Beyond ‘classical’ counterinsurgency: Modelling the Indian experience

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Abstract
India is perhaps one of the most experienced counterinsurgents in the world, having fought a huge array of insurgencies since Independence. To date, the dominant guiding principles and benchmarks established to evaluate India’s performance can be likened to a ‘classical’ model of COIN, forming a consensus across scholars, practitioners and policymakers alike of at least the rhetorical importance of adherence to democracy-friendly practices such as minimum force, the pursuit of political resolutions and hearts and minds. Charting the evolution of and analysing tensions within the model, this paper tests the extent of India’s actual adherence to the model in COIN campaigns in the Punjab and the Northeast, before proposing an alternative model, combining aspects of Kautilyan philosophy with some contextual indicators to better pin down how India responds to insurgencies.
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Introduction

Since India declared independence from British rule in 1947, the world’s largest democracy, populated by an astoundingly diverse range of ethnic, lingual and racial groups at an estimated 1.255 billion (World Population Review, 2014), has faced the colossal task of integrating these groups into a unified national framework (Kalyanaraman, 2003: p. 83). As such, it has faced and fought a vast array of insurgencies in Kashmir and Punjab in the West, Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Nagaland and Mizoram in the Northeast and the huge swathes of Naxalite-affected territory in Eastern India, continuing to face violence in Kashmir, the Northeast and the Naxalite-affected districts to date. This experience makes it arguably the best-versed practitioner of counterinsurgency (COIN) in the post-1945 world and indeed, one of the most successful, since it has not ‘lost’ to an insurgency (Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 44). Disseminating this experience through a comprehensive network of military academies and COIN training schools attended by many third world militaries (Fair, 2003: pp. 49-50), India is clearly at the forefront of modern COIN warfare and deserves a great deal of attention by Western theorists (Ganguly and Fidler, 2009a: p. 5).

Yet, the study of Indian COIN has been surprisingly limited outside India. Over recent decades, the US has been viewed with considerable suspicion as a product of the Cold War animosity between the two nations (ibid, p. 2), and indeed the US alliance with India’s adversary Pakistan during the War on Terror has done little to alleviate this scepticism. Although relations have thawed and exchanges increased slightly in recent years, Indian COIN remains understudied in Western circles, with Ganguly and Fidler’s (2009) edited volume marking one of the first comprehensive efforts to bring Indian COIN to Western students. As with studies of Western COIN in recent years, the works of Indian scholar-practitioners are influential, accessible from Indian service journals such as the United Service Institution of India (USI) and the South Asia Terrorism Portal (SATP) and their own works such as Lieutenant Colonel Chadha’s (2005) comprehensive volume, while there exists a strong body of independent analyses by Indian academics such as Rajagopalan
(2007), Kalyanaraman (2003) and authors of regimental histories such as Raghavan (2002) and Kanwal (2000). As a democracy, meanwhile its COIN and Army doctrines are readily accessible, as well as relevant constitutional and policy documentation concerning military aid to the civil authorities.

The above, through a combination of experiences, discourse, political influences and debate, have emerged to form a common, guiding set of principles, analytical tools and benchmarks that can be regarded as a more or less coherent ‘model’ used to explain and assess India’s doctrine (Singh, 2011), policy and practice, not dissimilar to the consensus established firstly by the British ‘model’ and later compounded by the FM 3-24-dominated ‘model’ in Western COIN studies (Mockaitis, 1990: p. 8; Sepp, 2005: pp. 8-12). Such ‘models’ of COIN essentially operate as broad narratives based on methodologies of historiographical generalisation, often struggling to explain individual cases (Cox and Bruscino, 2011: p. 4). Recently, French’s (2011) study of the British model revealed that the model fails to capture the full extent of British COIN practice, exposing coercive undercurrents much stronger than the ‘minimum force’ principle outlines (p. 5; Mockaitis, 1990: p. 52), while similar intellectual challenges have emerged against the ‘population-centrism’ of the FM 3-24 model (Cox and Bruscino, 2011: p. 3). None of this model-critical literature has thus far, however, proposed an alternative model that captures the full extent of the COIN approach in question. The purpose of this research is therefore to achieve this within the Indian context. It aims to examine the classical model, identify its tensions and limitations and propose an alternative intent on filling these gaps. This essentially begins to make inroads into two clear research gaps, concerning the study of Indian COIN in the West more generally, and challenging the way students of COIN think about specific models by constructing an alternative. It will do this by collating secondary historical, doctrinal, biographical and political accounts of Indian COIN both from the classical model and from works that present challenges to the model, in order to build a framework that encapsulates as much of this as possible. Doing this will allow for benchmarks to be established that allow for more holistic, sophisticated analyses of Indian COIN approaches in future that extend beyond, but do not exclude, aspects covered by the classical model. It is acknowledged that an endeavour to broaden beyond the classical model risks sacrificing coherency, particularly since the classical model itself suffers from several significant tensions, while it is also recognised that this study essentially proposes another narrative. As such, the proposition for an alternative model suggests some initial contextual indicators that tie different elements of this broad model to the various circumstances
that India has faced, keeping this new narrative within analytical touching distance of the case studies they are based upon.

First, chapter one explores the ‘classical’ Indian model of COIN, its key principles and the evolution of these, defined as such due to its loose similarities with the British ‘classical’ model (Chadha, 2009: p. 37), while also revealing tensions and some preliminary limitations. Second, by scrutinising the model, it then tests the classical model’s explanatory power in two case studies; Punjab and the Northeast. These are significant as they provide radically different COIN environments of differing priority to Delhi from which to assess the applicability of the model (Lalwani, 2014). Punjab, for instance, returned to normalcy after a particularly intense insurgency from 1978-1993, while the Northeast has remained a ‘site of enduring violence’ since the Naga insurgency’s outbreak in 1955 (Staniland, 2013: p. 169). From these findings, chapter three constructs an alternative model by consulting scholars that challenge the classical model, such as Staniland (2013: p. 168), providing theoretical grounding by drawing upon Indian strategic philosophy, particularly links between Kautilya’s realist approach (Roy, 2012; Bhaumik, 2009), before layering strategic contextual indicators to help manage this broadened model. Throughout, it is argued that India has pursued means sometimes contrary to the guiding principles of the classical model in varying situations, using an alternative model to capture these under a wider framework. It then concludes with some limitations that the model may face, while suggesting several areas for further research.

Chapter one: The ‘classical’ Indian COIN model

The existence of a ‘classical’ model of Indian COIN is widely assumed by a large body of scholar-practitioners and academics such as Rajagopalan (2007), Sinha (2007), Banerjee (2009) and Kalyanaraman (2003), underpinned by official Army doctrine (Indian Army, 2006). This model, built upon a significant degree of hindsight that looks back over half a century of COIN experience, assumes that a series of broad, guiding principles, such as the primacy of political negotiations, adherence to democratic and legal procedures, the use of minimum force and respect for human rights, have evolved to shape the course of India’s response to insurgencies. Capturing a ‘model’ of India’s ‘ideal’ COIN is inherently difficult, considering Moltke’s (1993) observation that battle plans rarely survive first contact with the enemy (p. 92). It is also clear that tensions exist within this nebulous body of ideas, such as the friction between enthusiasm for democratic processes and the inherently coercive nature

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1 For the sake of brevity, the ‘Northeast’ here refers to insurgencies in Nagaland, Mizoram, Manipur and Assam.
of COIN. Such tensions further complicate the process of identifying coherency within the model (Pogodda et al, 2014: p. 37).

This chapter explores the evolution of this amorphous body of ideas by charting the evolution of key, commonly recognised traits. It begins by discussing the military aspect of the model, as outlined by doctrine, policy and literature. It then traces the model’s origins and theoretical influences from British colonial and post-colonial COIN and the idealism of the Jawaharlal Nehru government, before analysing the evolution of the key political aspects of the model from Independence that make the model ‘Indian.’ Throughout, it discusses commonly emphasised traits and benchmarks for evaluation, drawing out the nuances and debates within the model as well as strengths, tensions and weaknesses. By doing this, it critically constructs a framework encapsulating the broad principles underpinning the model, to be tested using the Punjab and Northeast case studies.

1.1 Military assumptions: Army-centrism and the conventional war bias

Indian COIN scholars provide a broad outline of the military response Delhi has historically taken as a first resort to the outbreak of insurgency. Firstly, paramilitary forces, most typically the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), the Assam Rifles (AR) or the Border Security Force (BSF) would be deployed to the area alongside local police forces, with Indian Army battalions deployed in a lead role should the situation worsen (Rammohan, 2002a). This requires a ‘unity of effort’ between the myriad organisations that has ‘proved elusive to create and sustain’ due to the complex layers of governance that characterise the Indian Federal system (Banerjee, 2009: p. 203). At central level, the Army has its own command structure, while the AR, BSF and CRPF are controlled by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), threatening an incoherent Federal-level response. At the local level, police are answerable to state governments. Local and non-state actors are perceived by the intervening Centre as susceptible to communalism and incapable of managing internal security in comparison to the Army, which is seen as an external, impartial actor (Mallick, 2007: pp. 71-72). Since scholar, practitioner and doctrinal accounts largely emanate from the Army or those with connections to it, rather than representing the multiple layers of authority involved (Banerjee, 2009: p. 206), this raises potential issues concerning the ability of the model to effectively capture the role of paramilitary, state-level, and non-state actors in COIN operations.

Militarily, such a deployment normally consists of a network of outposts known as the ‘COIN grid,’ and has been utilised in every major operation since Independence
This seeks to maximise the military presence ‘to keep the insurgents on the run and gain physical and moral ascendancy’ (Indian Army, 2006: p. 25; Indian Army, 2004: p. 2005), using numerical superiority to achieve visible and psychological ‘area domination’ (Rabasa et al, 2007: p. 55; Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 51; Singh, 2011). The strategy is fundamentally coercive, stemming from the need for the fledgling Republic to deter and overwhelm any movement that might potentially affect its newly-found unity, particularly considering the threat of East Pakistani involvement in the Northeast insurgencies. As such, the early Naga and Mizo campaigns were particularly vicious, with heavy air and firepower used to demonstrate India’s willingness to uphold unity (Chadha, 2005: p. 342).

The effectiveness of such coercion has however been questioned by scholars (Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 44; Mehta, 2009: p. 169). While Singh (2011) and Rajagopalan (2008a: p. 256) both acknowledge the psychological impact of employing such methods, Rajagopalan (2008b) argues that it reflects the Indian Army’s conventional warfare bias (pp. 158, 56). He points towards a cycle in which an engrained preference for ‘overwhelming combat superiority’ encourages large, clumsy and inefficient ‘cordon-and-search’ operations (Indian Army, 2004: p. 9; Rajagopalan, 2007: pp. 52, 56). This, he argues, forces the Army onto the defensive against hit-and-run ambushes, requiring larger numbers to cope with these attacks and substituting effectiveness with blunt, coercive ‘jungle bashing’ (Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 53; Sinha, 2007: p. 5). Common in most COIN literature, (Galula, 2006: p. 72; Catignani, 2008: p. 72), it is unsurprising that the conventional warfare bias debate exists in India, given that conventional conflicts against Pakistan and China have regularly coincided with longer-running internal insurgencies. Dismay has traditionally been expressed at the prospect of involvement in COIN (Rajagopalan, 2008b: pp. 58, 46), as officer career prospects and promotions have been largely determined by the prestige associated with conventional war experience (Goswami, 2009: p. 80).

The late 1960s, as the Naga and Mizo insurgencies took hold in the Northeast and the Naxalite insurgency began at Naxalbari in 1968, did see some attempts to adapt to COIN. Specialist training was introduced with the foundation of the COIN and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS), and mobile, light ‘I’ battalions were introduced as COIN units, however both were limited in their effectiveness and, in the case of the ‘I’ battalions, scrapped altogether due to their inability to fight conventional warfare (Rajagopalan, 2008b:
The 1990s, bringing an added urgency to deal with the Pakistani-backed Kashmiri and Punjabi insurgencies, saw a similar spate of innovation, establishing light Rashtriya Rifles (RR) COIN regiments (Singh, 2011) and a COIN academy at Khrew (Ganguly, 2009: p. 85). Again, however, Rajagopalan (2007) sees these as technicalities, ultimately manned, funded and operated by the Army, whose priorities lay elsewhere (pp. 62-63). India’s Army doctrine releases in 2004 and 2006, meanwhile recognise that ‘some principles [of war] will need to be modified for the [COIN] environment’ (Indian Army, 2004: p. 24, emphasis added), implying a reluctance to doctrinally transform to fight what it considers ‘aberrations’ (Gill and Lamm, 2009: p. 183; Rajagopalan, 2008b: p. 44). The failure of these innovations to radically transform how India fights warfare is at odds with counterinsurgent academics’ position that COIN is a radically different form of warfare, diametrically opposed to the high-intensity, violent nature of conventional campaigning (Cox and Bruscino, 2011: p. 2). As such, the conventional war bias debate complements and strengthens other non-violent aspects commonly discussed within the model. However, its vehement opposition to anything associated with conventional warfare may limit its ability to understand intense periods of violence and coercion in COIN, exposing a tendency towards emphasising the non-violent aspects of the approach.

Also clear in Indian Army doctrines is the emphasis placed upon political, population-centric concepts; ‘minimum force,’ ‘hearts and minds,’ political and democratic processes (Indian Army, 2004: p. 25; Indian Army, 2006: pp. 16-17), and are seen as the fundamental principles of Indian COIN (Goswami, 2012). These have been influenced by a combination of British pre and post-independence doctrine and practice, Maoist insurgency theory, as well as a Nehruvian respect for Indian citizens and lessons gleaned from COIN campaigns. The next section traces the origins, evolution and impact of these aspects upon the wider model.

1.2 Theoretical origins
While there is discomfort in drawing continuities with British imperialism following Independence and the adoption of a democratic constitution, traces of this are indisputable (Singh, 2011). Independent India inherited most of the governmental machinery and institutions employed to combat insurgency from the British. Independent India’s successor to the colonial Army and Police, commonly deployed to quell insurrections in British India, retained its purpose, organisational structure and inherited an officer corps educated under
the British military ethos (Roy, 2013: pp. 157-158; Mallick, 2007: p. 68; Arnold, 1992: p. 44). British-raised frontier policing paramilitaries such as the AR have been used for COIN, while the CRPF, established during World War II to quell the increasing assertiveness of pro-independence sentiments, has been used to this effect to extinguish separatism in the Northeast (Misra, 1980: pp. 372, 375). Legally, the colonial-era Police of India Act (1861) remains in force (Bhonsale, 2006), while the ‘aid to the civil power’ adage, denoting the primacy of civil authority over the military, has been enshrined into Independent India’s Constitution and legal framework (Indian Army, 2006: p. 15). Doctrinally, Banerjee (2009) visits the colonial origins of ‘minimum force’ (p. 192), implicitly referring to the recognition of the dangers of excessive force by commanders such as Major-General Sir Charles Gwynn (1934: p. 14), although such individual experiences were by no means representative of the patchwork nature of British colonial policing (Anderson and Killingray, 1991: p. 6; Robb, 1991: p. 130).

Beyond these brief references, scholars are quick to stress a departure from ‘dark’ British colonial methods towards a ‘saner’ way of Indian COIN (Banerjee, 2009: p. 192; Whittingham, 2012: p. 593). To acknowledge any influence upon Indian COIN of harsher elements of Britain’s colonial COIN legacy, such as the cattle-killing and crop-burning operations advocated by commanders such as C. E. Callwell (1906: p. 27), would be ‘morally abhorrent to democratic India’ and unacceptable for a nation whose existence and legitimacy was based on liberation from colonialism (Rajagopalan, 2009b). This anticolonial rhetoric creates a simplified distinction between colonial and post-colonial COIN (Whittingham, 2012: p. 593). This overlooks continuities; clear links can be seen, for example, between India’s heavy-handed response designed to send a message to the Nagas, Mizos and their Pakistani sponsors following Independence, and British tendencies to employ overwhelming force against peripheral tribes to ‘wipe out an insult’ (Callwell, 1906: p. 27). Moreover, discussions of COIN origins completely exclude pre-colonial indigenous influences and philosophies, precluding any sense of historical ‘Indianism’ that may have interwoven with British influences (Roy, 2012: p. 263). An inadequate examination of historical continuities thus creates difficulties for the model in fully capturing the role of coercive force in Indian COIN.

Therefore, the model draws its theoretical origins from elsewhere, creating a particular set of assumptions about the nature of insurgency and COIN. Insurgency thinking
has firstly been influenced by the works of Mao Zedong (Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 50; Kalyanaraman, 2003: p. 88), whose principles and guidelines concerning the importance of winning popular support through education and propaganda became known as the ‘model’ for insurgencies (Mao, 1989: p. 43; Beckett, 2001: p. 74). Consolidation and expansion of strongholds, through winning mass support and waging guerrilla warfare, would then precede a final, conventional-scale offensive resulting in state capture (Beckett, 2001: p. 75). Mao’s population-centrism is reflected in Indian Army Doctrine (2006), stating that ‘without popular support, no insurrectionist movement can be sustained indefinitely’ (p. 16). It is unsurprising that this influenced India’s understanding of insurgencies. India’s first three major insurgencies were fought against Maoists and separatists deploying population-centric methods reminiscent of the Maoist model, such as land redistribution and shadow governance (Mahadevan, 2012: p. 206; Oetken, 2009: p. 129; Chadha, 2009: p. 33; Jafa, 2001: pp. 225-226; Sinha, 2007: p. 3). The Indian model therefore has continued to subscribe to Maoist understandings of revolution, popular warfare and state capture since (Rajagopalan, 2008b: p. 48; Goswami, 2012), paying scant attention to the literature on ‘New Wars,’ which emerged following the end of the Cold War and the onset of globalisation (Kaldor, 2006: pp. 5-7). ‘Criminal insurgencies,’ for example, seek to employ violence, corruption and social control to gain monopolistic control over economically valuable ‘turf’ (Sullivan and Bunker, 2011: pp. 743, 753) as Assamese, Manipuri, Naga and Naxalite insurgents have done since the 1990s to sustain their movements (Sahni and George, 2001: pp. 308-311; Chadha, 2005: p. 302; Mahadevan, 2012: p. 203). Ethno-religiously motivated insurgencies meanwhile focus exclusively upon the defence of their ethno-religious demographic; such tribal, communal and religious sentiments have driven the proliferation of insurgent groups in the Northeast. Population-centric COIN may therefore not be applicable to these types of insurgencies, meaning scholars and practitioners holding such assumptions may draw problematic ‘lessons’ that overlook where certain insurgencies draw their strength from.

The British Malayan approach to COIN, with strategies and tactics shared through Commonwealth military exchanges, influenced Indian COIN significantly during the 1950s and 1960s (Banerjee, 2009: p. 193). The British way to deal with the Maoist ‘fish in the water’ was to ‘drain the pond’ by systematically relocating the population into secure areas (Paget, 1967: pp. 24, 36; Thompson, 1966: pp. 56-57). Although highly successful, this was done through brutal coercion, with villages regularly dismantled and relocated at gunpoint
In India, population resettlement operations were conducted in Nagaland during the 1950s and in Mizoram in the late 1960s to isolate the population from the insurgents, with up to 240,000 of the 285,000 inhabitants of the Mizo Hills District relocated during 1967-1972 (Jafa, 2001: pp. 236-237). Indian Army relocation operations were equally as brutal; one officer recalled dragging into the open those who refused to leave their homes before setting their homes ablaze, while the village of Mametong was burnt down nineteen times to force officially ‘voluntary’ compliance (Jafa, 2001: pp. 241-242; Sundar, 2011: p. 51).

The strategy has been roundly condemned. Brigadier S.P. Sinha (2007: p. 2) and Jafa (2001: p. 143) for example note that while colonialists in Malaya were able to adopt such tactics successfully without a fear of backlash, for a democracy such a practice against its own citizens was morally dubious and unacceptable. Described as ‘state terror’ due to its indiscriminate use of force against insurgents and civilians (Sundar, 2011: pp. 48-49), Chadha (2005) argues that such practices ironically isolated the counterinsurgent from the population (pp. 288-289). Ultimately, the High Court, prompted by the Mizo community, declared the strategy unconstitutional by 1969, forcing the Army to abandon any further relocations (Rajagopalan, 2008b: p. 161). The legal backlash no doubt forced a shift in the model, as the Army was forced to abandon the village grouping tactic. Discursively, however the backlash’s impact on the model has served to create a broader point of departure from colonial, coercive means to a more democratic, enlightened approach focusing on winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the population, a potentially simplistic dichotomy that will be scrutinised in the following chapters.

1.3 ‘Hearts and minds’
Banerjee (2009) argues that the end of village grouping saw a doctrinal shift towards a focus on winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the population by providing developmental and economic services (p. 194). Projects such as the development of schools, hospitals, electricity and other crucial infrastructure have indeed featured in all of India’s COIN operations to some degree (Rabasa et al, 2007: p. 55). Sinha (2007) argues that, as Indian counterinsurgents realised their effectiveness, they have gradually expanded in scope and quality (p. 2), becoming a core, non-coercive element of the Indian model. Operation: Sadbhavana in Jammu and Kashmir, providing sanitation, education and renovation of the tourism industry has been lauded as the success story of this upward trajectory (Rabasa et
al, 2007: p. 56; Singh, 2011). At the Federal level, COIN operations have been accompanied by development funding injections to underdeveloped regions (Bhonsale, 2006), leading to claims that a state-building approach has become ‘the heart’ of India’s conflict resolution approach (Pogodda, 2014: p. 44). The employment of civic action in COIN has thus emerged as a fundamental precondition for success (Ganguly and Fidler, 2009b: p. 226), while scholars such as Chadha (2011) have proposed deepening the strategy, encouraging counterinsurgents to use their ‘heart as a weapon’ in a loosely-defined attempt to go beyond the scope of current hearts and minds approaches (p. 1). Clearly, hearts and minds has gained considerable traction among scholars. It gives the impression that Indian COIN directly grapples with the root causes of the insurgency rather than suppressing its dissatisfied constituents, creating the impression of a COIN approach conducted with democratic principles at its focal point.

Evidence of such a seismic shift from coercion towards hearts and minds from 1969, after which development-focused policies became institutionalised as the dominant aspect of the wider model, is however questionable. First, civic action projects were pursued before 1969 by Indian counterinsurgents in Nagaland and Mizoram anyway (Ladwig III, 2009: p.49). Moreover, these actions remained coupled with large-scale military deployments, ‘area domination’ and mass ‘cordon and search’ operations after 1969, essentially prioritising security before development. This exposes a clear divergence in emphasis between those within the model that prioritise developmental aspects, and the coercive practices that continued to play a significant part in it (Pogodda et al, 2014: p. 40). Consequently, this further fuels the model’s wider tendency to overlook the coercive elements of the Indian approach.

1.4 Minimum Force and the primacy of political resolution

The model’s emphasis on the non-coercive elements of Indian COIN has been influenced significantly by the rhetoric of India’s first Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, whose faith in democratic politics and the peaceful resolution of the 1953 Achingmori massacre conditioned his thinking on force in COIN (Nehru, 1956: p. 154; Banerjee, 2009: p. 193). Following the outbreak of the Naga insurgency, he urged military staff to recognise that ‘the Nagas were fellow countrymen who were not merely to be suppressed but, at some stage, had to be won over’ (Gopal, 1979: p. 212), stressing that ‘minimum force’ be applied to give these ‘misguided citizens’ an opportunity to return to democratic politics (Rajagopalan, 2007: pp. 47-48). His restrictions upon Army use of air and fire support invoked
protests from commanders, however at the doctrinal level at least, ‘minimum force’ has been adopted since its endorsement by the Chief of the Army Staff in 1955 (Kalyanaraman, 2003: p. 87; Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 47; Indian Army, 2006: p. 40). As such, the levels of force employed in Indian COIN operations have become a benchmark for evaluation; instances in which heavy force has been used since then have been portrayed as ‘simplistic’ displays of firepower owing to conventional war biases (Marwah, 2009: p. 98; Mehta, 2009: p. 169; Rajagopalan, 2008b: p. 46), producing lessons in need of learning (Chadha, 2009: pp. 38, 43). By applying this broad, Nehruvian assessment to all displays of force, scholars isolate these instances from their political and military contexts, potentially limiting the wider model’s ability to capture India’s post-Nehruvian COIN campaigns conducted by politicians facing radically different circumstances.

The conviction that military force is not only undesirable, but precludes victory produced a growing subscription to the centrality of political solutions. Such solutions were pursued by Nehru, whose persistent efforts to negotiate with the Naga separatists laid out a flexible negotiating framework; that India would consider every demand short of independence (Gopal, 1979: p. 208; Rajagopalan, 2009b). This included devolving powers, granting autonomy, carving out new federal entities (Chadha, 2005: p. 28), and incorporating insurgent leaders into the political process (Ganguly and Fidler, 2009b: p. 226), demonstrating a willingness to address grievances in line with Indian democracy. However, it gained substantial traction in doctrinal writings during the 1980s, a decade of intense violence during which military victories in Punjab, Sri Lanka and Kashmir appeared unlikely (Rajagopalan 2007: p. 58). The tendency has, as such, been to laud numerous ceasefires, agreements and accords as successes; despite the fact that ‘success’ rates have been highly questionable (Chadha, 2005: p. 426), often refracting insurgent violence towards fratricide and inter-ethnic conflict rather than producing comprehensive peace settlements (Bhaumik, 2009: p. 91). Additionally, deeming accords to be absolute successes, while regarding military victory as an absolute impossibility (Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 44; Ganguly and Fidler, 2009b: p. 226), neglects the relative power dynamics that may determine whether force or negotiation is used (Staniland, 2012: p. 252), producing a simplistic dichotomy that fails to capture the complexity of wartime bargaining processes.

1.5 The centrality of democratic process

An aspect of the model complementary to the focus on political settlements is the importance of ‘mature democratic process[es] by nurturing a ‘democratic political culture,’
strengthening marginalised groups, addressing the grievances that fuel insurgency (Goswami, 2009: p. 70), consolidating the legitimacy of the Indian Union and bringing moderate insurgents into the political process using governance techniques such as state elections (Kalyanaraman, 2003: p. 91; Thandi, 1996: p. 171). This aspect of the model emerged as genuine threats of secession from early insurgencies waned, owing to a combination of military pressure and the 1971 dismemberment of East Pakistan, which weakened the early Eastern insurgencies and opened space for political and democratic processes to operate hand in hand (Shekatkar, 2009: p. 24). Since then, elections and democratic empowerment programmes have become a significant part of the COIN landscape, often held after large military operations. As with political negotiations, however, democratic processes are frequently considered absolute successes in fostering loosely-defined ‘governance’ (Ibid, p. 18; Singh, 2011). This overlooks the complications of corruption, politician-insurgent collusion and violence that have plagued Indian wartime elections, limiting the model’s ability to explain the negative aspects of democratic processes in COIN.

Furthermore, suspensions of such democratic processes using legal provisions, such as the capital’s ability to impose Central rule, bypass elected state governments and provide extensive legal powers to security forces through the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA) (Government of India, 2012: pp. 179-182; Government of India, 1958: pp. 1-2) further expose the tensions between coercion and democratic principles in the classical model. Broadly, its consensus is that COIN should adhere to the rule of law (Rammohan, 2010; Goswami, 2012). This is particularly difficult to identify, since India’s legal framework itself is fraught with contradictions and thus subject to interpretation. The AFSPA, for example, provides powers of exemption to security forces that contradict fundamental rights such as equality before the law and provide room for interpretation to go well beyond ‘minimum force’ (Goswami, 2012; Fair, 2009: p. 119; Shekatkar, 2009: p. 23). As such, AFSPA has been criticised as providing legal cover to violate India’s professed respect for human rights with torture and extrajudicial killings (Baruah, 2014: p. 4; Sinha, 2007; Patnaik, 2007: p. 109), while Central rule is considered to diminish democratic accountability and drive alienated Indians towards insurgency (Chadda, 1997: pp. 108-109). On the other hand, scholar-practitioners have deemed such measures ‘essential legal instrument[s]’ to enable counterinsurgents to operate effectively within Indian sovereign territory (Shekatkar, 2009: p. 23; Mann, 2011). Regardless of desirability, however, legal provisions to restore order have
remained an important part of both Indian COIN and wider Indian politics since Independence. Frequent state government dismissals, centrally-imposed Army deployments and the 1975-1977 period of nationwide Emergency rule demonstrate Delhi’s willingness to override its democratic ideals to preserve its integrity, a willingness that suggests that it may not have rejected practices ‘morally abhorrent to democratic India’ in the absolute manner that scholars such as Rajagopalan (2009b) suggest.

1.6 Conclusion
This chapter has examined the origins and evolution of key military, political and legal aspects of the broad Indian ‘model’ of COIN and how scholars within the model account for these. It is clear that tensions exist between a desire to portray the Indian way as that of a state that, following Nehru’s faith in the political process, continued to pursue fundamentally political and non-coercive means to bring its ‘misguided citizens’ back into the fold (Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 48), developing in scope and sophistication as it learnt what was successful and morally acceptable while discarding what was not. While practices such as civic projects, political accords and democratic elections have increased in frequency, the model treats these as absolutes rather than examining them within their political contexts. The model also bears traces of the undercurrents of a fundamentally coercive Indian state that has resorted to overwhelming force, centralised control and special powers to quell insurgencies, however struggles to fully capture these due to the model’s dominant, democratic tendencies. Applying this model to the case studies, it is hypothesised, will expose these tensions in greater depth.

Chapter two: the classical model applied: COIN in Punjab and the Northeast
Having charted the evolution of key aspects of the classical Indian model, drawing out the predominant emphasis on pro-democratic tendencies and tensions with fundamentally coercive aspects of Indian COIN, this chapter seeks to test its key assumptions and principles against the campaign in Punjab (1978-1993) and the broader environment in India’s north-eastern states of Nagaland, Mizoram, Assam and Manipur (1956-present). Since the model often frames concepts such as ‘political negotiations’ and ‘democratic processes’ in absolute terms with little context, the case studies offer two insurgencies differing in nature and character through which to test these assumptions.

India’s northeast, connected to the mainland only via a 22-kilometre wide ‘chicken’s
The ‘neck’ comprising 1% of the region’s territory (Hussain, 2006; Cline, 2006: p. 127), has been characterised by political alienation since British rule, producing a smouldering patchwork of 50-100 separatist, autonomist, ethnic and criminal insurgent groups with divergent interests. With a comprehensive peace settlement reached only with the Mizo National Front (MNF) (ibid p. 127; Baruah, 2007a: p. 2), violence has remained ever-present, fluctuating in intensity as COIN operations restored, or indeed disrupted, the existing state of ‘durable disorder’ (ibid, p. 1). Much closer to Delhi and bordering the western front with Pakistan, Punjab’s insurgency centred on Sikh concerns of perceived assimilation into Hinduism (Chadha, 2005: p. 189), escalating as the Centre unsuccessfully manipulated local Sikh religious fervour, empowering religious scholar-turned insurgent commander Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale to divide the Akali vote. After an intense decade of violence claiming 21,469 lives, equally intense COIN operations ‘comprehensively defeated’ the movement, returning the economically and strategically important state to normalcy (Mathur, 2011; Thandi, 1996: p. 178). The chapter will test the model’s ability to effectively capture India’s COIN by examining deployment characteristics, the ‘hearts & minds’ approach, levels of force employed and the use of political accords and democratic processes in both case studies. By exposing what the model fails to capture, it begins to chart considerations for an alternative model to improve upon the classical model.

2.1 Federal, state and non-state actors

While the Army is clearly a key institution central to Indian COIN, leading many major operations, it is also clear that these operations have predominantly been exterior ‘in and out’ interventions in state affairs, outlasted by permanently-based local actors. Army scholar-practitioners and regimental histories nonetheless naturally focus on the military involvement (Baruah, 2014: p. 11; Sinha, 2001). The Punjab insurgency exposes the importance in going beyond this Army-centrism in establishing a framework for India’s approach. Following significant reorganisation and reinforcement under the leadership of K.P.S. Gill (Gill, 2001a: p. 41), the Punjab Police was transformed from an ill-equipped, incompetent and corrupt organisation into the leading force driving COIN operations (Marwah, 2009: p. 66), with other agencies providing supporting roles via the National Security Guard until the insurgency was defeated in 1993 (Fair, 2009: p. 109; Mathur, 2011; Gill, 2001a: p. 36). Indeed, Indian state police forces are equipped and organised upon colonial, quasi-paramilitary templates that make them capable of dealing with security threats as well as civic duties, doing so with considerable local expertise (Anderson and Killingray, 1992: p.
5). Consequently, an improved model should seek to avoid sweeping dismissals of state-level security forces as impotent or weak.

Similarly, the role of non-state actors such as former insurgent militias receives minimal attention from the classical model, and are not once mentioned in India’s key COIN doctrines. They have however, played useful intelligence roles in cooperation with security forces. In Nagaland, for example the BSF cooperated with and eventually absorbed into its ranks the insurgent splinter group Revolutionary Government of Nagaland (RGN) during the early 1970s, exploiting a factional split and gathering information on the opposing Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) faction to round up its key members (Chadha, 2005: p. 297). In Assam, the pressure applied by the Army’s Operations: Bajrang and Rhino (1990-1992) forced large-scale defections which in turn produced the Surrendered United Liberation Front of Assam (SULFA), a militia which provided intelligence on ULFA and inflicted a ‘significant toll’ on the group through death squad killings and mafia-style turf wars (Baruah, 2007f: p. 13). This role provided such groups with a state payroll and a license to retain their weapons, granting them the impunity to effectively run criminal operations based on extortion and intimidation of civilians, businesses and government officials, to which Delhi turned a blind eye in return for loyalty (Ibid, pp. 11-13). Assessments of COIN in the Northeast, however unsavoury or controversial the activities of these groups may be (Patankar, 2009: p. 77), cannot turn the same blind eye if they are to fully capture the range of India’s COIN actors.

2.2 De-emphasising the conventional warfare bias

This is particularly important when charting deployment patterns, since the conventional war bias argument assumes that the Army is mostly if not fully responsible for India’s COIN operations, arguing that large-unit operations are conditioned by a reluctance to doctrinally transform to maintain the Army’s capacity to match Pakistan and China conventionally (Rajagopalan, 2008b: p. 175). In the Northeast, the Army’s major operations appear to fit with this hypothesis. Since the conventionally-fought early campaigns against the Naga and Mizo insurgents, the CIJWS and ‘I’ battalion innovations have not altered the longstanding preference for large-unit ‘saturation’ operations (Ladwig III, 2009: p. 51), with Operations: Bajrang and Rhino in the early 1990’s drawing upon 40,000 Army personnel to combat roughly 1,000 insurgents (Goswami, 2009: p. 75). The process of co-opting former insurgents through amnesties and surrenders, such as the 1,500 strong SULFA that emerged from the operations, however suggests that the strategies deployed by the
Indian state as a whole may be less constrained by conventional war biases than Rajagopalan (2008b: p. 175) implies. Furthermore, the Indian strategy to achieve psychological dominance over the insurgents through visible, presence-based deployments is not unique to the Army or Federal paramilitaries. The Punjab Police under K.P.S. Gill demonstrated a remarkably similar appreciation of visible presence, increasing manpower to 65,000 and conducting ‘focal point patrols,’ involving converging large numbers of personnel and armoured vehicles onto areas previously lacking police presence, creating rumours of a ‘massive increase in police strength that belied the reality’ that served to psychologically damage insurgent morale (Mathur, 2011). As this state-level force, isolated from the need to doctrinally retain a capacity to fight conventional warfare, conducted and emphasised area domination in a similar fashion, it reveals issues with causally attributing area domination tactics to conventional war biases. Thus, while the conventional war bias debate remains relevant, an improved model should seek to focus on the nature of area domination as a deliberately coercive element of its wider COIN approach, rather than focusing on distinguishing ‘coercive’ conventional warfare from ‘non-coercive’ COIN. It should also attempt to better capture the extortive, brutal and insurgent-like behaviour of groups such as SULFA as instruments of Indian COIN, a practice that does not fit well with the classical model’s emphasis on population-centrism and the centrality of winning ‘hearts and minds’ (WHAM).

2.3 Hearts and minds: a panacea?

With a predominant focus on the centrality of concepts such as ‘hearts and minds,’ the classical model views developmental and civic projects as both a democratic alternative to unsavoury punitive tactics and an essential tactic to isolate the insurgent from the population. Turning to the case studies, this view is exemplified by regimental histories; the Punjab Regiment conducted civic activities in Amritsar during Operation: Rakshak (1989-1994) and built medical camps, schools and sports complexes for Assamese civilians, ‘winning the gratitude of thousands of locals’ in doing so (Raghavan, 2002: pp. 117-119). A history of Eastern Command meanwhile refers to the enthusiasm in which similar projects during Operation: Good Samaritan (1995) in Nagaland and Manipur were embraced by the population, ‘more than achiev[ing] the aim’ (Kanwal, 2000: p. 115). While it is important to treat approved regimental histories with caution, particularly regarding the often ecstatic successes they proclaim, they nonetheless demonstrate that civic duties were carried out in both Punjab and the Northeast with the aim of winning popular support.
The extent to which these policies have won achieved their desired aim, however, remain to be seen. Often, classical model scholars view the very fact that development and modernisation are being undertaken as absolute successes in themselves, without examining the context or ramifications that may not point to such a reality. For instance, development projects in the Northeast have in many cases displaced tribal communities with strong connections to indigenous villages, in fact producing a furious reaction not dissimilar to the protests against village grouping, fuelling further tensions and conflict (Pogodda, 2014: p. 42). Furthermore, many of these projects exist merely on paper, as large amounts of development funding have been siphoned off into black market practices lining the pockets of politicians, criminals and insurgents, serving to sustain rather than alleviate the conditions ripe for insurgency (Rammohan, 2002a). ULFA and SULFA are, for example, able to offer financial incentives to recruits, commanding considerable influence through the appropriation of up to 70% of Assam State’s rural development funds (Sahni and George, 2001: p. 311), while the National Socialist Council of Nagalim – Isiak-Muivah (NSCN-IM) gains from similar funding appropriation, using it as a trophy in a Robin Hood-style discourse to win support (Chadha, 2005: p. 301). In some cases, clearly, insurgent groups have actually stood to gain from the ‘hearts and minds’ approach, underscoring the importance of context rather than the absolutes put forward by the classical model.

The Punjab case demonstrates the importance of the shifting state of play, and how this affected the success of WHAM approaches. At the height of the insurgency in 1989, initial ‘healing hearts’ activities as part of Operation: Rakshak did not win popular support, since the insurgents ruled by fear and prevented the population from pledging allegiance to the government (Mathur, 2011; Thandi, 2006: pp. 173-174). It was not until security forces regained the initiative by inflicting a heavy toll on the insurgents with large-scale deployments and targeted killings before socioeconomic development began to return Punjab state to its strong political and economic position (Chima, 2007: p. 626; Fair, 2009: p. 110). WHAM therefore appears to have been employed in a post-conflict reconstruction fashion very different to its assumed position within the model, which tends to focus on WHAM as a panacea to defeating insurgency (Sinha, 2007: p. 2). Moreover, the successful combination of a force-centric COIN campaign and subsequent WHAM efforts reveals contradictions within the classical model’s emphasis on the interconnected relationship between WHAM and the use of minimum force (Rajagopalan, 2007: pp. 47-49).
2.4 Minimum, maximum and agreed force

Indeed, the classical model emphasis on the importance of ‘minimum force’ leads analyses of the particularly brutal Punjab COIN to conclude that the insurgency was comprehensively defeated ‘in spite of’ the violent nature of the campaign (Gill, 2001a: p. 24; Thandi, 1996: p. 165). Non-adherence to minimum force is widely recognised during Operation: Blue Star, during which tank and artillery firepower was employed in a successful but destructive and politically costly attempt to expel insurgents from the Golden Temple. While destroying the Sikh holy shrine infuriated the Sikh population, provoking riots, Indira Gandhi’s assassination and undoubtedly fuelling the insurgency, it must also be recognised that the operation made some initial gains. Massive firepower broke the aura of invincibility surrounding the movement and sent a clear message that such impunity in Punjab would be unacceptable (Chadha, 2005: p. 206), while Bhindranwale’s death shattered the leadership structure, creating factionalism and criminality and beginning the erosion of internal unity that exposed the insurgents to later COIN efforts (Chima, 2007: pp. 119-120).

Classical scholars, such as Marwah (2009: pp. 98-101) and Rajagopalan (2008a: p. 263), nonetheless see Blue Star as a rare breach of India’s ‘cardinal rule’ of minimum force (Sinha, 2007: p. 2), often juxtaposing it with the more methodical, less destructive Operation: Black Thunder (1988) to present a series of ‘lessons learned’ about the use of force. While the second operation demonstrated an elevated caution when operating in the religiously sensitive Golden Temple (Fair, 2009: p. 113), Black Thunder brought no such return to minimum force. In K.P.S. Gill’s (2001a) account, during the final two years of the insurgency, ‘application of the fullest force’ was essential in targeting the most important and most recent perpetrators of attacks to demonstrate swift justice (pp. 78-79). Summary executions and forced disappearances became a common element in an intense, force-centric crackdown that ‘shattered’ the insurgents’ capability to conduct attacks (Fair, 2009: p. 117; Thandi, 1996: p. 165; Staniland, 2013: p. 167), as the decline of insurgent-related deaths from 2591 in 1991, to 1515 in 1992, to 48 in 1993 demonstrates (Gill, 2001a: p. 79). Gill’s campaign clearly demonstrates the weakness of the classical model in accounting for the utility of ‘ruthless coercion [which] […] broke the back of the militancy’ without the conclusion of a meaningful political settlement (Staniland, 2013: p. 172; Latimer, 2004: p. 8).

Upon examination, the use of considerable force in COIN in the Northeast has not been isolated to the early Mizo aerial bombardments as Rajagopalan (2008a: p. 263) suggests. A lack of spectacular firepower does not necessarily mean that minimum force has
been adhered to. Baruah (2014), for example notes that the AFSPA, active in insurgency-affected areas of the Northeast since 1958 has been used to provide security forces with the maximum flexibility and impunity to carry out extrajudicial practices such as torture (pp. 2-4, 13), staged ‘encounter killings’ and disappearances, effectively lifting minimum force restrictions (Baruah, 2007b: p. 13). Interestingly, however, the AFSPA-sanctioned security apparatus has primarily served to contain insurgencies to the isolated Northeast rather than defeat them (Baruah, 2007e: p. 12). Complex arrangements have even emerged between insurgents and counterinsurgents, tacitly agreeing their own ‘implicit rules of engagement’ that define the extent to which violence is employed, producing ebbs and flows in the use of force according to these implicit rules and the state of political order (Staniland, 2012: p. 251). The requirement for different levels of force therefore varies across the two case studies; an improved model, rather than remaining rigidly attached to minimum force, should be able to acknowledge the fluctuations in the use of force that have taken place and begin to chart the considerations that influence them.

### 2.5 Beyond resolution: Political strategies

The case studies demonstrate that greater consideration of the context of power relations is also required when examining political negotiations, devolution and accords, which are valued as absolute successes by classical model theorists and indeed is present in Army doctrines (Rajagopalan, 2007: p. 44; Indian Army, 2006: p. 16). Ultimately, the success of political negotiations has depended upon the position from which the government negotiates. In Punjab, for example, the insurgents retained the initiative for large parts of the campaign, while all central political initiatives were treated suspiciously considering the role such interventions played in fomenting the insurgency. The 1985 Longowal Accord and the negotiation attempts of the Singh and Chandrashekhar governments therefore took place from a position of weakness; it was not until the police and military crackdown of 1992-1993, elevating the counterinsurgents to a position of strength, before political amnesties began to bear fruit (Gill, 2001: p. 63; Mathur, 2011). Since the insurgency was defeated by military means, however, the state did not need to concede anything to the insurgents in a comprehensive settlement (Staniland, 2013: p. 172).

In the Northeast, the 1986 accord resolving the Mizo insurgency nonetheless fits the classical model’s assumptions (Rajagopalan, 2009a). The Indian state, having gained the ascendancy following the collapse of East Pakistan, was able to negotiate a settlement
granting autonomy and statehood, demonstrating the success of ‘mature’ negotiations in producing lasting peace (Chadha, 2009: p. 42; Chadha, 2005: p. 353). It does however represent an isolated case; the relatively unique internal cohesion of the MNF under the leadership of Laldenga prevented splinter factions from rejecting the accord (Bhaumik, 2009: p. 105). Rather than approaching political solutions as a conclusive, comprehensive affair, the Indian state appears to have recognised the diverse and fragile nature of insurgent movements in the Northeast, exploiting these fragilities by encouraging division, isolation and fratricide through its negotiations. For example, five years after the 1975 Shillong Accord with the Naga National Council (NNC), the NSCN emerged from former members dissatisfied with the outcome, while the 1985 Assam Accord brought the All Assam Students Union (AASU) into mainstream politics, but produced a rejectionist ULFA (Chadha, 2005: p. 427). Furthermore, autonomy agreements have alienated other groups, leading to interethic violence as groups proliferate to stake their own claims (Lacina, 2007: p. 173). Delhi has also agreed ceasefires with Kuki and Naga groups embroiled in inter-ethnic and internecine conflict, allowing its enemies to conveniently inflict considerable damage upon one another (Bhaumik, 2009: p. 112; Lacina, 2007: p. 168). While this supports claims that the Indian approach is ‘uniquely political’ (Rajagoapalan, 2007: p. 44), it challenges the notion that India seeks political resolution. It suggests that the Centre is willing to accept a degree of violence in the Northeast, provided that it does not directly challenge the integrity of the Indian Union, splitting and reconciling with particular groups in order to maintain the status quo. An improved model should therefore seek to take this into account, giving it an elasticity that allows it to take into account the context of both the insurgency itself and Delhi’s broader political and regional considerations.

2.6 Democratic practices: A double-edged sword

Similarly, the role of democratic mechanisms in an alternative model should be loosened from the classical model’s position, summed up aptly by Fidler’s (2009) assertion that democratic ideals fit India’s strategic requirements for COIN (p. 221). Certainly, democratic practices such as state elections have been exploited by India as opportunistic tools of COIN, proving successful when Delhi had gained the upper hand. The 1972 Mizo elections, following the creation of Mizoram as a Union Territory and the loss of East Pakistan, produced a large turnout and dealt the MNF a blow that forced Laldenga to consider talks with Delhi (Chadha, 2005: pp. 349-350), while the steady, decades-long electoral process in Nagaland has worn down groups by dividing moderate and radical
elements within insurgent groups, producing divisions and splits (Shekatkar, 2009: p. 18). Since Delhi has not always retained the upper hand, however, democratic processes have not always suited the counterinsurgents, also being employed as a weapon by insurgents. The 1989 state assembly election at the height of the Punjab insurgency elected ten insurgency-sympathetic candidates out of thirteen seats, airing pro-insurgency voices and encouraging disruptive activities such as strikes and blockades (Gill, 2001: pp. 55-59). During the 1992 elections, therefore, the intense security crackdown was coupled with the fabrication of existing insurgent propaganda encouraging calls for an election boycott, resulting in a poor 21.6% voter turnout (Mathur, 2011). This worked to Delhi’s advantage; by manipulating democratic politics and actively reducing the participation of those sympathetic to the movement, it introduced a Congress government with a ‘clear mandate’ to wipe out the insurgency (Thandi, 1996: p. 165).

In the Northeast, similar issues with democratic practices have often led the Centre to suspend or overlook democratic politics. Ties between local political parties and insurgent organisations, such as those between the local political party and successor to the AASU, the Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) and ULFA cadres, have hampered COIN efforts by stalling policies and providing funds and intelligence (Lacina, 2007: p. 170; Chadha, 2005: p. 243), and have sustained insurgent violence by recruiting militias to fulfil political gains through electoral violence, extortion and intimidation. Consequently, Delhi’s response has been to centralise power and isolate the state government, as was done in Assam by establishing President’s Rule in 1990 before launching Operation: Bajrang. This insulated COIN operations from local democratic politics and created a parallel form of governance (Baruah, 2007f: p. 6; Baruah, 2007e: p. 4), meaning the two authoritarian and democratic systems coexisted with one another in a hybrid state of ‘durable disorder’ (Baruah, 2007a: p. 1). An alternative model must therefore recognise the potential for both counterinsurgent and insurgent to exploit democratic processes, and underline the fact, demonstrated by the case studies, that the Indian state has been willing to manipulate or circumvent these processes in order to achieve its aims, going beyond simplistic linkages between democratic inclusivity and counterinsurgent success.

2.7 Considerations for an alternative model
Testing the assumptions of the classical model against the two case studies has therefore revealed that it lacks in explanatory power in several areas. Firstly, the model is
predominantly Army-centric, failing to fully incorporate the range of other actors involved while over-emphasising the Army’s conventional warfare considerations. It has also demonstrated that hearts and minds projects, political negotiations and democratic processes, rather than indications of absolute success in themselves, have produced far less conclusive results in the field, often benefitting the insurgency itself if the politicostrategic circumstances are favourable. The examples have also shown that the Indian state is willing to go beyond ideals of comprehensive political resolutions to conflict and minimum force to act in accordance with these circumstances. To construct an alternative, improved model that better captures how India has approached insurgency, therefore, the scope of analysis needs to broaden beyond the classical model’s democracy-friendly ideal benchmarks, while providing a degree of flexibility to account for the varied politico-strategic situations that the Northeast and Punjab present, and how these have in turn informed different responses.

Chapter three: An alternative model

Testing the classical Indian model against the Punjab and Northeast case studies has thus revealed its position as a framework defined by absolute, democracy-friendly ideals, lacking in explanatory power when these ideals are absent and overlooking the agency of unsavoury means such as force, electoral manipulation and tacit ‘live and let live’ arrangements alongside more savoury means that the Indian state has deployed to manage particular situations (Staniland, 2012: pp. 244-250). Chapters one and two therefore prescribed both a broadening of the analytical spectrum to include such practices and actors, and a deepening that accounts for the political, strategic and historical contexts that informed the responses taken. While such breadth potentially limits coherency, it is argued that such an approach ultimately provides a set of analytical tools with which to holistically capture the range of India’s COIN responses, while retaining the explanatory power to examine the peculiarities of each case study. This chapter reviews and critiques the existing literature that goes beyond the classical model. By doing this, it builds a broadened typology more inclusive of the various tools India has pursued in the two case studies. It then draws upon analyses of India’s strategic, political and geostrategic circumstances and applies these as indicators influencing the various responses the Indian state has taken.

3.1 Broadening the agenda: colonial context and the Kautilyan framework

Zooming out from the specifics of the case studies and constructing a macro-level
analytical framework is an important step in challenging the classical model. Staniland (2013) makes a useful start in doing so by suggesting that Indian COIN challenges conventional wisdoms and India’s nature as a democracy, considering its ability to deploy ‘numerous tools [...] to manage (not necessarily monopolise) violence,’ referring to the use of force in Punjab, and a combination of force, political settlements and tacit arrangements in the Northeast (p. 168). Clearly, this statement provides a basic outline of an alternative, broadened model. Like classical model scholars, however, Staniland fails to mention the colonial and pre-colonial attitudes and philosophies that may have influenced this approach, ultimately implying that India’s COIN approach developed in a vacuum void of any pre-Independence context. As alluded to in chapter one, India inherited most of its coercive and bureaucratic state apparatus from British rule (Roy, 2013: p. 164). The colonial mechanisms to police and control British India were highly decentralised, producing a diversity in means that has continued into post-Independence India. In the Northeast, for example some counterinsurgents co-opted tribal auxiliaries and raised local paramilitaries, others carried out inclusive social welfare works and developmental projects, while less obedient populations were deterred through forceful punitive expeditions against rebellious tribes (Roy, 2013: pp. 62-65; Callwell, 1905: p. 27; Anderson and Killingray, 1991: p. 6; Robb, 1991: p. 130). Clearly, there are continuities that go beyond solely the use of punitive, coercive operations that have been emphasised by the classical model in order to create a point of departure between an oppressive colonial regime and an enlightened democratic government (Sinha, 2007: p. 2). The manner in which British commanders adopted varying approaches to react to different situations gives the model some useful historical context, since it demonstrates the way in which Independent India’s predecessors ultimately conducted themselves in a remarkably similar fashion.

Furthermore, recent literature on Indian strategic culture has focused on the indigenous roots of India’s approach, giving the model a sense of ‘Indianism’ while providing a theoretical framework that supports and builds on Staniland’s assertions. Roy (2012) discusses the impact of Hinduism on military theory from the Vedic era to post-Independence India, revealing the centuries-long debate between the two ideals of dharmayuddha, or ‘righteous warfare’ (Roy, 2007: p. 236), and kutayuddha, meaning ‘negation of the laws of war’ (Thakkar, 1999: p. 20). The ideas of Kautilya, adviser to the ancient Mauryan Empire, author of the Arthasastra treatise and advocate of kutayuddha, Bhaumik (2009: p. 90) and Roy (2012: p. 260) argue, can help to explain India’s dynamic
approach to COIN.

A staunch realist, Kautilya’s *kutayuddha* advocated the instrumental role of violence as a tool to exploit any weaknesses the enemy possesses (ibid, p. 67), proposing forceful and often ‘crafty’ methods that bear striking resemblances to those deployed by the Indian state in Punjab and the Northeast (Thakkar, 1999: p. 20). *Yana*, or coercive deterrence through ‘a display of military assets and valour’ (Roy, 2012: p. 92), for example can be seen in the focal point patrolling employed by the Punjab Police (Gill, 2001a: p. 40), the Army’s use of heavy firepower against the Mizo insurgency (Chadha, 2009: p. 37), and the implementation of a COIN grid presence in all major Army operations (Ladwig III, 2009: p. 50). *Bheda* describes the sowing of dissension within the enemy camp to cause fratricide; almost identical to the British concept of ‘divide and rule,’ the influence of both can be seen in India’s post-Independence COIN (Roy, 2012: pp. 67, 254). For example, the Punjab Police’s use of Covert Apprehension Techniques, using former insurgents to identify targets for elimination, fits Kautilya’s advocacy of *bheda*, since it fuelled a ‘spiral of distrust’ and fratricide within the Khalistan movement (Chima, 2007: p. 628). *Bheda* therefore recognises the role of spies and former insurgents (Roy, 2012: p. 92), giving the alternative model the breadth to include former insurgents such as SULFA into its framework for analysis. *Dvaidhibhutah*, or ‘dual policy’ similarly refers to making peace with enemies to allow them to attack other enemies, producing a mutual weakening beneficial to the ruler (Roy, 2012: p. 77). This can be seen in political accords, amnesties and Suspension of Operations agreements, which have been utilised by Delhi to pit groups against one another, as was the case with the agreement with Kuki groups, giving them space to fight the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) (Bhaumik, 2009: p. 112).

However, to define *kutayuddha*, or indeed Indian COIN, as characterised purely by ‘dirty’ tactics would be inaccurate. Indeed, the framework is able to capture both these and elements more familiar with the classical model. Concerning political negotiations, for example, Kautilya and later Kamandaka stressed the need to attempt political conciliation, which is evident in India’s willingness to grant statehood and autonomy to disaffected separatist and ethnic movements (Roy, 2012: p. 139; Bhaumik, 2007: pp. 6, xvi). Kautilya points to the role of economic incentives and rewards as part of a strategy to ‘win over disaffected subjects,’ a strategy that Independent India has followed (Roy, 2012: p. 93). In its most direct form, this practice is referred to as ‘buying off the opposition’ (Jafa, 2001: p.
212), or ‘corruption’ (Chadha, 2005: p. 314). Indeed, ‘surrender packages’ and placing insurgents on government payrolls have been instrumental in bringing groups such as SULFA onto the government side (Sahni and George, 2001: pp. 313-314), meanwhile Bhaumik (2007) suggests that the Indian state is aware that a significant portion of the development funding pumped into the Northeast is siphoned into insurgent coffers through corruption, but continues to do so ‘to keep them happy’ and prevent them from posing a significant challenge (p. 5). India’s approach to WHAM essentially operates within the same logic. Believing that an unhappy population could potentially fuel dissent and insurgency, Kautilya prioritised the social welfare of the population (Thakka, 1999: p. 22). The initiation of developmental projects to provide jobs, economic security, education, healthcare and high living standards in underdeveloped areas, combined with cultural sensitivity and respect for local traditions (Roy, 2012: p. 250), as in WHAM operations such as Operation: Good Samaritan in Manipur, presents disaffected citizens with rewards in the hope of winning their loyalty (Ladwig III, 2009: p. 49). Therefore, the concept of ‘rewards’ is useful as it broadens the model’s scope in capturing the processes used to win over, recruit or appease insurgents, while retaining the ability to explain the significant part ‘hearts and minds’ plays in India’s approach.

3.2 Strengthening the framework
The kutayuddha framework therefore provides a useful mechanism with which to broaden the analytical capture of COIN practices undertaken by the Indian state to include the use of force, division, reconciliation and rewards (Bhaumik, 2009: p. xvi). In establishing which means are employed, the framework suggests that rewards and conciliation should first be employed, with force and more divisive strategies being employed in the event of their failure (Roy, 2012: p. 93). This ordering however does not fit India’s experience, however; heavy force was employed immediately in the early Naga, Mizo and Punjab campaigns (Chadha, 2009: p. 37; Rajagopalan, 2007: pp. 46-47; Marwah, 2009: p. 98), while conciliation and economic incentives have often combined with movement-splitting initiatives after military operations, as in Assam following Operations: Bajrang and Rhino (Sahni and George, 2001: p. 310; Chadha, 2005: p. 249). The framework therefore fails to explain two fundamental problems; why have force, division, reconciliation and rewards been employed in various combinations, relying on varying levels of each, across space and time, and what criteria can be used to constitute ‘successes’ in the deployment of these strategies? Lacking the context to explain these variations, it produces the simplistic impression that India selects its
responses from a ‘mixed bag.’ By adding to this framework some mechanisms that allow for contextual analysis, the next section begins to chart some considerations that may influence and indeed force variations in these combinations. Charting these will then enable the construction of benchmarks for analysis in accordance with these considerations.

3.3 Strategic and grand strategic influences

According to Lalwani (2014), ‘States facing rebellion can select from different COIN options balanced against competing crises and priorities.’ India’s responses to insurgency are not necessarily pre-planned in a cabinet office in Delhi. COIN is essentially a reactive phenomenon involving reactions to fluid, on-ground developments, policy-practice frictions and simultaneous crises, and this should be taken into consideration when explaining India’s varied responses. India has faced a variety of insurgent groups varying in cohesion, manpower, capabilities and threats to national unity in states considered stronger or weaker than others, producing different relative power dynamics and forcing different state responses. Powerful groups with higher levels of cohesion and capabilities, as well as those claiming to represent large ethnic groups, have faced intense, force-centric responses (Bhaumik, 2009: pp. 121-122). For example, the MNF in 1966, having suddenly emerged and captured three key strategic towns and declaring the formation of a national government (Chadha, 2009: p. 34), faced air strikes as part of an extraordinarily strong response to demonstrate India’s resolve in upholding national unity (Chadha, 2005: p. 342; Chadha, 2009: p. 37).

The Punjab insurgents, gaining a position of strength from 1978-1984 as Bhindranwale’s men operated with impunity meanwhile provoked the poorly-planned, insensitive but nonetheless fierce display of force in Operation: Blue Star (Marwah, 2009: p. 99). The insensitivities associated with this operation nonetheless produced an escalation in violence, culminating in a major spike in insurgent strength during the 1988-1992 phase, as insurgents demanded independence talks at Geneva with the United Nations (UN) (Chadha, 2005: p. 199; Gill, 2001a: p. 61). Following initial political paralysis in the wake of this, as a result of the insurgents’ exploitation of negotiations and democratic elections (Gill, 2001a: pp. 55-56), the Narasimha Rao government eventually countered the insurgents with electoral manipulation of its own, using low voter turnouts as a mandate to introduce police reforms that ‘freed’ the Punjab police to brutally cripple the movement (Mathur, 2011; Fair, 2009: p. 109). Indeed, this also demonstrates the ability of insurgent groups to infiltrate and exploit these processes, disrupting and delaying the COIN response until the government was galvanised into a response. In the Northeast, groups such as the Naga and Assamese separatist
movements have been able to embed themselves in local politics to shield themselves from military responses, forcing India to adopt *bheda* initiatives to prize these groups apart, dividing groups on ethnic lines, encouraging internecine warfare, co-opting former or less powerful insurgent groups and imposing Central control using legal mechanisms such as the AFSPA (Roy, 2012: p. 254; Bhaumik, 2009: pp. xvii, 122; Baruah, 2007f: p. 6). Clearly, therefore, the capabilities of the insurgent movement can both serve to embolden or weaken the Indian response. Clearly, however, the actual capabilities of the insurgent movement do not necessarily determine the Indian response. Naxalite Maoists in Eastern India, for example, have been able to establish a huge belt of control over 76 districts and embed themselves in local crime-politics nexuses, while the Centre’s response has been extraordinarily minimal (Oetken, 2009: pp. 127, 145-147; Mahadevan, 2012: pp. 211-215). Lalwani (2014) argues that this demonstrates India’s restraint towards groups ‘tied to the dominant national identity,’ suggesting that those considered outsiders are not spared the same restraint. This argument, that India responds to insurgencies differently on the basis of friendly or alien national identities, firstly struggles to explain India’s heavy-handedness against the Punjab Sikh insurgents, since Punjabi Sikhs have a strong historical tradition of service with and loyalty to the Indian state (Staniland, 2013: p. 172). Furthermore, Punjab is central to the Indian economy, while strategically, the province provides an essential frontline on the Pakistani border and a regular feature in Indian conventional war plans (Thandi, 1996: p. 178; Rajagopalan, 2008b: p. 171). Indeed, Lalwani (2014) admits that ‘tremendous manpower, money, and materiel [was marshalled] to defeat insurgencies in Punjab’ due to its national importance; as in the early Mizo insurgency, it is unlikely that India was willing to tolerate a threat to its sovereignty over such a strategically important state, using heavy force to demonstrate this resolve (Chadha, 2009: p. 37).

Moreover, the identity argument does not account for India’s evolving approach to the ‘outsider’ revolt in the Northeast, which initially provoked fierce responses in Nagaland and Mizoram, yet has not seen a reaction of the same ferocity since the 1971 war against East Pakistan, with subsequent operations consisting of ‘quick in and out’ deployments only if and when the state government ceased to function (Baruah, 2014: p. 11). Indeed, insurgent groups in the Northeast following independence ‘leveraged India’s geopolitical troubles against New Delhi in order to achieve [...] independence’ (Chadha, 2009: p. 36). With insurgents able to call upon East Pakistan, which provided significant training, logistics and materiel assistance to groups such as the MNF and the NNC (Chadha, 2005: p. 336; Bhaumik, 2009: p. 89), and China, whose relationship with India was soured by Delhi’s support for the Tibetan resistance and the border conflict of 1962, the Indian state undoubtedly reacted with these geopolitical circumstances in mind (Shekatkar, 2009: p. 14).
The loss of the strategic threat of East Pakistan in 1971, dealing a material and psychological blow to the insurgents (Chadha, 2009: pp. 36-37), no longer required the Indian state to pursue aggressive COIN strategies, leading to the initiation of negotiations leading to the Shillong Accord (1975) and the Mizo Accord (1986). When these accords have failed to produce comprehensive settlements, the absence of a clear, strategic threat has discouraged the investment of massive resources into militarily defeating the insurgencies, resulting in a combination of divisive strategies to prize movements apart and encourage fratricide, offering rewards to keep these groups on side (Roy, 2012: p. 93), and establishing spheres of influence, rules governing the use of violence and direct collusion with insurgents, with significant force employed only when a direct challenge to this order exists (Staniland, 2012: pp. 250-252). Clearly, therefore, India’s wider geostrategic circumstances provide another important indicator in helping to determine which of the range of potential responses the Indian state is likely to take.

3.4 Conclusion
The above therefore present a set of criteria that, layered over the Kautilyan framework which broadens the analytical capture of the COIN measures employed by the Indian state, provide it with a degree of contextual grounding to help predict various combinations for circumstances and areas of various strategic urgency. Punjab, facing a strong insurgency in a strategically and economically important state bordering Pakistan and within proximity to Delhi, elicited a forceful COIN response, while responses to insurgency in the Northeast waned in intensity following the collapse of the East Pakistani threat, with cooptative, divisive and collusive means employed and force held as a last resort. This model allows for benchmarks for evaluation to be established in line with India’s own priorities for either defeating, containing or resolving a particular insurgency. This is in contrast to the classical model, which uses the ideals of ‘hearts and minds’ strategies, comprehensive political solutions and minimal use of force as benchmarks which, failing to account for their non-employment in particular circumstances, sees deviations from these as ineffective. While the ‘relative capabilities’ indicator to an extent captures the insurgency’s ability to exploit politics at the state level and potentially weaken or delay the counterinsurgent effort, the model does however lack a catch-all framework that can capture the shifting nature of state-centre relations in Indian politics. Since it is simplistic to make generalised assumptions that conflictual state-centre relations will determine the Indian COIN response, as most insurgencies have emerged owing to the friction inherent in such relations, the
model is faced with difficulties as it requires detailed, case-specific analysis of local party political dynamics intersecting with federal-level politics (Staniland, 2013: pp. 169, 172). Clearly, therefore, applications of the model to particular case studies must be grounded in such an understanding in order to alleviate this potential issue.

Conclusion
This dissertation has analysed the dominant ‘model’ or series of common threads within Indian COIN literature and doctrines used to capture, explain and assess India’s approach. Beginning by tracing and analysing the classical model, it has tested the model against the case studies in Punjab and the Northeast. It has then advanced current research by building and proposing an alternative model, building a layer of contextual sophistication upon the Kautilyan framework to ensure that the range of India’s approaches enter under the analytical microscope while retaining contextual grounding. By doing this, it has arrived at a series of conclusions, while positing some limitations and questions for further research. Firstly, it unpacked the ‘classical’ understanding of Indian COIN. Influenced by a particular set of broad, guiding principles influenced by India’s status as a postcolonial democracy, chapter one traced the evolution of these principles and revealed how they influence negative conclusions about deviations from these ideals. Rajagolapalan’s (2008b: p. 181) argument that the essentially coercive aspects of the Indian Army’s COIN strategy belonged to conventional war biases reinforced the distinction between ‘violent’ conventional warfare and ‘non-violent’ COIN (Cox and Bruscino, 2011: p. 2), revealing deviations to be clumsy ‘jungle bashing’ (Sinha, 2007: p. 5). A similar distinction made between ‘oppressive’ colonial COIN and the ‘enlightened’ post-colonial approach served to downplay the historical context and continuities between the two approaches, further reinforcing the paradigm championing ‘minimum force’ (Sinha, 2007: p. 2; Banerjee, 2009: p. 192; Whittingham, 2012: p. 593). The model’s support for the use of hearts and minds, political solutions and democratic practices results in their treatment as absolute successes in themselves rather than accounting for the varying outcomes of their employment.

The case studies, chosen for their variations in both character and length, further exposed these issues with the classical model, revealing that India’s use of coercive strategies in Punjab and the Northeast was employed by a broader range of actors than the Indian Army, revealing issues with Rajagopalan’s (2008b: p. 181) conventional war bias argument. Beyond the Army, whose scholar-practitioners and affiliated academics are
influential in the classical model, it exposed the need to analyse the crucial role of groups more commonly deemed to be unreliable, partisan and therefore incompetent (Mallick, 2007: pp. 71-72), demonstrated by the instrumental role of the Punjab Police and former insurgent groups such as the RGN in Nagaland and SULFA in Assam. Moreover, it revealed that coercion was not only present, but varied greatly between the opposites of ‘minimum force’ and the use of heavy firepower, including informal, mutually arranged codes of conduct laying out acceptable levels of force between insurgents and counterinsurgents (Staniland, 2012: p. 250). It also showed how hearts and minds policies can fuel insurgencies, political negotiations can produce fratricide rather than conciliation, and democratic processes can legitimise insurgencies depending on the relative power positions the insurgents and counterinsurgents occupy. These findings made clear the requirement for an alternative model to recognise that the ideals of the classical model have not always been pursued by the Indian state.

Constructing an alternative model using the Kautilyan framework as a base point has allowed for a recognition of the varying strategies that have been employed to different degrees, such as rewards providing economic incentives either through direct payments, corrupt fund diversion or economic development, conciliation, divide and rule and force (Bhaumik, 2009: p. 90). The inclusion of a set of contextual indicators furthermore allows the model to progress from a simplistic ‘mixed bag’ to explaining why India has used varying combinations of the above methods to combat insurgency with varying degrees of urgency. Adding this to the framework helps to explain why strong insurgent movements in Punjab and the Northeast with considerable Pakistani backing faced strong, repressive responses. It also explains why insurgencies in areas of less strategic value, such as the Northeast after the East Pakistani collapse, have been met with greater levels of co-option, division, coexistence and collusion, while force remained a present but dormant characteristic, used in significant quantities only when an insurgency became too strong and attempted to challenge the status quo (Staniland, 2012: p. 252). This supports Lalwani’s (2014) argument that states invest significant effort only when either their core regions are threatened or when a credible threat exists on the peripheries, suggesting that the ‘failings’ outlined by the classical model in the cases of Punjab and the Northeast do not match the strategic priorities of the Indian state, but match its ideological priorities, supporting the notion that India’s COIN doctrine is ‘an exercise in applied ideology’ (Fidler, 2009: p. 222).
More so than the classical model, using the Kautilyan framework to analyse Indian COIN provides greater analytical space in capturing practices both in line with and contrary to India’s status as a liberal democracy. However, this is likely to present potential issues. Since it questions the extent to which India adheres to democratic practices when fighting insurgencies, the nature of the model may, as Roy (2012) admits, create a degree of academic discomfort, especially among scholars educated in Western-modelled institutions. Furthermore, reconnecting Indian COIN to its colonial and pre-colonial roots will produce further discomfort, since Indian intellectuals tend to avoid connections between both colonialism, Hindu theories and modern Indian strategy ‘in order to avoid the stigma of being a communal right-wing Hindu’ or a pro-colonialist (p. 261). Moreover, suggesting that India prioritises the security of particular areas more than others is not an argument that will sit well with India’s status as a supranational, multi-ethnic democracy.

That said, in proposing an alternative model, this research has outlined several questions for further research. Testing the validity of the model would firstly require its application to case studies in Jammu and Kashmir and the Naxalite ‘Red Corridor,’ two other insurgency environments widely considered to occupy vastly different levels of importance to Delhi (Lalwani, 2014). This could then create space for comparisons across situations of similar strategic urgency, such as between Kashmir and Punjab, that could reveal nuances and add further contextual indicators to the model. Such indicators might include the role of local, national and state-centre politics in the above case studies. Moreover, the willingness of counterinsurgents to engage in tacit arrangements with insurgents in the Northeast is an understudied dynamic in COIN studies, suggesting that further research into counterinsurgents, peripheral insurgencies and political orders would be useful in tracing the construction, negotiation and implementation of these arrangements (Staniland, 2012: p. 244). More broadly, since ‘rarely is it a good idea for any field of human endeavour to be dominated by a single theory aimed at addressing a pressing problem (Cox and Bruscino, 2011: p. 1), it is hoped that this paper encourages work on alternative models to challenge current dominant paradigms in Western COIN literature.

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