on plantation and tin mines in 1948 mark the formal beginning of insurgency in Malaya.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

MCP had several structural advantages in Malaya like dense jungles which provides them sanctuary; they also had fighting experience with Japanese. Malaysians also had the post-war nationalist sentiment which helps them to mobilize against colonial power easily.<sup>xxxvii</sup> Apart from these advantages the insurgency in Malaya had suffered ethnic isolation as it mostly

s dependence on the support of Chinese minority population which limit its appeal among the rest of the population including Indian laborers.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

Initially British authorities responded this insurgency with traditional military approach, including curfews, sweeps, and deportations.<sup>xxxix</sup> These initial attempts to curb the insurgency largely failed, as they alienated civilians and disrupted their livelihoods. Among all these failures a turning point has come with the appointment of Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs in 1950 as Director of Operations. He changed the basic approach of COIN in Malaya and emphasizes on comprehensive civil-military approach which later known as the Briggs Plan.<sup>xi</sup>

### **The Briggs Plan: Population Control and Political Legitimacy**

The Briggs Plan (1950–1951) had redefined the COIN strategy in Malaya and become the operational foundation of British success. Briggs core plan was to separate the insurgents from its support base which was the rural Chinese population. The aim of this plan was to create a secure place where insurgents could not get shelter, food, recruitment and intelligence. Briggs had firm believe that military operations alone could not defeat an ideologically motivated insurgency movement.<sup>xii</sup> Instead of focusing on military operations, he focused on population control, intelligence dominance, and political reform.

#### **Key Components of the Briggs Plan:**

##### **1. Resettlement of the Population:**

The Briggs plan had started with relocating over 500,000 rural Chinese people into fortified “New Villages”.<sup>xiii</sup> These people were entitled to receive housing, healthcare, education, and community governance under British oversight. However this relocation was coercive, but it has secured the common population from insurgent intimidation and integrated them with government’s administrative system. Thus it effectively cut off the supplies of insurgents which were the lifeline of the MNLA’s.

##### **2. Unified Civil–Military Command:**

After separating population from insurgents Briggs established a unified command structure that integrated military, police, and civil administration.<sup>xiii</sup> District War Executive Committee (DWEC) had been established in each district.<sup>xiv</sup> Every DWEC chaired by a civil administrator. This administrator was responsible for ensuring coordination of intelligence, development, and security operations.

##### **3. Intelligence and Psychological Operations:**

Briggs were of the view that nothing can replace the human in intelligence gathering. Therefore he mostly relied on human intelligence (HUMINT) and psychological warfare (PsyOps).<sup>xv</sup> To this end he encourages amnesty programs. He also emphasize on positive propaganda to show the government efforts towards people of Malaya, which brought them legitimacy. One such effort to gather intelligence was in the form of Special Branch. This branch had become one of the most effective intelligence gathering agencies in Malaya. This

agency with the help of defectors, penetrates into the MCP networks and dismantle their plant and network..

#### **Lessons and Strategic Insights**

##### **The Malayan Emergency offers enduring lessons for modern COIN:**

###### **1. Unity of Effort:**

The success of COIN operation in Malaya was the outcome of a coherent civil–military structure with clear objectives. This was sharply different from the case of Vietnam and Afghanistan, where fragmented command and conflicting political interest undermine the effectiveness of the operation.

###### **2. Political Legitimacy Over Kinetic Dominance:**

The COIN operation in Malaya witnessed turning point when it was shifted from a purely military campaign to one based on political legitimacy and inclusive governance.

###### **3. Population-Centric Approach:**

The success of COIN operation in Malaya were largely based on the protection, welfare, and representation of the population. These principle had been codified later in Galula’s writings and became the covenant of COIN theory.

###### **4. Effective Use of Intelligence:**

Intelligence is one of the important aspect of any COIN operation. Malayan administration were largely depends on the human intelligence which provide them local support and psychological operations proved decisive. The “hearts and minds” campaign had been operational zed through systematic intelligence gathering.

###### **5. Cultural and Contextual Adaptability:**

The British changed themselves according to local environment. They accepted local ethnic, social, and political realities rather than imposing their culture on local population. This adaptive approach were not seen in U.S. and Soviet campaigns elsewhere.

#### **The Failure Model: Misapplied Force (Vietnam & Soviet–Afghan War)**

If the Malayan Emergency represents the example of successful counterinsurgency operation through population-centric approach, the Vietnam War (1955–1975) and the Soviet–Afghan War (1979–1989) represents the failure of excessive militarization and political incoherence. Both campaigns revealed the limits of technological and numerical superiority in wars among the people. In both cases, superpowers could not win the support of local population which make them alienated and help insurgents to strengthen their insurgent narrative. Thus eroded the political and moral legitimacy of the counterinsurgent powers.

#### **The Vietnam War (1955–1975): Strategic Overreach and Political Disconnection**

The problem in Vietnam emerged from the decolonization process in Indochina. After the French defeat at Dien Bien Phu (1954), Vietnam had been divided along the 17th parallel.<sup>xvi</sup>

The communist part was with Ho Chi Minh and the anti-communist part was under Ngo Dinh Diem.. The United States of America (USA) initially started intervention at advisory level which further escalated into a full-scale war after 1965. USA had deployed over 500,000 American troops in Vietnam.<sup>xlvii</sup> The objective was to prevent the communist expansion in Southeast Asia.

**United States totally misunderstood the nature of the conflict in Vietnam.** North Vietnam view American intervention as an external aggression rather than a domestic insurgency, which dismantle the American narrative against communist regime. Consequently, the American applied the approach of attrition over winning political legitimacy.

### The Fallacy of attrition

America has adopted a strategy totally different from the Malayan COIN approach which was based on the doctrine of search and destroys under the command of General William Westmoreland. This approach relying on large-scale operations, aerial bombardment, and body-count metrics to measure success. The objective of the operation was annihilation of the North Vietnam. Therefore over 7 million tons of bombs were dropped in North Vietnam which was three time the tonnage used in WWII.<sup>xlviii</sup> This approach totally ignored the decentralize nature of insurgency and its capacity for regeneration.

Despite heavy bombardment the Viet Cong (VC), successfully drawing support from rural populations and aided by the Ho Chi Minh Trail. America effort to destroy the villages, civilian casualties, and forced relocations of villagers to “Strategic Hamlet” alienated the neutral population.<sup>xlix</sup> Thus rather than isolating the insurgents, these inhuman actions strengthen the nationalist and anti-imperialist against the USA.

### Political Legitimacy and Governance Failure

Under Diem the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam) lacked popular legitimacy. Corruption was rampant, people were discriminated on religious lines, administration was inefficient which ultimately weakened the internal base South Vietnam.<sup>1</sup> U.S. dependence on an unpopular regime undermined the credibility of its mission. On the contrary North Vietnam followed a disciplined, ideologically coherent image which appealed to nationalist across both North and South. However, Viet forces had been repelled but exposes the vulnerability of U.S. forces and shattering the invincible image of America.<sup>li</sup> It was a psychological victory for the Viet Cong. On the other hand U.S. had faced the domestic pressure which was fueled by graphic media coverage and public protest.

### Lessons from Vietnam

The Vietnam witnessed several key COIN lessons which later was codified by theorists like David Galula and John Nagl:

#### 1. Military force alone cannot secure victory in insurgency.

Without credible local governance and political legitimacy, counterinsurgency efforts could not achieve their target.

2. **Metrics must align with strategic goals.** Over emphasized on Body counts and territorial control distort population security and trust.
3. **Cultural intelligence is indispensable.** With the outset of the COIN U.S. treating this conflict as a traditional conflict and totally ignored the social and ideological drivers of the insurgency.
4. **Media and domestic politics are decisive in modern COIN.** Vietnam teaches us that COIN campaigns operate in both military and informational domains.

### The Soviet–Afghan War (1979–1989): Occupation without Legitimacy

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979 was another mistake repeated by Soviet Union. The Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979, intended to support the Marxist government of the People’s Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA).<sup>lii</sup> Which soon convert into a brutal counterinsurgency quagmire? During a decade an estimated 15,000 Soviet soldiers were killed during the COIN operation, which eventually results into the collapse of the USSR.<sup>liii</sup>

### Context and Objectives

After assuming the power the PDPA made radical reforms such as land redistribution, secularization, and suppression of tribal and religious authorities which provoked widespread revolt. When PDPA failed to established stability in the region, Soviet forces stepped into the Afghanistan aiming to stabilize the regime of Babrak Karmal and to secure Afghanistan as a socialist buffer state. But the Mujahideen insurgency, motivated by religious sentiments and supported by the United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and China, quickly expanded across the mountainous terrain.

### The Soviet Approach: Coercive Control

The Soviet forces adopted the same mistake which had been done by the U.S. in Vietnam. Soviet were. They were also relying on firepower, aerial bombardment, and population displacement rather than governance reform. Soviet army had used excessive force against the Afghan Mujahideen. People who were suspected of aiding the Mujahideen were tortured and whole villages were destroyed.<sup>liiv</sup> Which results into mass civilian casualties and refugee flows exceeding 5 million people? This devastation eroded any remaining legitimacy of the PDPA government.

Apart from strategic failure, the Soviet military structure also played important role in failure of the COIN operation in Afghanistan. Soviet had the centralized, conventional, and heavy mechanized units. These units were ill-suited to Afghanistan’s guerrilla environment. On the other hand Mujahideen forces, operating in decentralized cells and had knowledge of terrain. Despite tactical innovations like airborne assaults and the use of Mi-24 Hind gunships, Soviet forces failed to control rural areas beyond major garrisons.<sup>liv</sup>

### Information and Ideological Defeat

Information and ideology is one of the most important factors in deciding victory in COIN operations. On the contrary of Malayan insurgency, Mujahideen were enjoying extensive external support through Operation Cyclone, a CIA–ISI joint program that supplied weapons (notably Stinger missiles), training, and intelligence while Soviet had not any local or external support. They had to rely on their own support. This external patronage transformed the Afghan insurgency into a global jihadist movement, further isolating the Soviets diplomatically.<sup>lvi</sup>

On the ideological level the USSR tried to propagate Marxist ideology which were contrary to the Afghanistan's Islamic identity, producing an irreconcilable legitimacy crisis. This scenario has been described by scholar Rodric Braithwaite (2011) as, "The Soviets could occupy the land but not the loyalties <sup>lvii</sup>." Thus USA and USSR both have committed same mistake at ideological level leading to failure of credible governance. By 1988, casualties among Soviet soldiers were mounting which lead to breakdown of morale. Eventually Soviet were forced to signed the Geneva accords and left the Afghanistan by 1989.

### Comparative Analysis: Vietnam and Afghanistan

Dimension	Vietnam (U.S.)	Afghanistan (USSR)
<b>Political Legitimacy</b>	Weak; dependent on corrupt South Vietnamese regime	Nonexistent; imposed Marxist regime rejected by populace
<b>Insurgency Motivation</b>	Nationalist, anti-colonial, communist-led	Religious-nationalist, anti-occupation
<b>Population Relations</b>	Alienated by destruction, forced relocation	Alienated by bombing and repression
<b>External Support to Insurgents</b>	Limited but steady (from North Vietnam, China, USSR)	Massive (U.S., Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, China)
<b>Outcome</b>	Withdrawal, regime collapse (1975)	Withdrawal, regime collapse (1992)
<b>Key Failure</b>	Misreading of local politics and overreliance on military metrics	Over centralized control, ideological imposition, lack of legitimacy

The example of Vietnam and Afghanistan demonstrates that the COIN operation was largely based on the kinetic measures rather than establishing a legitimate governance Both cases demonstrate that the center of gravity in COIN lies in legitimacy and governance, not force. Despite differing ideologies—capitalist versus communist—both the U.S. and USSR failed for strikingly similar reasons: the absence of local ownership, cultural insensitivity, and the inability to translate military success into political consolidation.

### India's Left-Wing Extremism (LWE): Governance-Led COIN

India is also facing insurgency on its ground, most notably is Left Wing Extremism (LWE) which is popularly known as the Naxal movement. Naxal movement represents such insurgency which is rooted in Indian context. The main reason of this

movement rooted in socio-economic marginalization. This movement originates in Naxalbari, West Bengal in 1967( Roy, 2006) <sup>lviii</sup> The movement quickly expanded across several districts of India which is known as the Red Corridor, encompassing parts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh.<sup>lix</sup> The CPI (Maoist) sought to overthrow the Indian state through protracted people's war.

### Development and Security Approach

Since the origin of Naxalism in India lies in domestic setting therefore initially India has adopted a law-and-order paradigm to curb the problem of Naxalism. But gradually it has shifted towards development and security framework. The National Policy and Action Plan (2015) emphasized four pillars:

1. **Security: Modernization of state police, coordination between state and central paramilitary forces** (state police modernization, central paramilitary coordination),
2. **Development: Emphasize on** infrastructure, land reform, welfare
3. **Rights and Governance:** Local population has been given the forest rights, grievance redressal mechanism
4. **Information and perception management:** Strategy to win local support

India government has shifted its focus from kinetic means towards achieving development targets. Initiatives such as the Integrated Action Plan (IAP) and Aspirational Districts Programme were focused to generate livelihood creation and governance accessibility.<sup>lx</sup> These measures gradually reduced LWE violence. According to ministry of Home Affairs the incidents of violence has been fallen by 75% between 2010 and 2023.

### Lessons from India's Approach

India produces unique lessons to tackle insurgency. India's operation to curb naxalism was not based on annihilation model rather India's COIN approach relies on constitutional legitimacy not occupation. Since India works in democratic setup therefore instead of sudden decimation approach India adopts gradual state penetration in naxal affected regions. Indian authorities had firm believe that insurgencies in democratic settings cannot be suppressed by brute force without eroding civil trust. Thus, India has adopted a policy of inclusion which rest on political inclusion, tribal rights, and socio-economic justice. India's approach towards tackling insurgency demonstrates COIN within a democratic framework. This model also suggests that operation against naxalism will only be succeeded and legitimate when it would be combined with local aspirations. Despite such well knitted policy India faces several challenges such as corruption, occasional human rights violations and slow delivery mechanism

### CONCLUSION

Counterinsurgency (COIN) operations are based on various factors such as military, politics and society which makes them inherently complex. The lessons from the comparative case studies of Malaya, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and India's Naxalite-affected regions suggests that kinetic operations alone could not produce success. COIN results are determined by variety of

factors including political legitimacy, population-centric approach, institutional capacity, and socio-economic development of the affected population. Thus we can suggest following factors for a successful COIN operation

1. Kinetic operation do not have permanent effect, it could be reversed but political legitimacy have permanent effect.
2. The case study of India suggest us that foreign led COIN operation do not have local support therefore they tend to fail. Whereas domestic COIN operation have huge chances of success.
3. With the advent of hybrid nature of war COIN operation also demand operation in multi domain which includes political, informational, economic and cultural.

Thus we can infer that the future COIN operation would not be the sole outcome of the kinetic operations but they will rest on resilient governance which gains legitimacy across physical and cognitive terrain.

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The authors declare no conflict of interest

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