



*Book Review*

## **Review of *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents***

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**Book:** *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents*, ed. C. Christine Fair and Sumit Ganguly (Delhi: Oxford Academic, 2014), ISBN 9780198094883 (print), ISBN 9780199082896 (online), <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198094883.001.0001>.

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Insurgencies challenge governments in a myriad of ways. These challenges include restoring order, controlling violence, and restoring state legitimacy. One of these challenges is framing an appropriate framework for counterinsurgency (COIN), after all COIN is complicated, presenting a range of operational, political, legal, and cultural issues. Some have called COIN the “graduate level of war.”<sup>1</sup> While COIN is typically viewed and addressed through a military lens, the police are often employed to contain and suppress insurgencies. Despite this historical reality, the understanding of the police role in quelling insurgencies is limited. There is a paucity of attention to the role and practice of the police in COIN and a relative lacuna in the literature addressing the appropriate role and effective deployment of police in COIN operations.<sup>2</sup> *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents* seeks to fill this gap in knowledge.

C. Christine Fair—professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University’s Edmund A Walsh School of Foreign Service—and Sumit Ganguly—Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Rabindranath Tagore Chair in Indian Cultures and Civilizations at Indiana University, Bloomington—have gone a long way to fill this gap with their edited collection *Policing Insurgencies*. Their text presents an introduction by the editors along with 11 chapters presenting perspectives and case studies on the various facets of employing police in COIN. The introduction sets the stage providing a review of the corpus of recent literature of police in counterinsurgency,



critiquing much of the recent COIN policy and doctrine analysis. They then outline the contents of their book and describe the case studies selected.

### *Case Studies in Policing COIN*

The first case study, by Walter C. Ladwig III at the University of Oxford and the Royal United Services Institute (RUSI), looks at the Philippine Constabulary during the Hukbalahap Rebellion (1946-54) and the relative efficiency of police and military responses in that conflict. The impact of corruption and political interference is highlighted. Kumar Ramakrishna, at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies at Nanyang Technical University, Singapore, discusses policing the Malayan Emergency (1948-60). This is the classic case emphasizing the value of integrating police into COIN efforts. Building police relations with the community—what we now call community policing—or “the police must be part of the people and the people part of the police” (p. 67) are instructive.

The competing visions of paramilitary policing and a constabulary approach grounded in the consent of the people are addressed in chapter 3, which examines Kenya’s Mau Mau Emergency (1952-60) by Huw Bennet and Andrew Mumford, from Aberystwyth and Nottingham Universities respectively. They detail the use of pseudo gangs as a means of penetrating insurgent cells, the perils of poor police skill and insufficient training, and the benefits of police integration into a broader coordinated campaign alongside other security forces. The Kenyan campaign opted for repressive restrictions on civil liberties that are largely precluded in modern democratic settings.

The fourth case study, in my view one of the most significant cases in contemporary COIN, is an analysis of the police during “the Troubles.” Mark Cochrane, a practitioner who served with the Royal Ulster Constabulary and its successor, the Police Service of Northern Ireland, provides a detailed assessment of efforts to counter the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and other terrorist groups during that sustained conflict. The varying emphasis on military as opposed to policing primacy are discussed. The critical role of intelligence (i.e., the Special Branch) by the police is emphasized. Political and legal interactions—including the use of special courts and legislation, internment and corrections approaches, and the normalization of community policing—are provided along with the lessons learned from these various aspects of the situation. Retaining the ability to sustain ongoing police intervention to crime and community concerns along with COIN actions (intra-conflict and adaptive full-spectrum policing) are demonstrated in this case. The common threads tying these together are inter-agency co-ordination and intelligence.<sup>3</sup>

Jennifer Morrison Taw, at Claremont McKenna College, looks at the role of the police in the Colombian Insurgency. That long conflict (1966–present) involving the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC), and National Liberation Army (ELN) against the Colombian state involved many approaches to integrating and emphasizing police in COIN. Success has been variable as the conflict continues despite being moderated by the security forces, including the National Police (Policía Nacional de Colombia). In the aftermath of the 2016 peace deal with the FARC, dissident factions and criminal bands, known as BACRIM (bandas criminales), continue to challenge the state fusing insurgency and criminality (pp. 168–167). Police capacity and insurgency are the theme of chapter 6 by Adnan Naseemullah, a Scharf Fellow at Johns Hopkins University. He found that the police can play an important role in COIN if given resources, are well coordinated with the military and judiciary, and have sufficient intelligence.

The police in Afghanistan (2002-11) are reviewed by Austin Long from Columbia University in Chapter 7. This important case, while overcome by events since 2021, illustrates how police limitations enabled the insurgents. While military and police could clear areas of insurgents, corruption, political interference, along with bureaucratic complexities diminished the effectiveness of the Afghan National Police. Despite the ultimate COIN failure this chapter is worth reviewing. Chapter 8 looks at the police role during Iraqi COIN (2003-06). Its authors, Matt Sherman and Josh Paul, both US government advisers, dissect the experience of Iraqi Police in Fallujah, as well as the relative success of various police approaches applied. This assessment included a review of interactions between the US Marines and Iraqi Public Order Brigades, local police, and commandos. The paramount role of public perceptions of police legitimacy is a core lesson learned from this experience.

Getting the right mix of factors, or “The Successful Convergence of Interests, Identities, and Institutions” is the lesson of Justin Chima’s recount of counterinsurgency by the Punjab Police. Chima, of Hiram College (Ohio), recounts the Sikh militancy (1984-95) and its evolving mix of police, paramilitary, and military COIN activity. Synchronizing these efforts was key to stabilizing the situation. In many ways, legendary Indian police counterinsurgent K.P. S. Gill epitomized that integration. Gill was also criticized for extrajudicial approaches.<sup>4</sup> Intelligence, co-ordinations, and technological innovation were hallmarks of the successful COIN efforts in Punjab. Avriind Vermam, Indiana University, concludes the case studies with a review of the police in India’s Maoist (Naxalite) Insurgency. These lessons included the development of special mission units like the Greyhounds, a commando force employed by the Andhra Pradesh and Telangana Police to augment community policing (pp. 304, 314). The early police use of aerial drones for COIN is also discussed (p. 314).

### *Concluding Thoughts*

The book concludes with a solid conclusion (Chapter 11) by David Fidler, a law professor at Indiana University. Fidler’s assessment, “The Police in Counterinsurgency,” synthesizes the book’s conclusions by identifying the tensions between effectiveness, legitimacy, concepts, and capabilities. The overarching themes are ensuring police legitimacy and the rule of law, police-community integration, and finding the proper mix of force structures to restore state solvency and end the insurgencies. This requires skill, intelligence, and commitment. It also requires ongoing command development and the ability to operate across the spectrum of conflict.

Altogether, *Policing Insurgencies* does a masterful job of tying together the complex range of issues involved in understanding and successfully employing “cops as counterinsurgents.” Its rich discussion is augmented by three tables, six figures, a list of acronyms, and an index. All of the chapters are well-referenced. The text is not only a valuable addition to the literature; it also provides valuable background for police and military planners facing potential COIN situations. Policy analysts and defense planners will find this book a useful tool. Political leaders would also be well served by assessing the lesson learned here as a means of developing a sound, integrated approach to counterinsurgency. Over reliance on the military for COIN without developing and incorporating robust police capabilities must be avoided.<sup>5</sup> *Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents* brings useful perspectives on the values of policing to those charged with building effective COIN strategies.

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\* Corrections included addressing typographical errors and formatting issues.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus, "The COIN Graduate Seminar," *Small Wars Journal*, 23 December 2008, <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/the-coin-graduate-seminar>.

<sup>2</sup> Notable exceptions include, Alice Hills, "Insurgency, Counterinsurgency and Policing," in *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, ed. Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (London: Routledge, 2012), 98-108; David H. Bayley and Robert M. Perito, *The Police in War: Fighting Insurgency, Terrorism, and Violent Crime*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> See John P. Sullivan, "Policing Urban Conflict: Urban Siege, Terrorism and Insecurity," Stratfor, 19 April 2018, [https://www.academia.edu/36721271/Policing\\_Urban\\_Conflict\\_Urban\\_Siege\\_Terrorism\\_and\\_Insecurity](https://www.academia.edu/36721271/Policing_Urban_Conflict_Urban_Siege_Terrorism_and_Insecurity); John P. Sullivan and Adam Elkus, "Preventing Another Mumbai," *CTC Sentinel* 2, no. 6 (June 2009), <https://ctc.usma.edu/preventing-another-mumbai-building-a-police-operational-art/>.

<sup>4</sup> On K.P.S. Gill, see "Kanwar Pal Singh Gill," Wikiwand, accessed 21 November 2021, [https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Kanwar\\_Pal\\_Singh\\_Gill](https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Kanwar_Pal_Singh_Gill).

<sup>5</sup> For a contemporary perspective on the value of police for COIN from an Indian vantage, see Kamal Kumar, "Spare Army Counterinsurgency Tasks, Police Does It Better: Look at Punjab, Andhra, Tripura," *The Print*, 25 June 2021, <https://theprint.in/opinion/spare-army-counterinsurgency-police-does-it-bette-punjab-andhra-tripura/684412/>.