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PUNJAB COUNTERINSURGENCY: FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE BETWEEN PEOPLE CENTRIC AND ENEMY CENTRIC APPROACH

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JCSP 40

Exercise Solo Flight

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**PUNJAB COUNTERINSURGENCY: FINDING THE RIGHT BALANCE
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INTRODUCTION

Since, the end of World War II, there has been a decline in the conventional warfare but the world is increasingly becoming violent; intrastate war- rebellion, civil war, insurgency, terrorism have become the dominant form of armed conflict. Terrorism and insurgency touched 85 countries in 2012 with the worldwide terrorism reaching new levels of destructiveness.¹ The world is trying to grapple with the problem of fighting insurgency and terrorism. While doing so, there is a tendency to focus towards the failures rather than the successes, though it is a fact that there are very few examples of successful counterinsurgency campaigns in the modern history. The study of successful counterinsurgency campaigns offers useful insights and assists in developing a successful counterinsurgency strategy.

Modern India's history, right from Independence is a history of almost ceaseless fourth generation conflicts. In these conflicts the Indian security forces (SF) have had some reverses, but they have also achieved some impressive success, probably more than any other country in the world.² Between 1978 and 1993, India's northwestern state of Punjab was riled by violence perpetrated by groups seeking to create a Sikh state called Khalistan.³ The violent insurgency consumed 21,469 lives before it was comprehensively defeated in 1993.⁴ The uniqueness of this campaign comes from the fact that the victory was achieved without acceding to any of the demands of the Sikh militants.

¹ START, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses on Terrorism, "Despite Fewer Attacks in Western World, Global Terrorism is Increasing," 19 December 2012, College Park, MD.

² Kiss, A. Peter, "Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe," European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection, July 2009, 3.

³ Fair, C. Christie, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 107.

⁴ Gill and Sahani, "Terror and Containment: Perspectives on India's Internal Security," Gyan Publishing House, Jan 1, 2001, New Delhi, 15.

The success/setbacks fighting the insurgency in Punjab were directly affected by getting a right/faulty mix of people centric and enemy centric measures. The essay will argue that the Punjab counterinsurgency campaign was successful by getting a right balance between the people centric and enemy centric measures. For the purpose of the essay, enemy centric counterinsurgency involves targeting of insurgents, their lines of supply and communication; it seeks the source of insurgency the insurgents themselves. The idea is to capture or kill the hard core members of the insurgency and disincentive the others. The population-centric approach aims to be less coercive to the general population and aims to win over their support.

Owing to the restrictions imposed by the word count the essay will give a brief description of background and causes of the Punjab insurgency and then delve in detail into the India's response to the Punjab insurgency. It will demonstrate how the use of a lop-sided or balanced approach between the people centric and enemy centric measures during different phases of campaign directly affected the failure/success. The author will also compare the methodology adopted with the present Indian Army Sub Conventional doctrine (IAD-SCO), published in 2006.⁵

HISTORY AND GENESIS OF INSURGENCY

Sikhs comprise just fewer than two percent of India's population, with their principal concentration in the state of Punjab, where the Sikh religion was born about 450 years ago.⁶ On independence in 1947 the state was divided; the western 4/5th with Muslim

⁵ Indian Army Doctrine "Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine," Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006, 4.

⁶ Anant Mathur, "Secrets of COIN Success: Lessons from the Punjab Campaign," *Faultlines*, Volume 20, January 2011, 1.

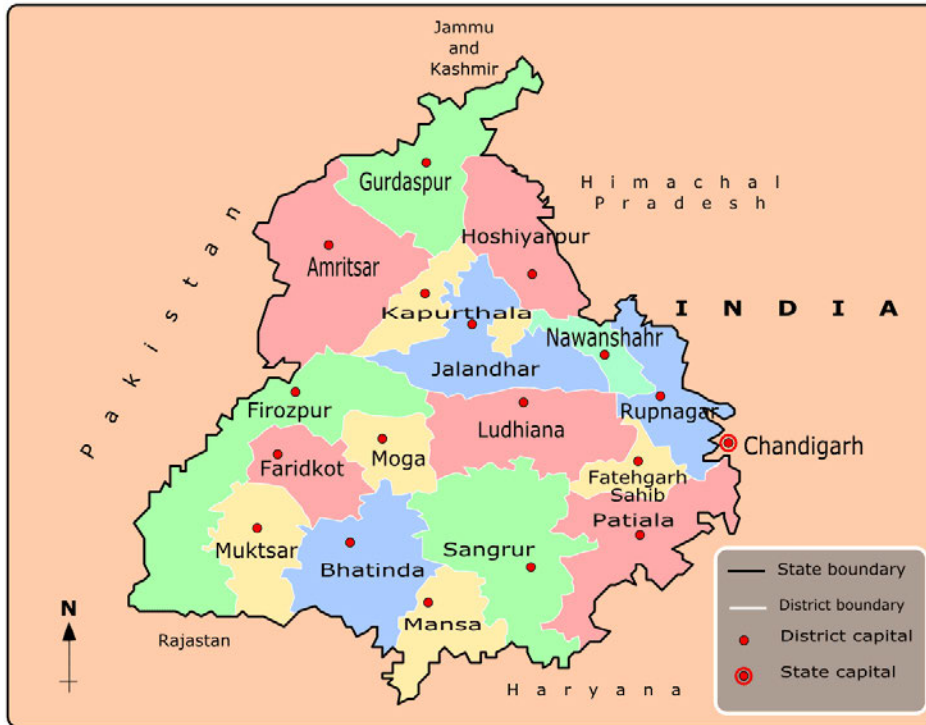
predominant population going to Punjab and the balance 1/5th with majority of Sikh population remaining with India. Some in Punjab believed that they have not gained much from the independence as the Muslims got their own state in the form of Pakistan and Hindus are predominant in India; Sikhs will have a difficulty to preserve their religion, unique culture and language in Hindu dominated India.⁷ The Sikhs suffered horribly during the partition, over two million Sikhs were driven away from their properties in Pakistan and thousands killed.⁸ This led to the demand for an independent Sikh majority state within India and the demand was met in 1966 with Punjab further being divided in to three states of Punjab, the Sikh dominated region, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh.⁹

⁷ Kiss, A. Peter, "Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe," European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection, July 2009, 6.

⁸ Anant Mathur, "Secrets of COIN Success: Lessons from the Punjab Campaign," *Faultlines*, Volume 20, January 2011, 1.

⁹ The Punjab Reorganization Act 1966, Government of India.

<http://www.google.ca/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=3&ved=0CDsQFjAC&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.thesuratinitiative.com%2Fapp%2Fdownload%2F756716208%2FPunjab%2BReorganization%2BAct%2Bof%2B1966.pdf&ei=1hxIU9HVIsoWyATc8IHQDA&usg=AFQjCNGzPXIy4TFkHL-tI8qoPRtGfDrsRQ&sig2=UYhA7X3A0AG2fJB13t70Kw&bvm=bv.65788261,d.aWw> accessed on 04 May 2014.



The social uprisings are complex and can be rarely attributed to a single driving cause, and the Punjab insurgency is no exception. A number of theories are proposed as the causes of insurgency: the negative economic and social impacts of the “green revolution, revival of religious fundamentalism; politicization of Sikh religion, conflict between the main Sikh political party Akali Dal and Congress party, centralization attempts by the federal government, incitement of the Sikh diaspora in Europe and Canada and, the Pakistan’s ulterior motives.¹⁰

The former Director General of Punjab Police, KPS Gill blames the petty politics for the genesis of Punjab insurgency. He states:

Sikh separatism was a self-inflicted wound, created by a perverse politics by the Congress party, then ruling at the Centre under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, in its effort to mobilize radical fringe groups within the community to

¹⁰ Kiss, A. Peter, “Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe,” European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection, July 2009, 7.

unsettle the elected Shiromani Akali Dal Government in Punjab. The Congress party's mischief fed into a marginal tradition within the lunatic fringe of the Sikh community in general, and the Akali party in particular, which had long invented various 'grievances' to mobilize communal votes, particularly within the influential, though restricted, electoral processes for the Shiromani Gurudwara Prabandhak Committee (SGPC), the administrative body that controls Sikh shrines and religious institutions in Punjab. The result was an augmenting process of competitive communalism, with all prominent political parties in the State encouraging Sikh extremism, and progressively empowering the most lawless elements in the community.¹¹

The grievances exist always and everywhere and they can be exploited by propaganda and funding.

SHIFTING APPROACH : IGNORING INSURGENCY 1978-1984

The Indians shifted their strategy and tactics twice during the fifteen year period of Punjab insurgency. The three different eras of the Punjab counter insurgency are 1978-1984, in which the emerging insurgency was treated as a law and order problem and allowed to grow almost unchecked to full maturity; 1984-1991, in which the central authority finally took action and alienated the Sikh population by dissolving the Punjab regional government, ordering the infamous invasion of the most holy shrine of Sikh's the Golden Temple; the period from the 1991-1993, in which the government, military, and law enforcement agencies learned from their

¹¹ Counterinsurgency in India Lessons from the Punjabi Insurgency Interview, *Eurasia Review* 24 December 2012. <http://www.eurasiareview.com/24122012-counterinsurgency-in-india-lessons-from-the-punjabi-insurgency-interview/> accessed on 04 May 2014.

previous mistakes and developed a winning strategy leading to an unconditional victory and normalization of situation in Punjab.¹²

The Akali Dal pressed for the formation of a Sikh dominated state and in 1966, the Punjab State Reorganization Bill carved out a “Sikh majority state” with Sikhs comprising of 54% percent of the population. The Akalis believed they will control the power in the new state being the only Sikh political party; they formed coalition government from 1967-1970, however Akali’s won only one seat out of 13 in the Indian parliament elections of 1971.¹³ The primary factor of the loss was the loss of faith in Akali Dal as a Sikh political party. To turn the tide, in 1973 the Akali Dal formulated the Anandpur Sahib Resolution (ASR), a document articulating the policies of central government which were detrimental to the Sikh population and offered resolutions. The true political purpose of the resolution was to establish fear and anxiety within the Sikh population.¹⁴

The first phase of insurgency was treated as a law and order situation by both the federal and the state government; until 1984 they refused to entertain the idea of a rising Sikh insurgency.¹⁵ The IAD-SCO sees this stage as low violence low base situation which calls for pre-emptive multi-pronged initiatives employing various elements of national power failing which its progression is a possibility.¹⁶ The political leaders from both Akali and Congress

¹² Burkart, Meredith K, “A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 4.

¹³ Kang, Charanjit Singh, “Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study,” Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 33.

¹⁴ Teleford, H. “The Political Economy of Punjab: Creating Space for Sikh Militancy,” *Asian Survey*, No. 17, 975-978.

¹⁵ Fair, C. Christie, “Lessons from India’s experience in the Punjab, 1978-93,” *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 108.

¹⁶ Indian Army Doctrine “Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine,” Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006.

jostled for political supremacy, blaming each other for the woes of people and failed to address the political, economic or social causes of the dissent.¹⁷ The dynamic created a political void which was filled by Sikh religious extremists.¹⁸ The lack of tangible reaction to the emerging situation is clearly a drift away from the doctrine. The lack of reaction to control the insurgents or to address the root causes of insurgency is a failure to adopt both enemy centric as well as people centric measures.

The political parties at the center supported the religious fundamentalists and assisted in the rise of Jarnail Singh Bhindranwale from an ordinary Sikh preacher to the religious and terrorists leaders with a large following; it was done in order to split the vote of religiously oriented Akali Dal followers.¹⁹ The Akali party rather than challenging the fundamentalist approach of Bhindranwale adopted a more hardliner approach themselves fuelling the anti-Hindu sentiments of the Sikhs. When the Sikh fundamentalist movement gained momentum and Bhindranwale gained enough popularity he started criticizing not only the Akali leaders who failed to look after the well-being of Sikhs but also the Hindu dominated Indian state.²⁰

In 1978, the death of 18 followers of Bhindranwale's in the clash with the Nirankaris (the liberal Hindu-Sikh sect) is the start point for the rise of violence in Punjab.²¹ Blaming the government and emboldened by the support of masses concerning his follower's death,

¹⁷ Marwah, Ved, "India's Counterinsurgency Campaign in Punjab," In *India and counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned*. Eds. Sumit Ganguly and David P. Fidler. New York, Routledge 90.

¹⁸ Kang, Charanjit Singh, "Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 24.

¹⁹ Teleford, H. "The Political Economy of Punjab: Creating Space for Sikh Militancy," *Asian Survey*, No. 17, 974-986.

²⁰ Kang, Charanjit Singh, "Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 25.

²¹ Gill, K P S, "Punjab, The Knights of Falsehood," Har- Anand Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1997,85.

Bhindranwale turned to violence for attaining political demands; the insurgency had begun.²²

The earliest methods included publishing hit lists and striking of Hindu and Nirankari leaders to avenge the death of his followers, winning over the population by circulating rhetoric on real and imaginary injustices suffered by Sikhs, infiltrating *Gurudwaras* (Sikh temples) to gain legitimacy and as means of protection.²³

India was the proud hosts of the 9th Asian Games in November-December 1982 at Delhi, India. The Akali's had threatened to intensify their agitation to press for the implementation of ASR; seeing the demonstrations as a prestige issue the federal Government reacted with a heavy handed approach.²⁴ Haryana police was ordered to search all Sikhs on their way to Delhi during the Asian games, a large section of the Akali leaders were arrested.²⁵ The lack of foresight to search every traveler and use of rough and denigrating methods to search the Sikhs made them feel second class citizens which drove them in to the arms of Sikh extremists. The methods used demonstrated a lack of population centric approach. The IAD-SCO identifies populace as the strategic center of gravity and recommends the use of measures to win over the popular support, as without popular support no insurrectionist movement can be sustained.²⁶

²² Burkart, Meredith K, "A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 4.

²³ Fair, C. Christie, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 92-93.

²⁴ Under Threat, New Delhi Braces For Sikh Protests, *The New York Times*, US Edition, 19 November 1982.

²⁵ Burkart, Meredith K, "A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 27.

²⁶ Indian Army Doctrine "Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine," Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006.

The Indian Government's first response to the increased violence was the dismissal of Akali Party coalition government in 1980.²⁷ This removed the opportunity of utilizing the local experience for tackling terrorism or using them as a scapegoat. At the time of dissolution the regional government was led by an Akali Dal majority, and dismissing it "only confirmed the narrative of Hindu-inspired, Congress-implemented discrimination against Sikhs."²⁸ The IAD-SCO warns of the terrorists' methodology to manipulate the environment to enhance credibility of their cause and justifying the armed struggle as the most plausible option to fulfill societal aspirations.²⁹ The actions of the federal government provided the extremists with sufficient ammunition to fuel their agitations. The actions demonstrate a lack of population centric approach and violation of the IAD-SCO.

A concerted effort by the federal government in conjunction with state government would have turned out to be a better approach. The actions of the federal government alienated the local government which launched "Dharm Yudh Morch" (religious agitation) on September 17, 1981 which further compounded the challenges of the federal government.³⁰ The dictator of the religious agitation, Harchand Singh Longowal declared, "Bhindranwale is our staff with which to beat the Government."³¹ By now Bhindarnwale had come out in open against the federal government. He was the center point of religious fundamentalist approach and it becomes evident from the excerpts of his talks:

²⁷ Fair, C. Christie, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 96.

²⁸ Burkart, Meredith K, "A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 27.

²⁹ Indian Army Doctrine "Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine," Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006.

³⁰ Kang, Charanjit Singh, "Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 60.

³¹ Gill, K P S, "Punjab, The Knights of Falsehood," Har- Anand Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1997, 78.

The Hindus are trying to enslave us; the atrocities against the Sikhs are rising day by day under the Hindu imperialist leaders of New Delhi; the Sikhs have never felt so humiliated not even under the reign of the Mughal emperors and British colonists. How can the Sikhs tolerate this injustice?³²

At another time while provoking youth to join the folds of violence, he stated:

Those of you who want to become extremists should raise their hands. Those of you who believe that they are the Sikhs of the Guru should raise their hands; others should hang their heads like goats. Every Sikh boy should keep 200 grenades with him. I had earlier directed that each village should raise a team of three youth with one revolver each and one motorcycle. In how many villages had this been done?³³

A perfect example of the inaction by the authorities and augmented might of the extremists is the incident on March 16, when two members of the Bhindranwale's killer squads engaged with the police outside Amritsar, one of the extremists was killed but the later managed to drive back to the Golden temple with his companion's body. The SGPC handed over the body of the dead terrorist to the district authorities more than 24 hours later.³⁴ In an apparent retaliation the Deputy Inspector General of Police, P.S Atwal was brutally executed in April 1983 within the golden temple premises when he turned up to pray at the temple; it was done in broad daylight with scores of witnesses standing by, including his bodyguards and a police contingent posted a hundred yards away.³⁵

Such was the terror that his bodyguards fled, the police outpost was abandoned and the policemen hid in the shops. The body of the senior police officer riddled with bullets kept lying at the main entrance of the Sikhs most sacred shrine for two hours before the District Commissioner could persuade the temple authorities to hand it over. Even after the Atwal's

³² Nayar Kuldeep and Khushwant Singh, "Tragedy of Punjab: Operation Blue Star & After," South Asia Books, 73.

³³ Gill, K P S, "Punjab, The Knights of Falsehood," Har- Anand Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1997,85.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 86.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 86.

murder the police force dithered about, unwilling to enter the Golden temple, where the militants had consolidated power, to collect evidence and bring the perpetrators to justice.³⁶

The local authorities never dared to breach the temple walls owing to the lack of conclusive directions from the indecisive central government. The failure to react to Atwal's killing not only convinced insurgents that they could continue their targeted killings with impunity; it also impressed on population that rule of law was sacrificed on the altar of political fear and expediency.³⁷ This overwhelming security vacuum owing to the inaction by authorities increased panic and forced population to take sides. On one hand lack of a coherent and severe response demonstrating the will of Government emboldened the extremists while on the other lack of measures to address the social and economic grievances provided a fertile ground for the extremists to get more recruits. It was a period where the government failed to adopt both people centric measures as well as enemy centric actions.

SHIFTING APPROACH: HARD LESSONS 1984-1991

This period of counterinsurgency highlights the shift from an ambivalent to a very heavy handed approach. In, June 1984 Prime Minister Indira Gandhi decided to resolve the crisis using military means.³⁸ The likelihood of the negotiated settlement was bleak owing to the differences between the Akalis and the Congress; moreover, Bhindranwale, the real mastermind behind

³⁶ Fair, C. Christie, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 96.

³⁷ Burkart, Meredith K, "A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 29.

³⁸ Kang, Charanjit Singh, "Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 63.

violence was neither willing to negotiate with the Hindu central government nor was he invited to participate in the negotiations.³⁹

The Golden Temple, located in Amritsar, Punjab near the Pakistan border is highly revered and recognized worldwide as the primary religious and political center of Sikhism; outside the temple are various bazaars, hotels, restaurants and historical locations including *Gurudwaras*.⁴⁰ Indian Army was employed for Operation Bluestar to clear Golden Temple, Bhindranwale's safe haven and primary target base and also forty other Sikh temples in Punjab were targeted because they were being used for terrorist activities.⁴¹ As per Gill

Paralysis was replaced by ill-conceived over reaction under Operation Bluestar and operation Woodrose, both poorly planned, executed under irrational, politically imposed timeframes, with little or no hard intelligence available to the Army that was abruptly deployed to 'clear the Golden Temple'.⁴²



THE GOLDEN TEMPLE

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁴⁰ Christopher, Lawrence Timothy, "The strategic Effects of Counterinsurgency Operations at Religious Sites: Lessons from India, Thailand and Israel," Dissertations and Theses, Portland State University, 1 January 2013, 44.

⁴¹ Kang, Charanjit Singh, "Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 63.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 65.

The operation Blue Star was a tactical success but it is considered a strategic loss owing to the outcome of the operations.⁴³ The operation was successful in eliminating Bhindranwale and other militants inside the temple complex but the repercussions clearly demonstrate that operation was not thought through. The military operation was executed amidst a curfew and media outage; it caused heavy damage to the temple, killed hundreds, galvanized a much wider insurgency within the Indian Sikh population, and mobilized international Sikh community.⁴⁴

The employment of military in the holy temple premises is objectionable to many whereas others argue that the utter failure of the local police forces to prevent militant build-up in the Golden Temple made it mandatory for the military to be employed.⁴⁵ The operation was destined to be failure owing to the circumstances; firstly, the military commanders had no familiarity with the people or the sources of actionable intelligence. The troops lacked intelligence on the layout of the temple and had to devote valuable time negotiating its fortifications.⁴⁶ The Army was deployed on 03 June 1984 and the operation started less than three days later leaving military with hardly any time to prepare. Gill observes:

The Army was sent in with needless haste, virtually blind, and, once again, with crippling restrictions on what they could and could not do within the Temple. There was a complete lack of information; no realistic intelligence existed on the actual strength of terrorists, of the quantity and deployment of arms available to

⁴³ Christopher, Lawrence Timothy, "The strategic Effects of Counterinsurgency Operations at Religious Sites: Lessons from India, Thailand and Israel," Dissertations and Theses, Portland State University, 1 January 2013, 6.

⁴⁴ Fair, C. Christie, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 112.

⁴⁵ Brar, K. S, "Operation Blue Star: The True Story, UBS Publishers' Distributors, New Delhi, 36, 41-42.

⁴⁶ C. Christine Fair, "Military Operations in Urban Areas: The Indian Experience," *India Review*, 2, No. 1, January 2003, 66.

them, or even a sufficiently detailed layout of the devastating impact on some of the most scared buildings. What could have been won by strategy and planning had to be seized by brute force.⁴⁷

The operation date coincided with a major Sikh festival when thousands of devotees were present in the temple; moreover, many allegations reveal civilians had little warning of the impending invasion. The complete media blackout, use of military and the controversial issue of date to conduct the operation gave the initiative to insurgent supporters to present their version of the story. The government failed to try and use media to delegitimize the separatists. Once the insurgents had framed the operation to their advantage the military had no means to gain back the initiative on the public relations front though military tried to gain some ground by releasing a multitude of photos of weapons and other evidence of Bhindranwale's heretical behavior at the temple but it was in vain.⁴⁸ The insurgents had won the information war. The operation Woodrose to roll up the Khalistan movement infrastructure led to the arrest of thousands at random or based on most tenuous reasons (e.g. age) by the military/paramilitary forces deployed from other states who had limited reliable information.⁴⁹ Sikhs became convinced that the Army and the government had no respect for their holy places, their property and individual lives.

Operation Blue Star triggered an unprecedented increase in violence which included the bombing of an Air India jet in 1986, assassination of the Indian Army's chief of Staff during operation Blue Star, General Vaidya.⁵⁰ The operation also triggered the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards on 31st of October 1984 which in turn sparked

⁴⁷ Gill, K P S, "Punjab, The Knights of Falsehood," Har- Anand Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1997, 96.

⁴⁸ Christopher, Lawrence Timothy, "The strategic Effects of Counterinsurgency Operations at Religious Sites: Lessons from India, Thailand and Israel," Dissertations and Theses, Portland State University, 1 January 2013, 51.

⁴⁹ Kiss, A. Peter, "Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe," European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection, July 2009, 23.

⁵⁰ Marwah, Ved, "India's Counterinsurgency Campaign in Punjab," In *India and counterinsurgency: Lessons Learned*. Eds. Sumit Ganguly and David P. Fidler. New York, Routledge, 100.

the anti-Sikh riots in early November 1984. Justice Nanavati commission report on 1984 Anti-Sikh riots includes the statement of home minister stating that 2146 Sikhs were killed in Delhi during the riots whereas 586 Sikhs were killed in other parts of the country; some of these riots were conducted by the local members/leaders of the Congress party which was in power at the center.⁵¹ The military and Para-military forces were deployed to control the riots after three days and upon their arrival riots died down within a matter of hours, leaving almost everyone to question why they were not deployed earlier.⁵²

The lack of efforts on the part of government to understand the population sentiments and win them over led to increasing number of Sikhs joining the insurgent cause. The Government's lopsided approach to adopt a harsh enemy centric approach without catering for the people's aspirations created an environment of distrust in the hearts and minds of the most moderate of Sikh population. The Sikhs not only lost the faith in the legitimate authorities; they ceased to consider them legitimate at all. The operation Blue Star and Sikh riots gave a new lease of life that could have easily been contained in 1984 itself. It was a lease of life which was to inflict a toll of thousands of deaths in the next nine years.⁵³

The action of media blackout is not in consonance to IAD-SCO, which emphasis on the proactive use of public information and perception management. The doctrine also recommends addressing the local aspirations to win over the local population; pursuing a political dialogue to attain national policy objectives but the federal government relied heavily on the military

⁵¹ Justice Nanavati Commission of Inquiry: 1984 Anti- Sikh Riots, Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, 09 February 2005, 3. http://www.mha.nic.in/hindi/sites/upload_files/mhahindi/files/pdf/Nanavati-I_eng.pdf accessed on 05 May 2014.

⁵² Burkart, Meredith K, "A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 37.

⁵³ Gill, K P S, "Punjab, The Knights of Falsehood," Har- Anand Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1997, 97.

approach only.⁵⁴ The IAD-SCO sees end state in which “conflict resolution” succeeds “conflict termination” but no such efforts were initiated even after operation Blue Star and operation Woodrose.

The next Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi withdrew federal forces from Punjab and made efforts to negotiate a political solution. The Rajiv-Longowal Accord promising to meet the aspirations of the Sikhs was signed on July 26 1985; the public opinion generally approved of it but the Sikh militants continued unabated violence and the Sikh politician Harcharan Singh Longowal was murdered a month later.⁵⁵ In the interim as an appeasement measure the Akali government released 2000 militants, most of whom rejoined the insurgency.⁵⁶ One of the major aspects of the deal was the transfer of Chandigarh as the capital of Punjab; however, as the date of transfer approached in January 1986, federal government backtracked on its promise making the sitting state government a lame duck and the insurgency resuscitated.⁵⁷

In April 1986, militants recaptured the Golden temple and announced formation of Khalistan as a consequence of deteriorating situation in the state in 1987 the state government was suspended and President’s rule imposed in Punjab.⁵⁸ In 1988, Rajiv Gandhi decided that implementation of the accord was futile, this act left the Akali party who negotiated the accord bereft of its legitimacy and deprived the federal government of a moderate negotiating partner;

⁵⁴ Indian Army Doctrine “Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine,” Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006, 17-19.

⁵⁵ Kiss, A. Peter, “Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe,” European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection, July 2009, 24.

⁵⁶ Fair, C. Christine, “Lessons from India’s experience in the Punjab, 1978-93,” *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 118.

⁵⁷ Telford, Hamish., “Counterinsurgency in India: Observations from Punjab and Kashmir,” *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Spring 2001, 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

some analysts argue had the accord been implemented , peace may have been possible earlier.⁵⁹ Some argue that decision to not honor the accord was made owing to the escalation in Sikh terrorist violence and discontent among Hindu nationalists within the Congress (I) party; however, the fact is that this assisted in legitimizing the cause of insurgents and alienated the Sikhs further.

In the period 1987-1989, Gandhi reverted back to the policy of force, the terrorists were evicted from the Golden temple again; however, unlike Blue Star the operation Black Thunder was carried out on detailed intelligence by the police and paramilitary in the view of full media glare. The operation was both a tactical and strategic success as the militants inside the temple surrendered; there were no casualties and no damage to the Golden Temple.⁶⁰ The insurgents surrendered in the front of full media coverage; starving and dehydrated, they were seen acting in ways that were cowardly and disrespectful, with their offensive behavior stripping the religious veneer from them.⁶¹ By January 1989, the insurgency was restricted to only three districts along the Pakistani border and then the Director General of Police the chief architect of the counterinsurgency campaign K P S Gill who led the successful operation Black Thunder was posted out of the state as part of a deal with terrorists.⁶²

In December, 1989, the V. P. Singh Janta government came to power and adopted a non-violent conciliatory counterterrorism strategy; government took reconciliatory measures to win

⁵⁹ Fair, C. Christine, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 118.

⁶⁰ Kiss, A. Peter, "Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe," *European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection*, July 2009, 24.

⁶¹ Christopher, Lawrence Timothy, "The strategic Effects of Counterinsurgency Operations at Religious Sites: Lessons from India, Thailand and Israel," *Dissertations and Theses*, Portland State University, 1 January 2013, 54.

⁶² Kiss, A. Peter, "Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe," *European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection*, July 2009, 25.

hearts and minds. The government completely ignored the enemy centric approach and it turned out to be unsuccessful as the terrorist groups took this as an opportunity to reorganize their networks, increase their recruitment, and re-arm their members.⁶³

The subsequent government of Chandrasekhar after the collapse of Janta government was in a precarious situation as it was a minority government. The government tried to engage in treaty negotiations but it failed as the terrorists were unwilling to negotiate with a minority government as it can't put forward a significant offer; moreover, the terrorist organizations demanded Khalistan as the starting point of any negotiations owing to the fact that terrorism was at an all-time high and the government's decision to decrease counterterrorism operations were seen as a sign of buckling under pressure.⁶⁴ The negotiations were bound to fail as any negotiations from a standing of weakness will not yield results as the terrorists see it as an opportunity to attain their goals. Gill states:

By January 1989, the terrorists had been pushed into a thin strip along the Pakistan border, with over 70 per cent of their strikes restricted to just three of the twelve districts in Punjab – Gurdaspur, Amritsar and Ferozepur. It was my conviction, at this stage, that terrorism could be ended within six months of sustained counter-terrorism operations. Unfortunately, politics intervened once again. Early elections and the establishment of a succession of feckless Prime Ministers – V.P. Singh followed by Chandrashekhar – at Delhi created the political space for increasing terrorist activity, even as growing restrictions were placed on Security Force operations in an effort to appease the terrorist leadership. As part of a 'deal' with the terrorists, I was transferred out of Punjab, and appointed as the Director General of the Central Reserve Police Force. By the time this period of political incoherence was brought to an end by the premature

⁶³ Kang, Charanjit Singh, "Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 70.

⁶⁴ Kang, Charanjit Singh, "Counter terrorism: Punjab a case study," Simon Fraser University, Burnaby Mountain, BC, Canada, Spring 2005, 70.

General Elections of 1991, killings in the State had escalated to unprecedented levels, and every District in Punjab was afflicted by terrorist activities.⁶⁵

The section demonstrated that the federal government failed to strike a balance between the population centric and enemy centric approach throughout the entire phase of counterinsurgency. Initially, the government adopted a strong enemy centric posture conducting operation Woodrose and operation Blue Star and completely ignored the aspirations of the population. The aftereffects of the Indira Gandhi's assassination and government mute response to stop the atrocities against Sikhs or to bring the perpetrators of the riots to justice further alienated the population. Gill argues that Operation Blue Star and the November 1984 Sikh massacres were the two most significant victories for the cause of Khalistan, not won by the militants but inflicted on the nation by its own government.⁶⁶ The shift to adopt a people centric approach in the form of Rajiv-Longowal Accord and then backtracking from it gave a boost to insurgency. The subsequent government's failed to adopt enemy centric approach and only relied on winning over the population which was seen as a weakness and an opportunity by the terrorists' failed to reign in the insurgency. The lopsided approach between enemy centric and population centric measures took the insurgency to an all-time high. The actions taken in this phase are completely of sync with the IAD-SCO; the government ignored the population centric approach and conducted enemy centric approach without care for the public sentiments and collateral damage.

⁶⁵ Counterinsurgency in India Lessons from the Punjabi Insurgency Interview, *Eurasia Review* 24 December 2012.

⁶⁶ Gill, K P S, "Punjab, The Knights of Falsehood," Har- Anand Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1997, 95.

SHIFTING APPROACH: DETERMINED COUNTERINSURGENCY 1991-1994

The fall of Chandrasekhar government paved way for the Narashima Rao government, which considered the resolution of Punjab insurgency as their topmost priority.⁶⁷ The possibility of a political solution was very bleak owing to the unprecedented levels of violence, fragmented terrorist leadership with over 160 terrorist organizations and, lack of the control of Punjab elite over these terrorists. The new government showed political will to resolve the Punjab insurgency; the government adopted hands off approach, ensuring that political interference did not hinders counterterrorism operations. The government sent an unequivocal message to the terrorists by posting K P S Gill back to Punjab and redeploying the Army.⁶⁸

The previous experience taught officials that in order to successfully fight insurgency civil and military needs to cooperate and coordinate their efforts; there is a need to develop a well-sourced, systematic, and strategic intelligence network.⁶⁹ The army also realized that it needs to rely on Punjab's local law enforcement agencies; the local police forces were strengthened by suitable leadership, increase in numbers, better training and equipment.⁷⁰ Gill brought motivated and courageous officers from other state cadres and paramilitary forces, this move weeded out officers with lack of motivation and loyalty who opted for 'softer postings'.⁷¹

⁶⁷ Kiss, A. Peter, "Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe," European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection, July 2009, 26.

⁶⁸ Anant Mathur, "Secrets of COIN Success: Lessons from the Punjab Campaign," *Faultlines*, Volume 20, January 2011, 8.

⁶⁹ Brar, K. S, "Operation Blue Star: The True Story, UBS Publishers' Distributors, New Delhi, 36, 41-42, 59.

⁷⁰ Burkart, Meredith K, "A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 40.

⁷¹ Anant Mathur, "Secrets of COIN Success: Lessons from the Punjab Campaign," *Faultlines*, Volume 20, January 2011, 3.

Beginning in 1989, a recruitment drive filled vacancies for the expanded Punjab police; in 1989 there were 51,833 authorized police billets compared to 32,855 in 1984, by 1993 the numbers rose to 65,658 and in 1994 it was 70,228.⁷² The Government had recruited 20,000 home guards and 6,000 Special Police Officers from Punjab itself; this was accompanied by deployment of 35 Army brigades and 350 companies of paramilitary forces, these additional deployments increased the estimated ratio of number of insurgents to the security forces up to 1:10 to 1:12.⁷³ The increased force levels are essential in COIN operations as the force lacking in numerical strength tends to make up for the deficiency using the firepower which causes enhanced collateral damage which alienates the population. The reliance on local forces, generating an intelligence network and minimal use of force are as per the IAD-SCO.⁷⁴

The military and paramilitary forces were deployed to seal the border with Pakistan in order to cut off the routes of supply and reinforcement; even during the conduct of operations military was used in cordon whereas the local police was employed for the actual operations.⁷⁵ The majority of the Punjab police personnel are Sikhs, the use of local forces deprived the militants of the propaganda value of claiming that the security forces were Hindu oppressors of Sikhs.⁷⁶ The religious and ethnic composition of the local forces also assisted in actionable intelligence collection. The numerical superiority and actionable intelligence led to conduct of surgical counterinsurgency operations. This methodology proved to be enemy centric as well as

⁷² Fair, C. Christine, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 114.

⁷³ Anant Mathur, "Secrets of COIN Success: Lessons from the Punjab Campaign," *Faultlines*, Volume 20, January 2011, 3.

⁷⁴ Indian Army Doctrine "Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine," Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006, 30-36.

⁷⁵ Fair, C. Christine, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 115.

⁷⁶ Fair, C. Christine, "Lessons from India's experience in the Punjab, 1978-93," *India and Counterinsurgency, Lessons Learned*, Strategic Studies Institute, Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, London and New York, 115.

population friendly. On the one hand the SF adopted Concealed Apprehensive Technique which used captured or surrendered militants as moles to capture or kill hardcore insurgents while on the other it offered amnesty, rehabilitation and reintegration of the moderate elements.⁷⁷ The IAD-SCO recommends a comprehensive surrender policy to address the security and esteem needs of the terrorists and the same was implemented in Punjab.⁷⁸

The external support is vital for any insurgency to thrive. Pakistan fulfilled the role of external support in the Punjab insurgency; immediately after the Blue Star a new generation of weapons AK-47 and AK-56 were provided to the insurgents, large number of youth crossed over to Pakistan for training in use of lethal weapons and explosives.⁷⁹ Analysis of intelligence clearly demonstrates that the border districts with Pakistan were worst affected by terrorism. Gill observes:

Pakistan was strenuously and openly directing the terrorist campaign at this stage (1989), to the extent that terrorist training camps were being organized even within 75 meters of the international border.⁸⁰

Pakistan provided moral, political, technical, financial and military support to the insurgents apart from acting as a safe sanctuary. By August 1989, the entire 122 Kilometers of sensitive border and by 1993, the entire Punjab border with Pakistan was sealed; these measures reduced cross border infiltration drastically and were instrumental in fighting the insurgency.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Burkart, Meredith K, "A winning Combination: Toward a More diversified and successful Counter-Insurgency Toolbox, Georgetown University, Washington DC, April 2010, 40.

⁷⁸ Indian Army Doctrine "Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine," Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006, 34.

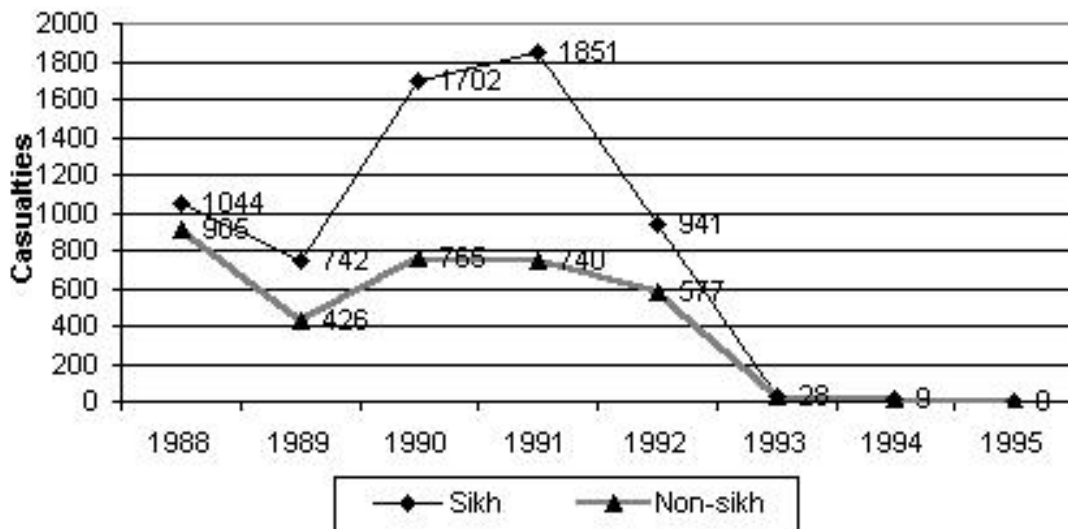
⁷⁹ Gill, K P S, "Punjab, The Knights of Falsehood," Har- Anand Publications Private Limited, New Delhi, 1997, 99.

⁸⁰ Gill and Sahani, "Terror and Containment: Perspectives on India's Internal Security," Gyan Publishing House, January 1, 2001, New Delhi, 53.

⁸¹ Anant Mathur, "Secrets of COIN Success: Lessons from the Punjab Campaign," *Faultlines*, Volume 20, January 2011, 6.

The isolation of conflict zone to choke the internal support is one of the lines of operations as recommended in the IAD-SCO.⁸²

The application of force was done using a strategy of “iron fist in the velvet glove”; on the basis of intelligence the terrorists were divided into categories “A” to “C”, the most dangerous and most determined insurgents were classified as “A” and the balance are mere followers. The strategy adopted focused on the elimination or neutralization of the “A” category of insurgents whereas the balance were captured and persuaded to assist the forces in eliminating the hardcore elements.⁸³ The graph below clearly indicates the success of counterinsurgency operations at this stage.



As the confidence of the forces increased they adopted a policy of swift response against terror attacks with precise intelligence, the perfect example of this the killing of Mr. Manchanda, the station director of All India Radio in 1992, the killer of the individual was neutralized in a

⁸² Indian Army Doctrine “Sub-Conventional Operations Doctrine,” Head Quarters Army Training Command, 2006, 31.

⁸³ Kiss, A. Peter, “Counterinsurgency in the Punjab- A Lesson for Europe,” European Police College (CEPOL) e-Library, Scientific Collection, July 2009, 30-31.

gun battle the same day and his accomplice met the same fate six days later.⁸⁴ This swift response by the forces decreased the hold of terrorists and established the faith of the population in the authorities. Gill while describing the factors for operational success mentions:

A unique experiment in multi-force counter-terrorist strategic initiatives and integrated command structures was initiated. The core of CT responses was handled by the Punjab Police backed by the Central Paramilitary Forces, with the Army providing ready back-up and outer cordons to operations. Three core patterns of response marked the CT strategy of this phase. The first was the immediate identification of the perpetrators of the latest terrorist outrage, and the application of the fullest force to secure their arrest or elimination. The second strategy focused on the most important terrorists. Instead of wasting resources on every petty criminal and opportunist who had joined the terrorist ranks, the available manpower and infrastructure was focused disproportionately on the leaders, the planners and the ideologues of the movement. The third was Operation Night Dominance, under which all senior officers were directed to take personal charge of operations at night. From this point on, these officers would be leading night-ops three or four days in every week – and performing their normal duties during the day. The cumulative impact of these strategies was a dramatic reversal of the conditions of chaos and pervasive terror that had prevailed in 1990-91. By end 1992, the terrorists had been visibly defeated. By mid-1993, it was possible to declare that the war in Punjab was over.⁸⁵

In February 1992, the federal government conducted state elections in Punjab under heavy security forces presence. The state was swamped with the security forces some 250,000 troops were moved to the state and every candidate was assigned at least a 32 man security detachment; though the voter turnout was a meager 21.6 percent but it had set the democratic process back in the state.⁸⁶ The exercise was fruitful in establish the faith of the people back in the system.

⁸⁴ Anant Mathur, "Secrets of COIN Success: Lessons from the Punjab Campaign," *Faultlines*, Volume 20, January 2011, 6.

⁸⁵ Counterinsurgency in India Lessons from the Punjabi Insurgency Interview, *Eurasia Review* 24 December 2012.

⁸⁶ Telford, Hamish., "Counterinsurgency in India: Observations from Punjab and Kashmir," *Journal of Conflict Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, Spring 2001, 2.

The final phase of the insurgency saw a determined resolve of the government to fight the insurgency. It adopted strong enemy centric approach while ensuring security to the population. A host of new legislations were passed to fight the insurgency effectively. The government won the hearts and minds of the population and normalcy returned to Punjab. By these hosts of actions government won back the population's trust, convinced hardliners that they could not win a revolution, and rather than being oppressive gave them a face saving and peaceful path to resolution. The actions taken at this stage were in consonance with the measures recommended in IAD-SCO.

CONCLUSION

The Indian experience of Punjab counterinsurgency was an effort to validate that a lopsided approach between enemy centric and population centric measures is not likely to succeed. In Punjab the initial response of government to insurgency (1978-1983) was of neglect and the political parties relegated it to a law and order situation and exploiting it to their advantage. The local forces were ill-trained, ill-equipped and understaffed to counter the insurgency. The enemy centric approach the SF to initial killings was so weak that it gave a feeling of impunity to the insurgents. The government also failed to adopt any population centric measures to address the root causes of insurgency. The ill-treatment of the Sikhs during 1982 Asian Games also drove them away from the government. The actions at this stage were in complete misalignment with the multifaceted approach recommended in the IAD-SCO.

In 1984, when the gravity of the situation was understood by the government it adopted a policy of punishing the people of Punjab. It was identified by the federal government that the

Punjab government is unable to fight the extremists and prevent the misuse of the *Gurudwaras* as focal points for terrorism. The removal of a majority Akali Dal government from power and suspicious attitude towards Sikhs demonstrated the anti-population strategy of the government. The circumstances of operation Blue Star media blackout, curfew, date coinciding with a major Sikh festival, use of military including tanks and little warning to the pilgrims leading to many death; validated the claims of insurgents that the government had no respect for the Sikh religion and meant to undermine it, violently if necessary. The killings of Sikhs, in the aftermath of assassination of Indira Gandhi and meek response of the government strengthened the belief in insurgent propaganda and the violence skyrocketed. The action at this stage were not in sync with the IAD-SCO as the population centric approach was completely abandoned by the government.

The government realized that insurgency can't be won over without winning over the population. The government understood the necessity of population centric measures however; the governments of V. P Singh and Chandrasekhar went into the trap of appeasement leading to strengthening the belief of insurgents that they can win. In the period 1984-91, the lack of balance, between population centric and enemy centric measures led to unprecedented increase in violence.

The successive government of Rao adopted a balanced strategy; some methods like focus on neutralizing the leadership with precise intelligence was enemy centric but it was population centric in the sense that it made the population safer. The involvement of the Punjab police and recruitment of the locals in the SF not only provided actionable intelligence but also defeated the anti-Hindu propaganda of insurgents. The decision to give adequate opportunity to the misguided

guided youth reflects population centric approach. The conduct of operation Black Thunder by local forces under full media glare exposed the myth of the cause of the militants. The control of the border with Pakistan dried up the resources for sustaining the insurgency which made the militants believe that they can't win. The actions taken at this stage were in sync with the measures recommended in the IAD-SCO. In the Punjab case it is well established that the right or faulty mix of people centric and enemy centric measures dictated the success and failure of the counterinsurgency campaign.

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