Hearts and Minds
&
Afghan Reconstruction Teams

Chayanika Saxena*

It has been close to 18 years that the US has found itself dealing with a seemingly unending insurgency in a distant land – Afghanistan. Having entered Afghanistan in 2001 to eliminate al Qaeda, little did it know that it would spend more than a decade and a half in addressing the daunting challenge of nation-building in a strife-torn country.

Changing various hands and shifting goal-posts, the international approach towards Afghanistan has increased awareness of the need to build the will of the people while breaking the will of the enemy. In other words, the policies and practices, on the whole, recognise that the destruction of the armed forces of the enemy can only be a means to an end. The larger objective, or the end-state, is to deny such groups conditions for their growth (or re-growth) and proliferation.

It is this realisation that has informed international efforts concerning Afghanistan to go beyond the task of hunting down the insurgents to creating permissive conditions for a functioning, effective democracy to take hold in the country.

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*   President Graduate Fellow and PhD candidate at the Department of Geography, National University of Singapore.

This understanding took the shape of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). A cohort of military and civilian functionaries, the purpose of PRTs was to advance security and development goals in a cohesive, conjoined manner, recognising that one cannot proceed without the other.

Now a terminated project, the rationale behind the implementation of this initiative was to provide counterinsurgency (COIN) in Afghanistan a credible and sustainable basis. In fact, the roots of the concept behind PRTs could be found in other counterinsurgency experiences, which despite their strategic and operational variations, were united in their understanding that it takes more than killing insurgents to thwart an insurgency. One such case has been that of Hearts and Minds that was launched as a COIN measure during the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960).

In moving from *kill-the-enemy* to *preserving-peoples-morale* approach, the COIN operations in the Malayan peninsula demonstrated that to defeat the enemy it was necessary to break its back, which in turn was contingent on building popular faith in the COIN measures. Breaking the will (of the enemy) and building the will (of the people), it was realised, had to be placed in dialogue with each other in such a way that the insurgency could be denied its popular base and bring the conflict to a sustainable end.

More than half a century apart and disparate in many ways, these two examples show that while no two insurgencies and COIN operations are alike, they do exhibit certain common traits. COIN, in particular, seems to subscribe to a common belief that the attrition of the enemy (physically and materiel-wise) can never be enough. At best, it is only a means to the desired end. For COIN to succeed, it must go beyond the physical elimination of the enemy to denying insurgency a political, moral, economic and social base to thrive on.

By looking at how the Malayan Hearts and Minds and Afghan PRTs made use of the development-security paradigm, this paper will highlight its significance to COIN and how it makes COIN useful in the management of conflicts.

What are Insurgency and Counterinsurgency anyway?

Insurgency

Insurgency is an unconventional and irregular war which is different from conventional and regular war in terms of the means it uses and the ends to which it is fought. However, there are two issues that confound this distinction. One, on many occasions, the difference between conventional and unconventional wars is hard to detect, especially if one considers the situation in Afghanistan where what is today a counterinsurgent movement against the Taliban had begun as a war against a transnational, non-state terror outfit. Two, there is nothing unconventional about insurgencies. In fact, as Kilcullen[1] notes, 83 per cent of the wars witnessed between 1816 and the 20th century were civil wars or insurgencies. In addition to this, it is also often difficult to distinguish insurgency from other irregular wars, particularly terrorism, given the propensity with which insurgent movements use terror tactics to meet their goals. Terror groups also work with political goals in mind akin to what the insurgents do. This makes the practical-level differentiation between an insurgency and other variants of war, regular or otherwise, difficult.[2]

Having said so, there is a doctrinal agreement on what insurgency stands for. According to US Joint Publication

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1   David Kilcullen, *Counterinsurgency*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2010.

2   James Kiras. "Irregular Warfare" in Jordan, David, et al. *Understanding Modern Warfare*s, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2016. pp. 301-368.

3-24[3] (2009), "insurgency is the organized use of subversion and violence to seize, nullify, or challenge political control of a region". Both the overall context and the ends to which insurgency operates are political in nature, seeking the overthrow of the existing regime often with the intention of installing oneself in power. Yet, despite its political grandstanding, an insurgency remains irregular insofar as those waging insurgencies often lack the formal wherewithal to wage a war. There is, thus, an inherent power asymmetry between the sides leading and fighting an insurgency.

Insurgencies also differ from conventional wars in terms of what they identify as their assets and liabilities[4], or as their centre of gravity (CoG). Insurgencies, unlike conventional wars which are force-centric in their nature, locate their CoG in the population. Insurgency becomes a population-centric war[5] as the reasons for its emergence are located in public disenchantment with the prevailing political and/or economic and/or social situation.

Insurgencies are also fluid and flexible in \nature.[6] The fact that their CoG is dispersed and often located among non-combatants makes it difficult to identify and sever their supply lines of cadre and materiel. Also, the means they employ and the objectives to which they are put are flexible and even self-reflexive. Insurgencies not only adapt to the local requirements but they also improvise as they respond to challenges.

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3   Joint Publication. "Counterinsurgency: US JP 3-24." October 5, 2009. *Defense Technical Information Center,* http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/new_pubs/jp3_24.pdf.

4   David Galula, "Counterinsurgency warfare: Theory and Practice." Mahnken , Thomas G. and Joseph A. eds., Maiolo. *Strategic Studies: A Reader*. Routledge, New Delhi, 2014, pp. 287-308.

5   David Kilcullen. op.cit. p.6.

6   James Kiras, "Irregular Warfare", op.cit.

Insurgencies tend to be more protracted than conventional wars, and for one major reason – the insurgents, aware of their conventional inferiority when facing a regular army, often assume a defensive posture.[7] Familiar with the locales of their operation and with the people who inhabit it, the insurgents have a far greater ability to wait out the opponent, waging a war of attrition in terms of men, materiel and morale against the opposing force.

While local-bound, insurgencies are also impacted by the external support they attract or fail to attract. In cases such as that of Afghanistan, where insurgencies are supported by external actors, controlling and eliminating them becomes a great issue.[8] Whereas in situations where insurgencies receive little support from outside, like in the Malayan case, [9] dealing with them becomes relatively easier. In the absence of transnational support, it often becomes difficult for the insurgents to regroup and reinforce outside the national territory, thereby limiting the field of operation to areas within domestic boundaries.

Affected by operational and doctrinal dynamics, dealing with an insurgency becomes a complicated task. Unlike conventional conflicts which are relatively more predictable, insurgencies are replete with surprises and improvisations that make it difficult to develop a set pattern to deal with them. COIN, thus has to evolve itself in a way that keeps pace with how an insurgency unfolds itself. This makes COIN highly context-dependent, making it difficult to arrive at a generic model to deal with insurgents. Nevertheless, there are certain common traits to COIN operations.

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7   David Kilcullen, op.cit.

8   Ibid.

9   Richard Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds", in Martson, Daniel and Carter Malkasian, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare*. Osprey Publishing, Oxford, 2008. pp. 101-118.

Counterinsurgency

Going back to US Joint Publication 3-24[10], COIN "is a comprehensive civilian and military effort designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes". The struggle against an insurgency is "primarily a political struggle and incorporates a wide range of activities by the host nation government of which security is only one, albeit an important one".[11]

One of the fundamental differences between COIN and other conventional warfare strategies is that politics does not take a backseat here. Not that political objectives do not drive conventional warfare; they do but as instruments that tend to appear often at the "beginning and at the end of a war"[12]. In contrast, the mandate of COIN is thoroughly political in nature insofar as its objective is to keep (political) power away from the insurgents and wrest away whatever they might already have.

COIN operations are also typically reactions in essence, unlike conventional warfare which can be driven by *suo-moto* initiative. COIN requires an insurgency to be in operation for it to take shape, leaving strategic initiative[13] in the hands of the insurgents who are particularly adept at waiting the opponent out. Given the reasons for its emergence, it is particularly hard to pre-empt an insurgency entirely. One can thwart its manifestations, so to speak, but since the causes for an insurgency lie much deeper, and these are neither easy to detect nor do they disappear instantly, they are likely to surface in similar or other forms. COIN, in a way, is therefore as good as the insurgency that creates the need for it.

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10   Joint Publication. "Counterinsurgency: US JP 3-24", op.cit.

11   Ibid.

12   David Galula, op.cit.

13   Ibid.

COIN is also as good as the state in which it is taking place. COIN operations mirror the state to the effect that "any state's approach to counterinsurgency depends to a large extent on the nature of that state, and the word 'COIN' can mean entirely different things depending on the character of the government involved".[14] The techniques employed to deal with insurgencies vary between regimes. However, the existence of a democratic government does not necessarily translate into the use of less oppressive means than say what an autocratic government would use.[15] Also, the nature of COIN is also impacted by who is operating it. Domestic COIN is affected by fewer challenges than an expeditionary COIN[16] which takes place in a third country.

Putting COIN into action requires much more than a "kill them all"[17] approach. As Stubbs[18] notes, "employing a 'not-lose' approach virtually guarantees that the counterinsurgents will not defeat well-supported, armed insurgents". Yes, an insurgency is a form of war, notwithstanding how unconventional or irregular it might be, and a major component in fighting it is to exterminate those causing troubles; but defeating it is what matters, and not the killing of the insurgents alone. And for that, as Kilcullen[19] notes, it is necessary to go local and respect the non-combatants.

Looking at the points mentioned above, the following aspects can be seen as a common thread between COIN operations wherever they unfold:

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14   Ibid.
15   Ibid.
16   Ibid.
17   David Kilcullen, op.cit.
18   Richard Stubbs, op.cit.
19   David Kilcullen, op.cit.

1. The aim of the war is to gain the support of the population rather than control of territory.

2. Most of the population will be neutral in the conflict; support of the masses can be obtained with the help of an active friendly minority.

3. Support of the population may be lost. The population must be efficiently protected to allow it to cooperate without fear of retribution by the opposite party.

4. Order enforcement should be done progressively by removing or driving away armed opponents, then gaining support of the population, and eventually strengthening positions by building infrastructure and setting long-term relationships with the population. This must be done area by area, using a pacified territory as a basis of operation to conquer a neighbouring area.[20]

Thus, where COIN operations have to be devised in a context-specific manner, there is an evident emphasis on winning hearts and minds which appears to be common to them. Demonstrating that there is more to winning than the number of dead on the adversary's side, I turn to two instances – Hearts and Minds in Malaya and Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan – which will highlight the centrality of winning over the population in COIN operations.

COIN IN MALAYA AND AFGHANISTAN

Malayan Emergency and Hearts and Minds

According to Stubbs[21], what began in 1948 in a "haphazard manner" slowly grew into a full-blown insurgency, involving thousands of insurgents. Spanning over more than a decade–

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20   David Galula, op.cit.
21   Richard Stubbs, op.cit.

between 1948 and 1960 – the insurgency in the Malayan Peninsula and the British response to it put in place a combination of direct and indirect approaches to not only fight the insurgents but the defeat the insurgency as well.

The roots of the Malayan insurgency laid at the intersections of many factors.[22] One, the Malayan Communist's Party's (MCP) armed wing, Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) along with Min Yuen were emboldened by the successes they had achieved in their fight against the Japanese in Malaya. Two, the successes of the Communists in China further bolstered their faith in their capacity to overthrow the British administration. Finally, their attempts to create a social, moral appeal by tapping into insecurities created by unemployment, low wages, etc. and promises of land reforms in return managed to turn people on its side.

The COIN measures taken to deal with Malayan insurgency evolved in response to the changing requirements of the time. Initially, the insurgency was treated as a law and order problem, dictating measures such as violent crackdowns. The character of COIN operations in the first stage was similar to a "search and destroy"[23] operation which produced little in terms of controlling or stemming the insurgency. In fact, the high-handedness of the colonial administration in dealing with an already disaffected group further alienated the ethnic Chinese population, generating more sympathy for the insurgents as a result. As the perceptible support for the insurgency increased, the intensity of crackdowns went up, forcing the C.H Boucher-

22 Herbert A Friedman. "Psychological Warfare of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1960", *The Psywar*, March 7, 2006, https://www.psywar.org/malaya.php.
23 Richard Stubbs, op.cit, pp. 101-118.

led[24] administration into greater depths of trouble. Apart from the ethnic Chinese who were already disaffected, other ethnic communities felt betrayed as the diversion of resources for tackling insurgency left them with little administrative attention and financial support. Unbridled violence against the insurgency, thus, created a double-whammy of sorts for the British administration.

It was in 1950 that COIN operations in Malaya underwent a change. A diversified mandate under Lieutenant General Harold Briggs saw COIN transition from being solely a force-centric operation to one that involved winning over the disaffected side to deny moral and material support to the insurgency. Central to the Briggs' plan was a realisation that the support base of the insurgent movement had to be eroded. The plan thus, undertook the following actions: (i) resettlement of ethnic Chinese population; (ii) strengthening of administration; (iii) greater coordination and interaction between the various civilian and military agencies; (iv) laying down of access roads, and (v) army's full control over the areas cleared of the Chinese settlements.[25]

However, there were some operational shortcomings such as lack of coordination between agencies; resettlement issues and security concerns around the new settlements. Then came Oliver Lyttelton, who improved upon Briggs's strategy and recommended six steps to deal with the insurgency: Unified command; reorganisation and retraining of the police; compulsory primary education; high protection to the resettlement areas; enlisting Malay-Chinese for ensuring local security, and most importantly create a new narrative that will

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24 Ibid, pp.102-103.
25 Ibid, p. 107.

help in countering the Communist propaganda.[26] It was also Lyttelton's plan to make someone oversee the entire operation and be accountable to the government in London. That was to be Lieutenant General Gerald Templer.

Where the previous plans did the spadework, it was with Templer that the hearts and minds approach created discernable outcomes. A part of the success of his plan was located in his prioritisation of welfare and development-centric activities over military actions. The other part stemmed from his emphasis on "seeing peacetime activities and COIN as complementary to each other".[27] He saw and used development and welfare as guarantees for security, and security as a facilitator of development and welfare.

Apart from getting the civil administration and police force in order, Templer's COIN operations laid emphasis on counter-propaganda and psychological warfare. He not only gave administrative terminology a more empathetic twist but also used air power in an innovative manner. For instance, the settlements were renamed as 'new villages'. The after-care of these settlements was given a more feel-good nomenclature; it was called 'development'. Similarly, where air power was used for conventional purposes, it was also used to drop leaflets, for broadcasting messages, supply drops, and the like to turn the popular tide in COIN's favour psychologically.[28] Unlike what we will see in Afghanistan's case, Templer used a local, C.C. – a Malayan Chinese – for devising the counter-propaganda strategy. After all, defeating an enemy requires that we know what it thinks.

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26   Ibid, pp. 108-109.

27   Ibid.

28   Ibid, pp. 109-115.

Gathering local intelligence, especially from "surrendered enemy personnel"[29] and promoting local governance and accountability were other critical steps taken by Templer to effectively defeat the insurgency. It is also important to note that the little external support that the insurgent movement received also ensured the efficacy of COIN operations by containing it within a defined area of operation.

Insurgency in Afghanistan and Provincial Reconstruction Teams

Almost 50 years apart and a lot different in nature from the insurgency witnessed in Malaya, the insurgency in Afghanistan presents an interesting case of transformation of conflict from one format to another. When the war in Afghanistan began, it was directed against al Qaeda, a non-state transnational actor that was known to have been given safe space by the Taliban that was running this country. But this war eventually evolved into a COIN operation against the insurgency primarily led by the Taliban. Seventeen years into the so-called war, the insurgency has survived and the COIN operations have not yielded much success.[30]

The Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan continues to persist less so because of its attraction. While there are people in Afghanistan who still lend their "support to the movement"[31],

29   Ibid, p. 112.
30   Ashley Jackson, *The Taliban's Fight for Hearts and Minds*, September 12, 2018, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/09/12/the-talibans-fight-for-hearts-and-minds-aghanistan/.
31   Michael Semple, "Rhetoric, Ideology, and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement", *United States Institute of Peace,* January 5, 2015, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/PW102-Rhetoric-Ideology-and-Organizational-Structure-of-the-Taliban-Movement.pdf, p. 29.

a great deal of its presence can be attributed to a combination of the following factors: its strong organisational structure; fear of retribution; external support, and lack of trust in the international COIN forces.[32] Although not seen as illegitimate, the apparent inefficiency of the present government in Afghanistan inspires little popular confidence. On the other hand, the Taliban is seen as a quicker dispenser of justice and other services.[33]

Afghanistan, unlike Malaya, has been a case of an expeditionary COIN. A major focus of this externally directed mandate has been to promote the transition from an in-conflict to a post-conflict scenario. It was thus required that the development of the state and its people go hand-in-hand with re-establishment of order and security. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) were envisaged as a tool in this respect.

The PRTs evolved from the "Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells"[34] which were established as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. As *United States Institute of Peace* (USIP) notes, these cells were composed of "a dozen Army Civil Affairs (CA) soldiers staffed these small outposts, dubbed "Chiclets,"…having the task to assess humanitarian needs, implement small-scale reconstruction projects, and establish relations with the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and nongovernmental organizations already in the field".[35]

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32 Ibid.

33 Ibid.

34 Robert M Perito, "The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified", *United States Institute of Peace*, October 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/39612/2005_october_sr152.pdf, p. 2.

35 Ibid.

Before PRTs took shape, they were preceded by Joint Regional Teams[36] whose mandate was to promote coordination between various external agencies and the domestic leadership for the promotion of sustainable development. The evolution of the preceding models into PRTs corresponded with the stage in which the conflict was in Afghanistan. They were essentially seen as a post-war reconstruction effort which, in turn, impacted its composition and operations. They doubled up as a COIN measure only in due time since the larger aim with which they worked was to hold the territory and the population from falling into the hands of Taliban once again.

PRTs objectives, largely, centred on: (i) development; (ii) extension of central authority; (iii) security; (iv) improved communication and coordination between actors working towards stabilisation and reconstruction of Afghanistan; (v) improved conditions for reconstruction without adverse impact on the safety of humanitarian workers.[37] They were neither entirely security-centric nor were they expected to replicate the efforts of other civilian agencies. They could be seen as force multipliers whose aim was to deliver in the short-term so as to promote long-term confidence in the domestic government.

Unlike Malayan COIN operations, which involved offensive and stability operations at the same time, PRTs did not involve active combat. Security factored in either for protecting the PRT affiliates or for training or reform purposes.[38] Having said so, most of the PRTs – those led by the US – continued to be

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36   Andrea L. Hoshmand, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan", 2005, *University of Maryland School of Public Policy.* http://faculty.publicpolicy.umd.edu/sites/default/files/fetter/files/students/Hoshmand.pdf.

37   Ibid.

38   Ibid.

dominated by military personnel, creating friction on the one hand between the civilian and military functionaries within PRTs and on the other between PRTs and humanitarian agencies.[39]

PRTs also witnessed contextual paradoxes as they progressed. At one level, in cases where the provincial leaders were strong, the role of PRTs in extending the central authority to the provinces either ended up alienating the local leaders or the developmental projects ended up beefing them up in a way that allowed them to gain more distance from the central government.[40] At another level, the military make-up of PRTs combined with their civilian, developmental tasks, exposed the humanitarian agencies to attacks as it became increasingly difficult to distinguish an unprotected NGO worker from the PRT members. Furthermore, since the task of PRTs did not include "active offense", they could not come to the rescue of "people outside their unit".[41]

PRTs were also hamstrung by structural challenges. To begin with, PRTs did not have one common framework to work with or guidelines to go by. This not only resulted in disaggregated development between regions but it also created friction both within and between PRTs. Governed by their own national mandates, PRTs refused to borrow best-practices from each other.[42] They were also affected by the military-heavy nature of their composition which often made developmental tasks secondary. Finally, PRTs were not good at projecting their success. There was an evident lack of information about the work of PRTs and what they achieved; part of which was caused by the absence of area experts and linguists on the teams.[43]

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39   Robert M. Perito, op.cit.
40   Ibid.
41   Ibid, p. 6.
42   Ibid.
43   Ibid.

Now disbanded, PRTs introduced practices whose aim was to promote greater military-civilian cooperation in expeditionary insurgencies in concrete, formal and institutionalised ways. Building on the experiments of the past, they improved upon the existing templates and perhaps provided the future with another template to learn from.

Different Context Similar Objective

The Development-Security Paradigm, COIN and Conflict Management

Comparing the two cases mentioned above show similarities and divergences. Where the Malayan case had inter-agency coordination under a unified command, the Afghan case lacked inter and intra-team harmony. Similarly, despite also being offensive in their nature, the Malayan COIN measures laid greater stress on welfare activities. That could have been the result of leadership. Where Templer believed in the development-security philosophy, PRTs led by the US (which made up the majority) were stacked with military leaders and as a result could not adopt and implement the welfare-first option well. Information and psychological power of the Malayan COIN operations were stronger than that of Afghan PRTs when compared, and this could in part be attributed to greater familiarity of the British leadership to the situation in Malaya as they were the ruling power then.

Though these two models differed on many levels, they nevertheless demonstrated the centrality of the development-security approach in winning the hearts and minds of those affected by insurgency. Taking place in two different contexts and almost 50 years apart, both the Malayan and Afghan cases were united in their belief that it takes more than just killing the enemy to defeat an insurgency. In their own ways, both

hearts and minds and PRTs became crucial tools in managing the conflict in their respective contexts. While they met with different success and had varying operational dimensions, their essence appeared to be the same. The intent and purpose were to move beyond the search and destroy paradigm to an approach that looks at security and development as two sides of the same coin.

Unlike regular warfare, insurgencies are more insidious. The enemy lines are not clearly drawn and its centre of gravity is more people-oriented both of which make any insurgency fluid and amorphous. As the population becomes the fulcrum of insurgencies, the people directly experiencing conflict and those affected by it at some distance have a moral, physical and economic impact on how insurgencies and COIN unfold. At one level, they become the succour of an insurgent movement to which it alludes for support, at another level population is also made into a literal and metaphorical shield for insurgencies.

The case of Afghanistan has demonstrated the varying uses to which population has been put. The appeal to and use of the domestic population have been central to the sustenance of insurgent operations. In a similar vein, the exasperation of the American audience with what looks like an unyielding war has psychological and material implications for the US-led international efforts against the Taliban. The fact that the American population[44], at large, is tired of financing the war with men, materiel and money has allowed the Taliban to sit and wait for the expeditionary forces to exit. After all, in the operational universe of insurgencies, to not to make a move and wait out the counter-insurgents is perhaps more yielding than meeting the superior enemy on the battlefront.

44   Max Fisher, "15 Years Into Afghan War, Americans Would Rather Not Talk About It", *The New York Times*, September 20, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/21/world/asia/afghanistan-war-15-years-americans.html.

Both the cases have also demonstrated that the operationalisation of the development-security model is more than just military or strategic operations. Since insurgencies, and consequently COIN, are political in their nature, both hearts and minds and PRTs could be effectively read as tools of conflict management. Conflict management, unlike conflict transformation, is not directed towards ending a conflict. Rather, the mandate of conflict management is akin to damage control or troubleshooting, where the emphasis is on controlling the spiralling of violence by creating a more enabling, positive environment for reconciliation. In dealing with conflicts in negative and positive ways, the purpose of conflict management is to mitigate the occurrence of violence through the elimination of its sources and by introducing and reinforcing factors that promote peace. Thus, put this way, the focus is both on getting rid of the roadblocks as well creating and enabling circumstance with the overall purpose of helping in the restoration (and consequently sustenance) of peace.

The steps taken towards conflict management emerge from a unique understanding of the conflict. The essence of conflict management lies in giving a constructive discursive twist to how a situation is understood. "The problem is not the conflicts per se" as Ropers notes, "but the way in which they are managed and resolved"[45] He further adds, "if we use the terminology of peace in place of the terminology of conflict, then the goal here could be reformulated as the pursuit of a state of "positive peace" in which the absence of violence ("negative peace") is supplemented by the promotion of social justice, and

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45 Norbert Ropers, "Peace-Building, Crisis Prevention and Conflict Management: Technical Cooperation in the Context of Crises, Conflicts and Disasters", 2002. *Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ) GmbH,* https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/4DB1BE036A238660C1256C9C003C442E-gtz-peace-02.pdf, p. 11.

thus placed on a sustainable and legitimate footing".[46] As we can see, the element of reinforcement of positive psychology is important in mitigating a conflict both in its intensity and reach. This, in turn, aligns the priorities of campaigns such as hearts and minds and PRTs with the template of conflict management, making such campaigns potentially effective tools in the management of conflicts.

Going back to the hearts and minds campaign and PRTs, while they alone did not[47] and cannot[48] bring about an end to the conflict, both these crucial in their respective environments to *hold* the *cleared* territory in a more sustainable and enduring manner. For instance, in case of the Malayan Emergency, which can be evaluated with the benefit of hindsight, an evident decline was witnessed in the support to MRLA as the COIN operations transited from "counter-terror to clear and hold to optimisation"[49]. According to Hack[50], "average insurgent strength slumped from 7,292 in 1951 to 5,765 in 1952, while the ratio of insurgent to security force casualties climbed from 3:1 in 1951 to 6:1 in 1952". The bell-curve of terrorist incidents[51] which had reached its maximum in 1951, corresponding as it was with a substantial increase in the strength of insurgents, came down with the adoption and implementation of COIN

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46 Ibid.

47 James Flint, "Assessing the British Counter-Insurgency Effort in Malaya." *E-International Relations Students,* February 11, 2015, http://www.e-ir.info/2015/02/11/assessing-the-british-counter-insurgency-effort-in-malaya/.

48 Peter Viggo Jakobsen, "PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but not Sufficient", *Danish Institute of International Studies,* 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/19253/PRTs_Afghanistan.pdf.

49 Karl Hack, "Extracting Counterinsurgency lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan", *Open Research Online - The Open University,* 2009, http://oro.open.ac.uk/19073/2/FD7907A1.pdf, p. 2.

50 Ibid.

51 James Flint, op.cit.

operations that were equipped to handle both security and development related concerns.

Assessing PRTs in a similar manner is rather difficult, and for many reasons. One, unlike the Malayan case, the conflict in Afghanistan is yet to end. Two, PRTs lacked a pre-identified end-state and which meant that they never had a clear blueprint about who would have followed them as regular development teams once they wrapped up. For all intents and purposes, PRTs were disbanded with no effective, pan-Afghanistan replacement. Three, a clear lack of consensus on the mandate of PRTs meant that there was no common yardstick against which its successes and shortcomings could be judged. The absence of a grand narrative and inter-agency coordination meant that PRTs, at best, created bracketed results, if any. The disaggregated nature of PRTs meant that each donor country could model its PRT the way it liked, and which was often more in sync with the donor nation's priorities than that of Afghanistan. As a result, it became extremely difficult to map out what the PRTs had managed to achieve or not managed to achieve in a comprehensive manner. In fact, given their variegated nature and an absent inter-agency strategic plan, one can still not say with certainty if they, overall, assisted the central government of Afghanistan to extend its authority across the country. Four, it is interesting to note that while PRTs were introduced as part of the larger post-conflict strategy[52], the basic question about what it was is still not settled. As Luehrs[53]

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52 Nima Asbabzadeh et. al., "Provincial Reconstruction Team: Lessons and Recommendations", *Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs,* January, 2008, http://wws.princeton.edu/news-and-events/news/item/prts-iraq-and-afghanistan-best-practices-and-lesson-learned-0.

53 Christoff Luehrs, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: A Literature Review", Center for Complex Operations, National Defence University, 2009, http://cco.ndu.edu/Portals/96/Documents/prism/prism_1-1/10_Prism_95-102_Luehrs.pdf, p. 96.

notes, the literature on PRTs (both in Afghanistan and Iraq) has shown that the "basic questions concerning PRTs", such as what they were, what they were meant to do, etc. have thrown up varying results. There is an entire spectrum of responses that these questions have generated essentially because PRTs appeared to work on the principle of each according to its own.

Some authors stress that PRTs should be focused on security (security sector reform, intelligence, force protection), only conduct limited reconstruction, and avoid governance… On the other hand, the International Security Assistance Force has identified discrete lines of operation for PRTs: security, governance, enabling reconstruction, and coordinating with other actors. Beyond such broad mission statements, there is no agreement within the US Government (or between the government and its allies) on how PRTs should be organised, how they should conduct operations, or what specifically they should accomplish.[54]

Finally, since PRTs were put in place in those areas where it was still hostile for humanitarian agencies to operate, independent assessment of the impact of such efforts, proved to be a difficult task. The volatility of the environments in which they worked not only demanded quick fixes – whose impact potential was both limited and ran out faster than large projects but, also that the implementation of bigger developmental efforts could not happen given the brevity of PRTs own lifespan.

Nevertheless, the impact of PRTs was reported from each of their zones in positive and negative terms. "PRTs record inputs such as the numbers and types of staff, and some outputs, such as kilometers of road commissioned and numbers of trainings

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54   Ibid.

conducted".[55] While still dispersed in their nature to present a clear, big picture, it has been concluded that PRTs have not been impact-less, especially in a positive way. However, limited it might have been, PRTs have managed to "extend the authority of the Afghan government beyond Kabul, facilitated reconstruction and dampened violence."[56] In fact, "despite the absence of a consistent set of outcome-based metrics, PRT staff report a positive effect on the environments in which they work. In each capital visited for this research, returned staff suggested that they are able to contribute to both development and security improvements".[57]

Despite their military-heavy nature, "the primary purpose of creating these outposts was political, but PRTs were also seen as a means for dealing with the causes of Afghanistan's instability: terrorism, warlords, unemployment, and grinding poverty".[58] For instance, "in Nangarhar Province, PRT's visibility and provision of alternative livelihood programs helped the provincial governor obtain an 83 per cent voluntary reduction in opium cultivation in 2005".[59]

PRTs were also relatively successful in settling conflicts of interest between the local stakeholders in Afghanistan. Composed of external actors who were believed to have no ethnic or tribal interests and favourites, PRTs were approached for their perceived "bipartisan nature for the settling of disputes".[60] A major example in this regard was the settling

55 Nima Asbabzadeh, op.cit., p. 16.
56 Peter Viggo Jakobsen, "PRTs in Afghanistan: Successful but not Sufficient", Danish Institute of International Studies, 2005, https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/19253/PRTs_Afghanistan.pdf, p. 4.
57 Nima Asbabzadeh, op.cit., p. 16.
58 Robert M. Perito, op.cit., p. 2.
59 Ibid, p. 6.
60 Ibid.

of conflict between two warlords – Mohammad Ata Noor and Abdul Rashid Dostum in 2003.[61] On the welfare front, the role of PRTs is building quick impact development projects managed to create confidence in the local population towards the domestic government as well as the foreign forces undertaking these measures.[62]

Complex Paradigms

The purpose with which this paper began was not to arrive at a general template for COIN operations. While it is hard to miss parallels between COIN operations as they unfold and continue to take shape in different parts of the world, these are not sufficient to put in place a one-size-fits-all model for dealing with insurgency. The cases of hearts and minds in Malayan Emergency and PRTs in Afghanistan demonstrated this.

Taking place in different eras, the challenges faced by the British forces in Malaya and those that were in front of the America-led expeditionary forces in Afghanistan could have been the same in kind but differed massively in degrees. Yes, the purpose was (and is) the same, and which was/is to wrest power away from the insurgents. But this is where the similarities end. Put negatively – not as in bad light – the essence of any COIN operation is to rid the host nation of the insurgency. Like a massive boulder (or boulders) blocking a road, the insurgents are seen as impediments to the attainment of a political end-state; one in which they are either effectively reconciled into the mainstream or are eliminated. How one goes about removing those boulders is determined by a lot of varying environmental factors.

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61   Andrea L. Hoshmand, op.cit.
62   Robert M. Perito, op.cit.

COIN operations are spatially and temporally sensitive. What might have worked in one country need not necessarily, and in fact, most often, do not work in another context. Similarly, what worked in one phase of COIN operations might not have the same level of operability in another phase. These operations are affected by political, economic and social circumstances that are both domestic and external to the host nation. The internal geography of the country as well as its external location have a credible impact on insurgencies, and consequently, on COIN operations. International support to the insurgents, or the lack of it, is of relevance in determining the intensity and the life-span of any insurgency. COIN operations too are impeded or aided by the presence of hostile or friendly neighbours.

While interoperable in some ways, transposing a supposedly successful COIN operation in a context that is qualitatively different from the original case has usually failed. However, this should not limit us from drawing experiential lessons which can refine, if not define, COIN operations. The cases of hearts and minds and PRTs demonstrated this as well.

At the centre of both these COIN operations was an understanding that defeating insurgency takes more than just an attrition in the number of insurgents. Psychological, social, political and economic depletion of strength of the insurgents is equally important, or perhaps more. It is necessary to drain the swamp so as to deny the fish a conducive environment in which they can swim. This can happen when security is understood not in the strategic sense alone. For an insurgency to be defeated, it is necessary to understand and approach security from the vantage points of politics, economics and social equations. The development-security paradigm can, therefore, be understood

as the central tenet, if you may, of COIN operations and the overall objective with which it proceeds.

The importance of this paradigm, as noted above, is also found in the role it can play in the management of conflicts. Since the overall purpose of COIN is to create an environment that insurgents cannot derive material and moral succour from, operations such as hearts and minds and PRTs can help in the containment of the negatives of a conflict and promote positive peace. Psychological persuasion and the creation of an alternative social-economic system are at the heart of such operations, which help in weaning the population off the insurgents who they were dependent on by force or choice.

The potential role that this paradigm can play in mitigating the ills of any conflict lies in the recognition of the complementary roles of development and security. To divorce one from another in the name of strategy has proven to be deficient as we have seen in Afghanistan. The political accents of an insurgency, and therefore of COIN, cannot be ignored for the simple reason that the end-state is the political victory of either side. Therefore, while it is necessary to eliminate insurgencies in its actual number through attrition, this approach is partial and ultimately only a means to the desired end.