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EXPLAINING ANOMALOUS OUTCOMES IN WAR:
THE INDIAN ARMY IN SRI LANKA

by

RAJESH RAJAGOPALAN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in
Political Science in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, the
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Abstract

EXPLAINING ANOMALOUS OUTCOMES IN WAR:
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Rajesh Rajagopalan

Adviser: Professor Howard H. Lentner

This dissertation explains why militarily strong states lose guerrilla wars to far weaker insurgent groups. I argue that the counterinsurgency doctrines of regular armies have a positional-war bias that is unsuitable to fighting guerrilla wars. The Indian army's experience in fighting the guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in Sri Lanka in the late 1980s illustrates the effect of the positional-war bias in the counterinsurgency doctrines of regular armies. I use the organizational-culture approach and the neorealist approach to explain why such biased doctrines are adopted. Because the two approaches suggest contradictory answers, and because both are contending theories of international politics, how well they explain the puzzle can provide important clues to their utility in explaining international politics. I conclude that the neorealist approach provides a better

explanation; however, I also find that the two approaches may have more in common than most previous studies had indicated.

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CHAPTER ONE

THE PROBLEM OF ANOMALOUS OUTCOMES IN WAR

Why do stronger states lose wars? It seems logical to expect victory to go to the stronger side, especially in as total a test of strength as war, and indeed, the stronger side usually does prevail in war. Usually, but not always; states far stronger than their adversaries also repeatedly lose wars. The most obvious examples of such anomalous outcomes are the U.S. defeat in Vietnam and the Soviet defeat in Afghanistan. The United States and the Soviet Union were clearly far stronger than their respective adversaries by any measure of power, and yet they lost. Such humiliation was not reserved solely for the superpowers. Israeli military might crushed its Arab adversaries, several at a time, more than once. Nevertheless, the Israelis were unable to defeat the Islamic guerrillas in southern Lebanon. India, another regional power, dismembered Pakistan with great ease in 1971. A decade and a half later, despite being even stronger, India was forced to withdraw its Army from Sri Lanka, after failing to defeat the Tamil insurgents there. Why do states so militarily strong suffer such unexpected defeats?

Such results will not be surprising if the strength of opponents in a war had no effect on its outcome. Common sense leads us to expect the stronger side to win. Empirical evidence supports it: though they use different indices to measure national strength, a number of studies have shown that the outcomes of wars depend on the relative strength of the adversaries.¹ If greater strength usually leads to victory in war, those instances where it does not lead to victory can be considered anomalous. This dissertation seeks to explain these anomalous outcomes by examining in depth the Indian failure in Sri Lanka.

¹Zeev Maoz, "Resolve, Capabilities, and the Outcome of Interstate Disputes, 1816-1976," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 27, 2 (June 1983): 195-229. Maoz argues that "resolve" is a better predictor of conflict outcomes, but only as long as the conflict remains short of war. In conflicts that end in wars, the stronger side prevails. Similar conclusions were reached by other studies. See, for example, Frank W. Wayman, J. David Singer and Gary Goertz, "Capabilities, Allocations, and Success in Militarized Disputes and Wars, 1816-1976," *International Studies Quarterly*, 27 (1983): 497-515. See also, A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, *The War Ledger* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980), ch. 2; Jacek Kugler and William Domke, "Comparing the Strength of Nations," *Comparative Political Studies* 19, 1 (April 1986): 39-69; A.F.K. Organski and Jacek Kugler, "Davids and Goliaths: Predicting the Outcomes of International Wars," *Comparative Political Studies* 11, 2 (July 1978): 141-180. Many of the above studies are quantitative and are based on the data generated by the Correlates of War project. For a critique of the methodological foundations of these studies, see David Dessler, "Beyond Correlations: Toward A Causal Theory of War," *International Studies Quarterly* 35 (1991): 337-355. Still, Dessler's criticism is primarily concerned with the difficulty of generating theories of war on the basis of facts generated by such quantitative works. The facts themselves are not in much dispute.

Anomalous Outcomes and Insurgencies

Any type of war could end with an anomalous outcome. Nevertheless, I focus on only explaining anomalous outcomes in insurgencies. This is partly because the most striking illustrations of the phenomenon are the victories of insurgent groups in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka over much more powerful adversaries. More importantly, there are good methodological reasons for selecting insurgencies to study anomalous outcomes.

The first step in studying anomalous outcomes in war is determining which war results are anomalous. Anomalous outcomes are seen most clearly when powerful states lose to clearly weaker insurgent groups. Though the stronger side could lose in conventional wars also, calculating the balance of power of opposing sides is more difficult in conventional wars. Knowing what to include in calculating the relative strength of adversaries is never easy. The advantage that one side enjoys in one measure of strength might be offset by the advantage of the opposing side in another area. For example, one side might have the benefit of a larger military force, while the other side might have better weapons. It would be difficult in such cases to decide which side was stronger, and hence to decide if the outcome was indeed anomalous. Such difficulties are less evident when conventional state forces fight insurgents.

Insurgents are usually far weaker than their opponents, in both men and materials.

Determining anomalous outcomes in conventional war is difficult also because many times it is not clear who won and who lost. Conventional wars do not always end like the Second World War, with the total defeat and subjugation of one side, or even like the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, with one side emerging the clear victor. Many conventional wars end like the 1973 Yom Kippur war and the 1965 India-Pakistan war, with no clear military winner or loser. In contrast, the outcome is generally clearer in insurgencies. Victory and defeat are zero-sum: only one side is left standing at the end of the bout. The difficulty of determining who was stronger and who won in conventional war makes insurgencies better cases for studying anomalous outcomes in war. Though insurgents do not always win, they have enjoyed some clear and spectacular successes.

There is another compelling reason to look toward insurgencies when studying anomalous outcomes: they illustrate the importance of military doctrine and strategy in determining success in war. Though the availability of military resources might be important, equally important in determining who wins wars is the manner in which available military resources are used. As Kenneth Waltz has argued, saying that great powers are weak because they cannot bring order to small states is analogous to saying "that a

pneumatic hammer is weak because it is not suitable for drilling decayed teeth."² Asking how available means were used is as important as asking what means were available because, as with using pneumatic hammers for dentistry, unsuitable or inappropriate military doctrines can be as much a cause of military defeat as material weakness. Even in conventional war, it is clear that military forces generally perform better when they fight the war they have prepared for. The dramatic collapse of the French army in May 1940 resulted because the Germans forced the French to fight a mobile war that the French army was unprepared for. For two decades, the French army had expected and prepared for a static, slow-moving, attrition war. Similarly, the Royal Air Force's (RAF) victory over the Luftwaffe in the Battle of Britain can be explained by the appropriateness of the British doctrine and the inappropriateness of the German doctrine. The RAF excelled at air defense of the British isles, a task they had, albeit belatedly, prepared for. The Luftwaffe, on the other hand, had neither expected nor prepared for a strategic bombing campaign. Their doctrine stressed close support for fast moving army assaults. The success of the British and the failure of the Luftwaffe were therefore the results of the levels of

²Kenneth Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 189.

appropriateness of their respective military doctrines.³ Though inappropriate military doctrines can explain cases of military disasters in conventional wars also, the impact of military doctrines in explaining military defeat is more clearly seen in counterinsurgency wars because of the stark differences between the doctrinal preferences of the opposing forces. The military doctrine of insurgent groups stress small unit operations with light weapons, while conventional forces generally prefer to operate with larger units and formations, employing heavy weapons such as long-range artillery.

These reasons suggest that studying anomalous outcomes in war is best done by examining cases of failed counterinsurgency efforts by militarily powerful states. However, one further methodological issue also needs to be addressed before using failed counterinsurgencies as representative cases of anomalous outcomes, that of the comparability of insurgencies with other wars. If conventional forces always lose to insurgents, then the results of such wars might not be comparable to other wars. Such is not the case. Though conventional forces appear to lose to insurgents often, there are enough examples of conventional forces defeating insurgents. The British Army

³Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrines: France, Britain and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984) especially p. 82.

has been the most successful, defeating guerrilla forces in both the Boer war and in the Malayan insurgency. Other conventional military forces have had more limited successes. The U.S. Marines, and in particular its Combined Action Platoons, were successful in areas where they were deployed during the Vietnam war. Similarly, the German Army's *Jagdkommando* units successfully fought local resistance insurgents in occupied Yugoslavia and Russia during the Second World War. Though the French effort in Algeria is not often thought of as a success, the quadrillage system they employed was a military success. These examples suggest that conventional military forces are not doomed to fail, even though they often do, when they fight insurgents.

The Case Study and Its Relevance

This dissertation uses the case study method. Case studies have been separated into several different categories based on the purpose behind particular case studies.⁴ My use of the method falls broadly within Arend

⁴Two broad classifications are provided in the works of Arend Lijphart and Harry Eckstein. See, Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review* 65 (September 1971):682-93 and Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson Polsby, *Handbook of Political Science, Vol. 7, Strategies of Inquiry* (Reading, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1975), 79-137. Alexander George provides a synthesis of these typologies. See Alexander L. George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: the Method of Structured, Focused Comparison," in Paul Gordon Lauren,

Lijphart's 'theory confirming/theory infirming case study' and Harry Eckstein's 'crucial case study' method. The purpose is to derive hypotheses from existing theoretical approaches and compare the expectations of the theory with the findings from the case study. In general, comparative case studies are considered more useful in both generating theories and in testing them.⁵ Nevertheless, the utility of single case studies is also well established, especially in theory-testing.⁶ Many recent studies back the utility of the single case study method.⁷ Another crucial reason dictated limiting this study to just the Indian army's counterinsurgency experience: there are no previous works on the Indian army's doctrines, much less its counterinsurgency doctrine. Writing a history of the development of the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine and comparing it with other similar cases would have been

Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory and Policy (New York, N.Y.: The Free Press, 1979), 43-68. See also David Collier, "The Comparative Method: Two Decades of Change," in *Comparative Political Dynamics: Global Research Perspectives*, ed. Dankwart A. Rustow and Kenneth Paul Erickson (New York, N.Y.: Harper Collins, 1991), 7-31.

⁵Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method"; George, "Case Studies and Theory Development."

⁶A good defense of the case study method can be found in Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science."

⁷See, for example, Alastair Johnston, *Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Ming China* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) and Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

impractical. Below, I briefly explain the Indian army's experience in Sri Lanka.

The failure of the Indian Army to defeat the Tamil insurgents in Sri Lanka represents a clear illustration of an anomalous outcome. In the late 1970s, a section of the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka undertook an armed rebellion against the Sinhala-dominated government of Sri Lanka with the objective of creating a homeland for the Tamils called Tamil Eelam.⁸ The rebellion received moral and material assistance from the Tamil population in neighboring India and from the government of India.⁹ The rebellion gained support and intensified after 1983 as a result of Sinhala-Tamil riots in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, in which several hundred Tamils were killed. The Sri Lankan government sought to put down the rebellion by force, which exacerbated the conflict. The use of force also complicated relations with India, because the Sri Lankan government sought the help of other countries such as Pakistan, Israel and the United States, which the Indian government perceived as being inimical to Indian interests in the region.

⁸For a brief overview of the development of the crisis, see Shantha K. Hennayake, "The Peace Accord and the Tamils in Sri Lanka," *Asian Survey* 29, 4 (April 1989): 401-415.

⁹Jeyaratnam Wilson, *The Break Up of Sri Lanka: The Sinhalese-Tamil Conflict* (London: Orient Longman, 1988), ch. 7.

In July 1987 the government of India forced the Sri Lankan government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), the predominant Tamil rebel group, to agree to a peaceful settlement of the conflict.¹⁰ Neither the Sri Lankan government nor the Tamils were satisfied with the agreement, but they acquiesced because there was little choice. Under the agreement, the Tamils would gain some level of administrative autonomy within the larger Sri Lankan federation. In order to create the climate necessary for this political agreement to work, the Tamils would give up their armed struggle and surrender their weapons, while the Sri Lankan army would be withdrawn from Tamil areas, or confined to its bases. A specially constituted force from the Indian Army, called the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF), was given the responsibility for implementing the military aspects of the accord, such as collecting weapons from the Tamils and providing general law and order.¹¹ In particular, the Indian army was to function as a buffer force between the Tamils and the Sri Lankan army.

¹⁰The LTTE was not the only Tamil group fighting the Sri Lankan army; it was, however, the strongest. On the relations between India and the various Tamil groups, see, Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "The Tamil Militants: Before the Accord and After," *Pacific Affairs* 61, 4 (Winter 1988-89): 603-619.

¹¹Ralph R. Premdas and S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: The Indo-Lanka Peace Accord," *Asian Survey* 28, 6 (June 1988): 676-690.

Despite some early successes, the agreement soon faltered. The LTTE was reluctant to trust either the Indian or the Sri Lankan government. When some members of the LTTE were captured by the Sri Lankan navy and subsequently committed suicide, the LTTE blamed the government of India. This incident effectively marked the end of the cease-fire. The LTTE resumed its military campaign, this time attacking the IPKF. The IPKF, which was responsible for disarming the Tamils under the peace agreement, responded with force.

The war between the IPKF and the LTTE proceeded in two stages. The first stage, in which the LTTE attempted to conduct a conventional defensive war against the IPKF, lasted through most of the October of 1987. The Indian army had underestimated the capabilities of the LTTE and therefore took longer than expected to fulfill its objectives. However, with time, it was able to dislodge the LTTE from its base in the city of Jaffna and establish IPKF control there. The next stage proved more difficult for the IPKF as the LTTE changed its strategy and began a guerrilla war.¹² For two frustrating years, the IPKF conducted counterinsurgency operations against the LTTE, with only limited success.¹³ Early failures in

¹²Shankar Bhaduri and Afsir Karim, *The Sri Lankan Crisis* (New Delhi: Lancer, 1990).

¹³Rajesh Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco: Peace Keepers at War* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1990).

counterinsurgency operations led to massive increases in the number of IPKF troops deployed to fight the LTTE. Starting with as few as 8,000 troops, the peak strength of the IPKF exceeded 100,000 according to some estimates.¹⁴ Such increases in strength did not make the IPKF any more effective.¹⁵ Moreover, Indian counterinsurgency operations resulted in civilian casualties, which further eroded the support for the IPKF among the Sri Lankan Tamils and further strengthened the LTTE.¹⁶ In March 1990, the IPKF was withdrawn from Sri Lanka, its objectives unrealized.

The IPKF's experience represents a typical case of a professional, conventional army's failure against much weaker insurgents. There is little doubt about which side was stronger: the IPKF outnumbered the LTTE by at least ten-to-one. There is little reason to doubt the IPKF's capability in conventional war, as was seen in the

¹⁴There is some dispute about the peak strength of the IPKF in Sri Lanka, with the Indian government and Army routinely providing a figure around 50,000 while independent sources in India suggest that upward of 100,000 troops were dispatched. See, "Comments: Sri Lanka," *Indian Defense Review* 1 (January 1988): 19-22. See also similar high estimates in Marshall R. Singer, "Sri Lanka in 1990: The Ethnic Strife Continues," *Asian Survey* 31, 2 (February 1991): 140-145.

¹⁵Edgar O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka 1973-88* (London: Brassey's, 1989).

¹⁶For a first-hand account of the human rights violations by the various sides in this conflict, see William McGowan, *Only Man is Vile: The Tragedy of Sri Lanka* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1992), chps. 12 & 16.

capturing of Jaffna from the Tamil Tigers in the first stage of the war. There is little doubt also about the final outcome: the Indian Army was unable to defeat the LTTE. This makes it a good case for exploring anomalous outcomes.

The Inadequacies of Existing Explanations

Only a small number of studies exist on the IPKF's experience in Sri Lanka. These works share a common weakness: they are all "current-history" type narratives, with little attempt to go beyond simply outlining the events that took place.¹⁷ Despite this weakness, they are good secondary sources of information and they do suggest some preliminary explanations for the IPKF's failure. Accounts by IPKF officers suggest a number of reasons for the failure of their mission: poor intelligence about the insurgents, over-centralization and inflexibility of command, and inappropriate equipment and tactics.¹⁸ Other accounts suggest that the Indian army was dominated by commanders of the "western military school" -- commanders who had spent most of their careers on India's western front preparing to fight a large scale conventional war

¹⁷Bhaduri and Karim, *The Sri Lankan Crisis*; Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco*; and O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*.

¹⁸See anonymous letter, A Battalion Commander, "Operation Pawan: An Infantry Perspective," (Correspondence) *Indian Defense Review* (January 1990): 192-194.

against Pakistan -- and that this dominance led to the conventional-war mindset that was ill-suited to the conditions of the war in Sri Lanka.

The theoretical literature that examines anomalous outcomes in war is rather limited. It can be divided into two broad categories on the basis of their explanations: those which suggest that military doctrines were responsible for the anomalous outcomes and those that suggest political and other non-military factors were responsible. Among studies that employ military doctrine as the independent variable two opposing viewpoints exist. One is best represented by Harry Summers in his influential analysis of American strategy in the Vietnam war. Summers argues that the U.S. Army forgot or misapplied fundamental principles of the employment of military force because it placed too much emphasis on counterinsurgency warfare and not enough on what he considers to have been the real threat -- the conventional forces of North Vietnam.¹⁹ This explanation, while garnering substantial support from the U.S. Army, is disputed by other students of the Vietnam war.²⁰ The IPKF's experience does not support Summers'

¹⁹Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato: Presidio, 1982), especially ch. 7. See also Bruce Palmer, *The 25-Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1984).

²⁰See, for example, a critique of Summers' thesis in John M. Gates, "Vietnam: The Debate Goes On," in *Assessing the Vietnam War: A Collection From the Journal of*

thesis: the IPKF's failure was to a large extent the result of its reliance on the principles of conventional war, and its neglect of proper counterinsurgency operations.

A significant number of other accounts make the opposite claim: that the U.S. Army did *not* focus sufficiently on counterinsurgency warfare, and because of institutional inertia and misjudgment of the conditions on the ground, spent too much time and effort on fighting a conventional war²¹ This criticism has been leveled at many conventional forces involved in counterinsurgency efforts, including the IPKF. However, these explanations are also incomplete because they do not answer or even ask why some conventional military forces are better at adapting to counterinsurgency than others. Without addressing this question, it is difficult to explain *successful* counterinsurgency efforts by conventional military forces, such as the experience of the U.S. Marines in Vietnam, especially of the Combined Action Platoons (CAPs), who were largely successful in meeting the needs of

the U.S. Army War College, eds. Lloyd J. Mathews and Dale E. Brown, 43-56 (London: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1987).

²¹The most persuasive of such arguments is in Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986). Other important works that make essentially the same arguments are Robert W. Komer, *Bureaucracy at War: U.S. Performance in the Vietnam Conflict* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1986) and Thomas Thayer, *War Without Fronts: The American Experience in Vietnam* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985).

counterinsurgency warfare.²² Another is the successful prosecution by the British of the Boer War and the Malayan insurgency.²³ In these cases, conventional military forces were able to adapt and successfully meet insurgency threats.

One explanation for the difference in doctrinal flexibility between the British army in the Boer war and the U.S. army in Vietnam focuses on the structure of the civilian institutions and its effect on military doctrine.²⁴ The argument is that a unified civilian institutional structure (such as in Britain, where the military is under the control of the Cabinet) makes the military more sensitive to the political needs of their civilian masters, and therefore more flexible. On the other hand, where no such unified civilian institutional structure exists (such as, for example, in the United States, where the constitutional division of power between the president and the Congress extends to the control of the military also), the military acquires a limited level

²²Michael E. Peterson, *The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

²³For a comparison between the British and the American experiences, see Deborah D. Avant, "The Institutional Sources of Military Doctrine: Hegemons in Peripheral Wars," *International Studies Quarterly* 37, 4 (December 1993): 409-430.

²⁴*Ibid.*

of autonomy, which leads to greater doctrinal rigidity.²⁵ However, this explanation does not account for the inflexibility of the Indian army in Sri Lanka. Indian institutional arrangements are very similar to those of the British; thus if this argument is valid, the Indian army should have been as flexible in Sri Lanka as the British army was in the Boer war, and yet this was not the case.

Another commonly mentioned factor for the success of insurgent forces is the amount of support they receive from foreign sources. Throughout the war in Sri Lanka, for example, Indian Army officers complained about the failure of the state government in Tamil Nadu to shut down Tamil Tiger supply networks in the state.²⁶ American military officers have blamed North Vietnamese support of the rebellion in the south as the critical factor for the failure of the U.S. Army's campaign there.²⁷

There is little doubt that external support has been important in maintaining guerrilla forces in the field. On the other hand, there is also little evidence that external support changed the underlying balance of forces in favor of the insurgents. The inability of the insurgents to challenge conventional forces in conventional war is the

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Depinder Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Trishul Publications, 1992), 129-30.

²⁷Summers, *On Strategy*.

best indicator of this. If external support was the critical element in the defeat of conventional forces in cases like Vietnam, then it should have ensured success in the conventional phases of the war also. External support was effective only during the guerrilla phases of the war, and only because the U.S. Army never developed the doctrinal capability to fight a guerrilla war. In every conventional phase of the war in Vietnam, such as the Tet offensive in 1968, the insurgents were decimated. This suggests that what was important was the nature of the war rather than the nature of the support. The argument is not that there was no external support nor even that the external support made no difference to the overall capability of the insurgents. It is simply that external support did not change the balance of forces.

The second category of explanations focuses on political factors to explain anomalous outcomes. Zeev Maoz proposes an explanation for "paradoxical outcomes" based on changing alliance patterns.²⁸ According to this argument, states that want to ensure the defeat of inferior adversaries sometimes acquire or employ capabilities that are much larger than what is required for the task. Such increases in capabilities threaten other actors, who join the weaker side, leading to the creation of an opposing

²⁸Zeev Maoz, "Power, Capabilities, and Paradoxical Conflict Outcomes," *World Politics* 41, 2 (January 1989): 239-266.

coalition. Thus, the increase in capabilities, designed to ensure victory, turns out to be counter-productive.²⁹ There are two problems with this explanation: first, it is not clear that these are cases of "paradoxical outcomes." If new actors enter the conflict, the power equation between the adversaries is altered. Maoz's case study of the Balkan wars of 1912-13 illustrates this problem clearly. In March and May 1912, Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece signed interlocking military alliances against Turkey. In the war that followed, Turkey lost to this alliance. Even though the Turkish army was numerically superior to the opposing alliance of Balkan states, it was far weaker than the alliance in organizational and technological terms, a fact that Maoz acknowledges.³⁰ If the Balkan Alliance was stronger, there was no "paradox" in the outcome, since the stronger side won the war. If the Balkan Alliance was weaker than Turkey, another problem presents itself: Maoz provides no explanation for why the alliance won, despite its weakness. Simply stating that the Balkan Alliance won because they joined together

²⁹Another study also found that while superiority in strength is a good predictor of the results of war, over-allocation of resources to military capabilities was usually counter-productive. See Wayman, Singer and Goertz, "Capabilities, Allocations, and Success in Militarized Disputes and Wars, 1816-1976."

³⁰Maoz, "Power, Capabilities, and Paradoxical Conflict Outcomes," 251.

against Turkey is not sufficient since no causal link is provided between the formation of the opposing alliance and the outcome of the war.

Another explanation for anomalous outcomes focuses on domestic politics as the independent variable. Andrew Mack argues that long term military campaigns by great powers against weak insurgent groups lead to the deterioration of domestic support for the war.³¹ This is because the sacrifices asked of the public are disproportionate to the direct threat posed to the great power by the insurgents. In the case of Vietnam, for example, the Viet Cong posed no direct military threat to the United States, and therefore the American public was unwilling to tolerate the sacrifices asked. This loss of public support can be observed in most cases of unsuccessful counterinsurgency efforts against weaker adversaries. In the case of the Indian military intervention in Sri Lanka, support for the Indian commitment to Sri Lanka declined as the war dragged on. However, this explanation does not address the question of why massive superiority in power fails to result in early victory for the stronger state. In the case of Vietnam, for example, it does not explain why the United States was unable to win the war in the first few years of its involvement. Similarly in Sri Lanka, this

³¹Andrew Mack, "Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict," *World Politics* 27, 2 (January 1975): 175-200.

argument does not explain why the Indian Army could not quickly force the insurgents back to the negotiating table, despite outnumbering them by more than ten to one. Loss of domestic support in each of these cases was a consequence of the military stalemate, not its cause.

A solution to the broader 'fungibility of power' problem suggested by David Baldwin might be usefully adapted to examine anomalous outcomes in war.³² Baldwin argues that the fungibility of power resources has to be seen within a "policy-contingency framework" which would specify the context in which particular power resources are being used.³³ Thus, power resources that are useful in a military dispute might not be useful in a trade dispute -- not all power resources are useful in all contexts. Though this does not explain why superior military forces are unable to prevail in war since the power resource being used (military power) is appropriate to the context (war), Baldwin's explanation can be extended to argue that even the use of military force has to fit within a certain "policy-contingency framework." In other words, one type

³²The 'fungibility of power' problem refers to difficulty of translating power into results. Robert Keohane argues that this is one of the central problems in Realist theory. Robert Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in *Political Science: The State of the Discipline*, ed. Ada Finifter, 503-40 (Washington, DC.: American Political Science Association, 1983).

³³David A. Baldwin, "Power Analysis and World Politics: New Trends versus Old Politics," *World Politics* 31, 2 (January 1979): 161- 194.

of military force (an army designed to fight conventional wars) might not be effective in other types of conflicts (counterinsurgency warfare).

Michael Shafer, drawing lessons from the American experience in Vietnam, suggests that counterinsurgency policies have to be appropriate to the conditions of the region to which it is applied.³⁴ He argues that the United States developed a counterinsurgency "paradigm" that reflected a belief in the universal applicability of political development theories of the 1950s and 60s, and which paid scant attention to the complexity and uniqueness of the situation on the ground. This paradigm emphasized a common set of prescriptions to fight insurgencies which included providing security to the population from insurgent coercion, a responsive administration, and economic progress. However, Shafer does not show that any of these policies were actually implemented. More often than not, diversity characterized the American approach to the problem of insurgency, with different agencies prescribing and attempting to implement different solutions. In Vietnam for example, if the United States followed any paradigm at all, it was the "conventional war paradigm" followed by the U.S. Army, which is unaccounted

³⁴Michael Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U. S. Counterinsurgency Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988).

for in Shafer's model.³⁵ Shafer argues that the paradigm was not implemented because local conditions, which were ignored in designing the paradigm, would not allow it to be implemented. However, this paradigm was applied, with great success in the Philippines, where American policy was innovative and carefully orchestrated. Shafer argues that the policy in the Philippines, even though it bore remarkable similarity to the paradigmatic approach as proposed by American advisors, was actually indigenous.³⁶ Shafer's work provides some interesting insights into the making of American counterinsurgency policy, but offer little to explain why it failed.

The final explanation for anomalous outcomes looks at psychological factors, in particular the will-power, morale and motivation of the insurgents. Most accounts of unsuccessful counterinsurgency efforts by conventional armies argue that it was the superior will-power of the insurgents which helped them win against vastly superior forces.³⁷ However, there are a number of problems with this approach. The most obvious is that there is no simple

³⁵Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*.

³⁶James Wirtz, "Counterinsurgency Paradigms," review of *Deadly Paradigms: The Failure of U. S. Counterinsurgency Policy*, by Michael Shafer, *International Security* 14, 1 (Summer 1989): 184-94.

³⁷In Sri Lanka, for example, the LTTE fighters were so motivated that they would willingly commit suicide rather than surrender. According to some accounts, over ten percent of the fatalities of the LTTE came as a result of such suicides. See O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 126.

and direct method of measuring or comparing will-power. This is important because there is no indication that conventional forces have any less will-power than their insurgent adversaries, especially in the early stages of the conflict. Unsuccessful counterinsurgency efforts may lead to a loss of morale and will-power, but this is not peculiar to counterinsurgency efforts; it is reasonable to suspect that unsuccessful military campaigns can lead to loss of will-power and morale in any kind of war. Therefore, just as in the case of the loss of domestic support for war, loss of military morale appears to be a consequence of the lack of military success, not its cause.

The difficulty of measuring will-power and morale leads to another, more serious flaw: explanations that posit will-power as the independent variable in the outcomes of war become tautological. Insurgents who defeat superior military forces are usually credited with having superior will-power, while insurgents who do not are said to be less motivated.³⁸ The independent variable and the dependent variable become reversed in the process: the

³⁸For example, despite the fact that there were a number of different groups fighting for the Tamils, all except the LTTE were decimated, either by the Sri Lankan military, or by the Indian Army or by the LTTE, which tolerated no opposition. Accounts comparing different groups routinely suggest that the LTTE was the most committed. See for example, Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "The Tamil Militants: Before the Accord and After."

outcome of war is used to explain differences in will power rather than the other way around.

Finally, in addition to being non-measurable and tautological, arguments focusing on will-power are also incomplete. Insurgent forces rarely defeat superior forces in direct set-piece battles. In Vietnam, for example, the U.S. Army accurately claimed that it had never lost a battle with either the Viet Cong or the North Vietnamese Army.³⁹ In Sri Lanka, similarly, the Indian Army was able to prevail in the first stage of the conflict, when the LTTE adopted a conventional military defense of their positions: superior will power apparently did not make any difference in the outcome of this phase of the war. However, once the LTTE shifted to active insurgency operations, the Indian Army became less effective. The difference between the outcomes in the two stages of the conflict cannot be explained in terms of will-power or morale. What did change between the first stage and the second stage of the war was the military doctrine employed by the LTTE: offensive insurgency as opposed to the original strategy of conventional, set-piece defenses.

³⁹Col. Summers, for example, reportedly told a North Vietnamese officer: "You know you never defeated us on the battlefield." The North Vietnamese officer replied: "That is true, but it is also irrelevant." While the officer was correct that it did not change the ultimate outcome of the war, he also acknowledges that all the will power and motivation of the insurgents was no match for the American superiority in firepower. See Summers, *On Strategy*, 1.

Thus, rather than will-power and morale, military doctrines appear to be more useful for explaining anomalous outcomes.

Though current explanations for anomalous outcomes in war are clearly inadequate, the above examination indicates the direction for further work. Specifically, it suggests that arguments which employ military doctrine as the independent variable offer the most promise for explaining anomalous outcomes in war. However, if doctrines are the reason why conventional military forces are ineffective in counterinsurgency wars, then it is essential to show that conventional military forces adopt doctrines that are inappropriate for the tasks of counterinsurgency. This requires an examination of the strategy and doctrine of insurgent forces and a comparative examination of successful and unsuccessful counterinsurgency efforts. This task is handled in the second chapter.

Explaining the defeat of conventional military forces in guerrilla wars as the consequence of inappropriate doctrines is only part of the answer. It is also necessary to explain why conventional military forces adopt such inappropriate doctrines and why conventional forces persist with such doctrines despite their inadequacy in counterinsurgency. Scholars have used different and contending theories to explain military doctrines. These theories should also be able to explain why inappropriate doctrines are adopted. In the next chapter, I examine

these different approaches to military doctrine and the explanations they provide for inappropriate military doctrines.

Theories of International Politics and Anomalous Outcomes

Explaining anomalous outcomes is important for understanding the value of the major approaches to the study of international politics. Because the neorealist approach to the study of international politics focuses on the persistence and utility of force in international politics, such anomalous outcomes present a well-recognized challenge to neorealism. In a broad overview of the contributions of neorealism, Robert Keohane argues that one of the central problems with this approach is its assumption of the "fungibility of power."⁴⁰ The neorealist approach assume that "states seek power."⁴¹ Though definitions of power vary, "[t]he control over resources approach is the most widely used and accepted approach."⁴² This suggests that power is "fungible," that control over power resources can lead to control over outcomes.⁴³ Neorealists would agree that control over power resources

⁴⁰Robert Keohane, "Theory of World Politics."

⁴¹Ibid, 508.

⁴²Jeffrey Hart, "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations," *International Organization* 30, 2 (Spring 1976): 289-305.

⁴³Ibid.

does not always lead to control over outcomes.⁴⁴ However, neorealist approaches must be able to show that power resources matter, at the very least, in war. If differences in power capabilities cannot even predict the outcome of wars, then it is reasonable to suspect that analyses of the power of states as a determining factor will not be very useful in other issues either. Of course, anomalies in predictions are to be expected in theories, especially in the social sciences; nevertheless, the mark of a good theory is its capacity to explain such anomalies in a manner that would be consistent with the theory. Keohane uses this measure -- originally suggested by Imre Lakatos for evaluating "theoretical research programs"⁴⁵ -- to argue that the neorealist "research program" shows signs of degeneration because of its failure to successfully address the problem of anomalies in the assumption about the fungibility of power.⁴⁶ As Keohane suggests, this can

⁴⁴Keohane acknowledges this, and cites Waltz, who argued that while differences in strength are important, they do not matter in all situations. See Keohane, "Theory of World Politics," 522. See also Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 189.

⁴⁵Imre Lakatos, "Falsification and the Methodology of Scientific Research Programs", in *Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge*, ed. Imre Lakatos and Alan Musgrave, 91-196 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

⁴⁶Keohane, "Theory of World Politics," 522-26.

undermine the entire theoretical framework of neorealism, in which power plays a central role.⁴⁷

Scholars partial to the neorealist approach generally dismissed cases like Vietnam: Kenneth Waltz argues that it represented a problem of political governance, and Barry Posen refers to the superior will-power of the Vietnamese.⁴⁸ This is not very helpful: rather than claiming that these outcomes fall outside the purview of neorealism, neorealists need to account for these outcomes in a manner that is consistent with this approach, if neorealism is to have continuing relevance. This task is even more vital because of the importance of military doctrines in explaining anomalous outcomes. Neorealists have claimed that their approach offers a better explanation of military doctrines than other contending approaches.⁴⁹ If this is a valid claim, neorealism should be equally adept at explaining the adoption of inappropriate doctrines by conventional forces fighting guerrilla wars.

Anomalous outcomes in war also represent a challenge to the emerging "reflective" approaches.⁵⁰ If reflective

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 189; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrines*, 60-61.

⁴⁹Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrines*.

⁵⁰This categorization was originally used by Robert O. Keohane, "International Institutions: Two Approaches,"

approaches provide better explanations of international politics, as is claimed, they should be able to help in understanding the causes for such anomalous outcomes, in particular, why conventional military forces adopt inappropriate doctrines when fighting guerrilla wars. Though this approach is very diverse, those who subscribe to it share the belief that ideational factors are the key to understanding state behavior and international outcomes.⁵¹ Their works suggest that the cultural environment in which decision-makers operate and how they think about and perceive their world, determine their

International Studies Quarterly 32, 4 (December 1988): 379-96.

⁵¹For example, some scholars argue that the international structure cannot be understood without reference to state practices and identities. See Alexander Wendt, "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Problem," *International Organization* 41, 3 (Summer 1987): 335-370; David Dessler, "What's at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate," *International Organization* 43, 3 (Summer 1989): 441-73. Wendt develops this theme more concretely in "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, 2 (Spring 1992): 391-425 and in "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," *American Political Science Review* 88, 2 (June 1994): 384-96. A few of the other writings that broadly fall within this approach include Robert W. Cox, "Social Forces, States and World Orders: Beyond International Relations Theory," *Millenium: Journal of International Studies* 10, 2 (Summer 1981); Richard Ned Lebow, "The Long Peace, the End of the Cold War and the Future of Realism," *International Organization* 48, 2 (Spring 1994): 269-77; Rey Koslowski, "Understanding Change in International Politics: The Soviet Empire's Demise and the International System," *International Organization* 48, 2 (Spring 1994): 215-44; J. Samuel Barkin and Bruce Cronin, "The State and the Nation: Changing Norms and Rules of Sovereignty in International Relations," *International Organization* 48, 1 (Winter 1994): 107-30.

policy choices and behavior. However, not much empirical work has been done to examine the hypotheses generated by this approach.⁵²

One area where some concrete work has been attempted is in the study of military and strategic cultures.⁵³ Though reflective approaches do not directly address military issues, the argument that preferences and behavior are determined by "intersubjective understandings" does lead to certain expectations about military behavior also. Alastair Johnston, for example, explains the behavior of Ming China by reference to the 'Realpolitik' belief system

⁵²One study of feudal Europe suggests that there might not be much empirical support to be had. See Markus Fischer, "Feudal Europe, 800-1300: Communal Discourse and Conflictual Practices," *International Organization* 46, 2 (Spring 1992): 427-66. See also the response by Rodney Bruce Hall and Friedrich Kratochwil, "Medieval Tales: Neorealist 'Science' and the Abuse of History," *International Organization* 47, 3 (Summer 1993): 479-500. In addition, see also, John J. Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19, 3 (Winter 1994-95): 5-49.

⁵³For a good review of the strategic culture literature, see Alastair Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," *International Security* 19, 4 (Spring 1995): 32-64. Some recent works in this area include, Stephen Peter Rosen, "Military Effectiveness: Why Society Matters," *International Security* 19, 4 (Spring 1995): 5-31 and Johnston, *Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Ming China*. Other works that focus more narrowly on the impact of culture on the preferences and behavior of military organizations, see Elizabeth Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines: The Cultural Roots of Doctrinal Change," Ph.D dissertation, Cornell University, 1992; and Jeffrey W. Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

of its ruling elite.⁵⁴ More narrowly, Elizabeth Kier explains the military doctrinal choices of great powers in Europe between the world wars by examining the organizational cultures and the political environment within which they operated.⁵⁵ Jeffrey Legro explains why some military forces engaged in war chose to escalate to new levels while others 'cooperated' with their adversaries to prevent escalation, by referring to the differences in the cultures of various military organizations.⁵⁶ All these works share the belief that ideas, traced to the cultural environment, have a direct bearing on choices. Kier and Legro in particular claim that organizational culture has a strong bearing on military choices, including doctrinal choices.

If reflective approaches are valid, then organizational culture should be able to explain why military forces adopt inappropriate doctrines. In addition, because partisans of both approaches have seen the other approach as the direct alternative to their own, and have claimed that their approach offers a comparatively superior explanation, pitting these approaches against each other should provide interesting insights into their

⁵⁴Johnston, *Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Ming China*.

⁵⁵Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines."

⁵⁶Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*.

strengths and weaknesses and ultimately their relative merits. In the next chapter, I explain these approaches in greater detail and draw specific hypotheses from these approaches.

Summary

In this chapter, I have argued that counterinsurgency wars represent the clearest cases of anomalous outcomes in wars. Therefore, such wars are the most appropriate ones to examine in trying to understand anomalous outcomes. Existing explanations for such outcomes are inadequate, but they suggest that inappropriate military doctrines explain the puzzle. In the next chapter, I define military doctrines, and explain why conventional military doctrines are inappropriate in fighting insurgents. Subsequently, I draw specific hypotheses from neorealist and organizational culture perspectives about why conventional military forces adopt inappropriate doctrines when fighting insurgents.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO INAPPROPRIATE DOCTRINES

In the first chapter, I suggested that anomalous outcomes are best explained as the consequence of inappropriate military doctrines. I also argued that the differences between military doctrines of opposing sides and the influence of this difference on war outcomes is most apparent in guerilla wars. Such wars also represent unambiguous examples of anomalous outcomes. The importance of military doctrine in this explanation requires that it be defined clearly. This I attempt to do in the first section of this chapter. In the second section, I describe the difference between positional war and guerrilla war. I explain why conventional armies, which are designed to fight positional wars, have great difficulty in fighting guerrilla wars, tracing this difficulty to the positional-war bias in their counterinsurgency doctrines. In the last two sections of the chapter, I turn to two major theoretical approaches -- the organizational culture and the neorealist approaches -- that claim to explain state behavior, and in particular military doctrines, to explain why conventional armies adopt such inappropriate doctrines.

Problems of Definition: Military Strategy and Doctrine

Studying military doctrine requires that the term first be defined properly. Previous studies have defined military doctrine such that it also included elements of military strategy. The confusion is compounded because different military organizations have different ways of defining military doctrine, and some include elements that point towards strategy. Nevertheless, military doctrine needs to be defined so that it is distinct from military strategy. I use previous studies of military doctrine, which do not set apart these concepts clearly, to illustrate the drawbacks that result from mixing these concepts.

Defining Military Doctrine

I define military doctrine as Dale Smith does, as a set of views on war and the principles concerning its conduct that are adopted by military leadership, taught in military academies and which provide the basis for war plans.¹ Therefore, military doctrines represent beliefs about the kind of war the military expects to fight and the accepted wisdom about the best method for fighting it.

¹Dale O. Smith, *U.S. Military Doctrine* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1955); See also, Julian Lider, *Military Theory: Concept, Structure, Problems* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 306; Allan R Millet, Williamson Murray and Kenneth H. Watman, "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations," *International Security* 11: 1 (Summer 1986): 37-71.

Both the expectations of future war as well as the prescription for prosecuting it will be evident in the preparations the military makes during peacetime. This includes the weapons the military believes are necessary to fight the war and the manner in which it trains its soldiers to use these weapons.

An example of a military doctrine is the French concept of the "methodical battle" which was employed in various field service regulations in the interwar years. Though the doctrine's roots can be traced to earlier periods, the doctrine was stressed in the interwar years partly as a consequence of the French belief in the dominance of firepower in any future war, as well as their lack of confidence in short-term conscript troops, which they sought to alleviate by detailed preparation and simplified operations. The doctrine formed the basis of various French war plans during this period.² Another example of a military doctrine is what Andrew Krepinevich refers to as the "Army Concept" of the United States Army, which defined conventional, medium intensity war as the most likely type of war that the United States would fight, and prescribed methods for fighting such a war.³

²Robert Allan Doughty, *The Breaking Point: Sedan and the Fall of France, 1940* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1990), 27-30.

³Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986), 4-7.

It is important to keep in mind that the comprehensiveness of military doctrines varies: some might only provide general guidelines for combat behavior, while others might prescribe specific methodology. Most military doctrines are not as detailed as the French doctrine was during the interwar years.⁴ German military doctrines during the interwar years provide a good contrast to the comprehensiveness of French military doctrines. German doctrines expected field commanders to understand and accomplish the military objectives given to them on the basis of the broad guidelines set out in the doctrine. The German Army saw war as being unamenable to strict schedules and rigid plans and expected initiative from their well-trained commanders and troops.⁵ German doctrine probably represents the opposite extreme from the French in comprehensiveness, while most other doctrines fall somewhere between these two.

Differentiating Military Strategy from Military Doctrine

It is also important to separate military doctrine from military strategy. Military strategy specifies how a

⁴On the detailed nature and the inflexibility of the French doctrine see, Robert Allan Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1919-1939* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1985), 10-11.

⁵Doughty, *The Breaking Point*, 30-32; James S. Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg: Hans von Seeckt and German Military Reform* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1992), xiv-xv.

particular objective is to be reached and is conditioned by various environmental factors that include, but are not limited to, the balance of opposing forces, the capabilities of the respective commanders, and geography.⁶ Military strategy, dependent as it is on the specifics of the military problem, could change to accommodate changes in the environment. Thus German military strategy for the invasion of France in 1940 changed dramatically during the six months preceding the invasion, as several German military and political leaders came to the conclusion that an offensive through the Ardennes offered greater chance of success than the previous strategy which emphasized an offensive through Belgium, similar to the Schlieffen Plan of the pre-World War I era. Similarly, Indian military strategy for the assault on East Pakistan in 1971 was totally different from its traditional attrition strategy, and it was adopted during the six months prior to the war in response to the conditions in the East Pakistan theater.

⁶Military strategy can itself be further divided, as Luttwak does, into the overall, or theater level of strategy, and the operational level, which deals with a specific geographical subset of the overall strategy. See Edward N. Luttwak, *Strategy: The Logic of War and Peace* (Cambridge, MA.: The Belknap Press, 1987). Millett et al also make a similar distinction in "Military Effectiveness." This distinction between theater level strategy and the operational level of strategy might be important if the dependent variable is military strategy. For my purposes, it is more important to note the distinction between military strategy and military doctrine. See also Lider, *Military Theory*, especially, chapter 5.

Military doctrine is less flexible. Though changes in the environment can illustrate the need for change in an existing doctrine, the cumbersomeness of the process can discourage such change. Changing doctrine involves acquiring new tools, learning new skills and sometimes new attitudes. More importantly, in times of uncertainty and danger, making such fundamental changes can be risky. Barry Posen points out that the Russians were in the midst of just such a change when Germany attacked in 1941, with disastrous consequences for the Russians. On the other hand, the French, though recognizing the need for changing their doctrine, nevertheless refused to make the necessary changes because they did not want to be caught by a German invasion before such changes could be completed.⁷ Though doctrinal changes have been known to take place even during war, this is unusual. Doctrinal changes should be expected to take place when the threat of war is low.

Problems of Definitions

This definition of military doctrine is different and considerably narrower than other recent definitions. Posen, and more recently, Elizabeth Kier, both define military doctrine in a manner that also include elements of military strategy. Posen defines military doctrine as a

⁷Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrines: France, Britain and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984), 30-31.

subset of grand strategy. In his definition, grand strategy is the "political-military, means-ends chain, a states' theory about how best it can 'cause' security for itself," while military doctrine deals with the military part of this means-ends chain, specifying what military tools are to be used and the method for using them.⁸

Excluding tactics from his definition, he suggests that military doctrine deals with "how battles are fought."⁹ His characterization of Blitzkrieg, which was a specific military strategy, as a military doctrine, provide further indication of his inclusion of strategy in the definition of military doctrine.¹⁰ His conclusion, that balance of power better explains the military behavior of Britain, France, and Germany between the world wars, applies more to military strategy than to doctrine. ¹¹

Similarly, Kier includes components of strategy in

⁸Ibid., 13.

⁹Ibid., 245, footnote 3.

¹⁰Ibid., 14 and passim. Luttwak, Mearsheimer and others characterize Blitzkrieg accurately as a military strategy rather than as a military doctrine. Luttwak, *Strategy*, 91; John Mearsheimer, *Conventional Deterrence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 35-43. See also Doughty, *The Breaking Point*, 19-26 and 323-24. Both Mearsheimer and Doughty clearly distinguish between German military doctrine and German military strategy.

¹¹This is not to suggest that balance of power considerations will not explain military doctrines. Indeed, it might. The point is that since Posen focuses mostly on military strategy rather than doctrine, we cannot draw many conclusions about the sources of military doctrines.

her definition of military doctrine. Like Posen, Kier defines military doctrine as something between tactics and strategy, but unlike Posen, she includes "the operational" level, which she borrows from Luttwak, in her definition.¹² Though she explicitly states that doctrine is not the same as strategy, by including the operational level in her definition she mixes strategy in her definition of doctrine. Still, Kier is somewhat more accurate in identifying French military doctrine, as indicated by her attention to the French thinking on the defensive use of tanks, on the importance of firepower in future battle, and on the French concept of 'methodical battle.'¹³ On the other hand, she also reverts to explaining French military strategy at various times, for example, when she discusses

¹²Elizabeth Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines: The Cultural Roots of Doctrinal Change" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1992), 94. Luttwak, *Strategy*, 91. Kier appears to have misunderstood Luttwak. Luttwak uses the "operational" only to indicate one level of strategy. Luttwak sees the operational level of strategy (see p. 91) as being between the tactical level of strategy (see chapter 6, especially p. 84) and the theater level of strategy (see p. 113). His intention in using this terminology is clear when he writes about distinguishing the various levels: "The boundary of what is 'operational' in methods, ongoing command, and action is evident in any real-life case, even if very difficult to demarcate in the abstract . . . there is no need for any arbitrary definition: we need only uncover *the natural stratification of strategy in any given episode to grasp what is operational and what comes below and above.*" (p. 91) Emphasis added.

¹³Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines," 110-15.

French war plans.¹⁴ When she does write about strategy, her definition of strategy is similar to Posen's, and refers to grand strategy, the meshing of political goals and political-military means, rather than just military strategy. Thus the three-fold distinction that Kier makes is the same as that of Posen, between grand strategy, military doctrine and tactics, with military strategy included in the definition of military doctrine.¹⁵

The Problems of Definitions: Methodological Issues

Defining military doctrine so broadly as to also include military strategy leads to more than just semantic confusion. It is methodologically unsound and complicates theory testing. When Posen and Kier write about military doctrine as the dependent variable, they are talking about two different variables, military doctrine and military strategy. These could have different, independent causes. For example, the French army doctrine's emphasis on firepower appears to be a reflection of the experience of the First World War, whereas the French strategy can probably be explained better by reference to balance of power considerations. If the same independent variable explained both military strategy and doctrine, or if there

¹⁴Ibid., 127-31.

¹⁵Kier also includes procurement decisions as the operationalized element of military doctrine. Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines," 96-97.

was a close correspondence between military strategy and doctrine, this distinction would not be methodologically problematic. For example, if changes in military doctrine were reflected by changes in military strategy and vice-versa, the above distinction would be unimportant.

However, no such correspondence exists. Military strategy and military doctrine are determined by different factors. Thus, each can change without corresponding changes in the other variable. Military strategy generally changes much more rapidly than military doctrine, in response to changing environmental conditions.

German strategy prior to the invasion of France in May 1940 illustrates this clearly. As Germany invaded Poland, it adopted a defensive strategy towards France in the west. After the defeat of Poland, Germany adopted an offensive strategy toward France. Additionally, Germany had not one but at least two different strategies for the invasion of France. The various drafts of the original strategy for the war against France, called Plan Yellow, sought a massive attack by the northern wing of the German army (Army Group B) through Belgium, with the southern wing (Army Group A) covering its eastern flank. When it became clear that this plan would not give Germany the rapid and decisive victory that Hitler wanted, Germany changed its invasion strategy. The new plan shifted the main attack from Army Group B to Army Group A, which would attack

through the Ardennes to envelop the French and British forces from the south.¹⁶ These dramatic changes in German strategy were accompanied by no changes in German military doctrines as such. All three major changes in German strategy -- from a defensive strategy, to an invasion through Belgium, and finally, to an attack through the Ardennes -- were based on the same, existing German military doctrine. If doctrine is defined to include strategy, the only conclusion that can be reached is that German doctrine changed thrice in six months. Defining doctrines as distinct from strategy enables us to see these changes for what they were, as changes of strategy, all based on an enduring doctrine that stressed mobile, combined arms operations, initiative in battle, and infiltration tactics to avoid defensive strong points.

The Relationship Between Military Strategy and Doctrine

This does not mean that military doctrines and military strategy are unrelated. They are closely related and indeed this close relationship partly explains the confusion in definition. Ideally, military doctrine should support military strategy and military strategy should correspond to the capabilities of the doctrine. When strategies are adopted that are unsupported by doctrine or

¹⁶Doughty, *The Breaking Point*, 19-26; Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 86-88.

when existing doctrines force the military to apply unsuitable strategies, military forces will likely face difficulties in accomplishing their mission.

Military doctrines can enable different military strategies. By the same token, military doctrines can also disable military strategy. German military doctrine of the interwar years, with its emphasis on flexibility and battlefield initiative, permitted widely varying strategies to be adopted, as conditions and military objectives changed. It enabled viable defensive, offensive and even counterinsurgency strategies to be adopted.¹⁷ French military doctrines of the same period permitted French military leaders fewer options in strategy.

It should be noted that though military doctrines can increase or decrease the options for military strategy, military doctrine does not determine military strategy. For example, French military doctrines reduced the options for French military strategy, but did not actually determine the strategy that France eventually adopted.

¹⁷On the defensive use of German doctrine, see Robert Citino's discussion of the use of German doctrine to meet the perceived threat from Poland in the 1920's in Robert M. Citino, *The Evolution of Blitzkrieg: Germany Defends Itself Against Poland, 1918-1933* (New York: Greenwood Press, Contributions in Military Studies Number 61, 1987). See also Corum, *The Roots of Blitzkrieg*., 173-74. I disagree with Citino's use of the concept doctrine, for many of the reasons stated earlier, but Corum is more careful. On the use of German doctrine for counterinsurgency purposes, see Otto Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1962).

Just as German military strategy changed in the period before the war, French strategy also evolved. The original French strategy planned a defense along the river Escaut (Plan E), but this changed to holding the line at the River Dyle (Plan D), which was also given up in favor of an advance into southern Holland, the so-called Breda variant of Plan D. The rigidity of the French military doctrine did not determine a rigid French military strategy; France had more than one viable military strategy to choose from. Clearly, therefore, military doctrine does not determine military strategy. Why one strategy was chosen over another would be difficult to explain on the basis of military doctrines alone. It might be possible to explain, on the basis of existing military doctrines, whether offensive strategies or defensive strategies will be favored, but even here determinate explanations are probably not to be expected.

Military doctrines, even if not useful in explaining or predicting specific military strategies, still can be useful in explaining why military forces sometimes adopt apparently inappropriate strategies, or why they fail in their mission even when their strategy appears appropriate. For example, in the Battle of Britain, victory and defeat was determined to a larger extent by the appropriateness of the doctrine that underlay the British and German air doctrines rather than by the superior quality of British

equipment or superiority in numbers. The Royal Air Force's doctrine stressed air defense, and it supported a strategy that aimed pragmatically at defending British skies. The potential of the RAF's doctrine and the requirements of its strategy blended together to produce victory. On the other hand, the *Luftwaffe's* strategy of bombing Britain into submission was poorly served by a doctrine that had all along emphasized medium-range close air support of fast-moving assault columns rather than strategic bombardment.¹⁸ In this case, the failure of the *Luftwaffe* can be traced in large measure to the inappropriate doctrinal basis of *Luftwaffe's* strategy in the Battle of Britain. Thus, doctrine can limit the effectiveness of strategy, even if the strategy itself is appropriate.

On the other hand, doctrines can sometimes also lead to the adoption of inappropriate strategies. Counterinsurgency strategies of conventional armies are good examples of this. Conventional armies fighting counterinsurgency wars tend to adopt strategies that fit their doctrinal possibilities rather than the requirements of counterinsurgency. The U. S. Army in Vietnam, for example, insisted on applying strategies that fit Army doctrines but were unsuitable for the needs of the Vietnam war, rather than change doctrine to fit the needs of the

¹⁸Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine*, 95-99.

war they were actually fighting. Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the Indian army used strategies that fit existing doctrines but were unsuitable for the task of dealing with the Tamil insurgents.

The different causes and consequences of military strategy and military doctrine require that these two concepts be examined separately. In studying Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrines, I focus only on the army's view of guerrilla war and how it prepared to fight such wars. The Indian army's view of guerrilla war can be gleaned from the writings of military officers in professional journals published by various arms of the Indian military, from autobiographies and memoirs of army officers, and from unit histories. I examine army training, the debates about appropriate doctrine, and the weapons sought by the army to understand its doctrine, particularly with reference to counterinsurgency war. Training provides an operationalized view of military doctrine. It represents the army's institutionalized view of war and the method for prosecuting it. Examining debates within the military is important because these would reveal differences as well as conformity in the army's view of war. More importantly, these would reveal how important particular missions were -- a dearth of articles on counterinsurgency, but a wealth of essays on armored combat reveal important details about the

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military's perspective on future war. In looking at military appropriations, I examine the kinds of weapons the army sought, rather than the weapons the Army actually acquired. Kier argues that weapons acquisitions, as a political process, reveal the political elites' understanding and acceptance of military doctrine and should therefore be included in studying doctrines.¹⁹ I disagree, for two reasons: As Kier points out, the acquisition of military equipment can be the result of a number of a number of factors, many unrelated to military doctrine.²⁰ In the Indian case, the logic of military arms acquisition is somewhat mystifying, and many times has been unrelated to military demands or needs. Two well known cases in the Indian Air Force reveal this problem. For more than two decades, the Indian Air Force has been seeking an Advanced Jet Trainer without success, because of inadequate civilian attention.²¹ On the other hand, the Indian Air Force did acquire two squadrons of Mirage-2000's fighter-jets in the early 1980's as a consequence of a political decision rather than a military requirement.²²

¹⁹Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines," 96-97.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹"Aborting A Take-Off," *Sunday*, July 19-25, 1992, 14-15.

²²Jerrold F. Elkin and W. Andrew Ritezel, "The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance," *Asian Survey*, 26:5 (May 1986): 527.

These instances reveal that, at least in the Indian case, arms acquisition tells us little about the military organization's perspectives and preferences. Therefore I focus on what the military sought rather than what it actually acquired, since this is more likely to give an indication of the military's perspective of future war.

Secondly, as I have argued earlier, Kier includes military strategy in her definition of doctrine. Strategy is partly determined by the political needs of the state and thus requires political acceptance. My definition of doctrine explicitly excludes military strategy and so does not require political acceptance of military's perspective about future war.

The Principles of Counterinsurgency Warfare

I have now defined what military doctrines are and how military doctrines differ from military strategy. In this section, I examine the nature of guerrilla warfare, and explain why conventional armies adopt counterinsurgency doctrines that reflect their positional war-orientation.

Counterinsurgency remains a puzzle for most conventional armies.²³ In addition, counterinsurgency

²³There are exceptions. The British Army has consistently shown itself to be adaptable in dealing with counterinsurgency wars in various parts of the world. Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change : Lessons From Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). Similarly, the German Army during the Second World War showed a remarkable capacity to conduct effective

warfare is looked upon with distaste by conventional armies, a task they would gladly avoid if possible. Thus, the Indian army, eschewing its tradition of not involving itself in political decision-making, publicly expressed dismay at its increasing deployment in domestic counterinsurgency operations.²⁴ Similarly, the U. S. Army has repeatedly expressed its intention about never getting into "another Vietnam."²⁵

The reason for such attitudes is that most conventional armies have great difficulty in adapting themselves to the task of counterinsurgency. Conventional armies are designed to fight positional wars with other conventional armies. Even when they fight guerrilla wars, they adopt counterinsurgency doctrines that have a positional-war bias. This leads them to fight as they do in conventional, positional-wars and makes them

counterinsurgency operations. Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*.

²⁴On the increasing use of the Indian Army in "aid to the civil" operations, see Sumit Ganguly, "From Defense of the Nation to Aid to the Civil: The Army in Contemporary India," *Journal of Asian and African Studies* 26:1-2 (1991): 11-26. On the resentment of the Army in being employed in this fashion see, "A Middle-Aged Military Machine," *India Today*, April 30, 1993, 27-29, and T. A. Davis, "Internal Security Deteriorating Rapidly," *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter* 20:2-3 (August-September 1993): 11.

²⁵One facet of this "no more Vietnam's" syndrome may be reflected in the Army's view of how the war should have been fought -- not surprisingly, the answer was as a conventional war -- best set out in by Colonel Harry Summers in his book, *On Strategy*, which won wide acclaim within the Army. Ronald H. Spector, "Army Strategy in the Vietnam War," review of *The Army and Vietnam* by Andrew F. Krepinevich, in *International Security* 11:4 (Spring 1987).

increasingly frustrated when their efforts result in little success. Krepinevich argues that the U. S. Army, despite paying lip service to the need for a distinct counterinsurgency doctrine, continued to apply the 'Army Concept,' a conventional, positional-war approach designed to deal with a Soviet invasion of central Europe, in fighting the Viet Cong guerrillas.²⁶ Similarly, in Sri Lanka, the Indian army has been blamed for fighting the Tamil Tiger guerrillas with a conventional war mind-set more appropriate on the western front against Pakistan. In both cases, though these armies adopted counterinsurgency doctrines, their counterinsurgency doctrines had a positional-war bias.

It is understandable that conventional armies will apply existing positional-war doctrines, even when faced with counterinsurgency war. Even the (eventually) successful British effort in the Boer war began with the British army using positional war-oriented doctrines, which emphasized traditional large unit operations and heavy artillery. On the other hand, when the traditional approach failed, the British army successfully innovated with smaller units, greater mobility and less reliance on heavy artillery and isolation of the civilian population in concentration camps away from the rebels.²⁷ The British

²⁶Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam*.

²⁷Thomas Pakenham, *The Boer War* (New York: Random

case, however, is an exception. Most conventional armies find it difficult to adopt counterinsurgency doctrines that are not afflicted with the positional-war bias.

Understanding the nature of insurgencies can help in understanding some of the difficulties faced by conventional armies in such wars.

The Stages of Insurgency

Insurgencies, especially communist insurgencies in the third world, have been the subject of much study throughout the cold war years.²⁸ However, there is no single, accepted definition of an insurgency. Moreover the concept itself is used interchangeably with others such as "guerrilla war," "partisan war," "unconventional war," and "revolutionary war."²⁹ One author recently clubbed all

House, 1979).

²⁸ Though guerrilla war is a well known phenomenon in military history, the specific form of communist inspired insurgency after 1945 was seen as unique. This was aided by a belief that such insurgencies represented a "surreptitious" attempt "to revise the balance among the major powers by stealth and deception." Douglas S. Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era: U.S. Doctrine and Performance, 1950 to the Present* (New York: The Free Press, 1977), 1-2. See also, Sir Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgencies: Experiences from Malaysia and Vietnam* (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 14-15.

²⁹ Different scholars provide different reasons for their elaborate distinctions between these concepts. Mostly, these turn out to be differences in the comprehensiveness of the specific concepts. The best definitions are provided by Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Operations: Techniques of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Walker and Company, 1967), 14-15.

such wars together as wars of the "third kind."³⁰ Nevertheless, some broad distinctions can be made between these concepts. Insurgencies can be characterized as armed rebellions that seek to replace existing political authority.³¹ Guerrilla war, its most common synonym, simply describes one military stage in an insurgency in which the rebels adopt a strategy of hit-and-run attacks by small armed bands against larger government forces.

Insurgencies go through various political and military stages. Very broadly these can be divided into the political-preparatory stage, the guerrilla war stage and the conventional war stage.³² In the political-preparatory stage, the insurgents create the conditions on the ground that would sustain the insurgency. In communist insurgencies, this involves the creation of a communist party and associated "united front" organizations.³³ Once

³⁰ Edward R. Rice, *Wars of the Third Kind: Conflict in Underdeveloped Countries* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1988).

³¹ Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Operations*, 14-15.

³² These are my characterizations. Every writer on guerrilla war suggests some variation of this pattern. See in particular, Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, 3-11; Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgencies*, chapter 3; Baljit Singh and Ko-Wang Mei, *Theory and Practice of Modern Guerrilla Warfare* (Bombay: Asia Publishing House, 1971) chapter 3; David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1964) chapter 3.

³³ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 44-48.

the organizational basis is set up, the insurgents begin conducting small scale attacks, primarily ambushes and assaults on isolated police and military posts. The objective is to both gain weapons as well as to demonstrate the strength of the insurgents and the corresponding vulnerability of the government.³⁴ The stage is now set for the beginning of the first of two military stages, the guerrilla war stage.

Guerrilla war is the second stage in an insurgency. In this stage, the capabilities of the guerrillas are still no match for those of the government. In order to weaken government forces and loosen its control over the territory and population, the rebels conduct hit-and-run operations designed to harass the superior government forces and cut the lines of communication between strongholds such as cities.³⁵ As the relative capabilities of the opposing forces shift in favor of the rebels, they conduct larger scale operations and begin to hold territory. Eventually,

³⁴ Based on the British experience in Malaya, Thompson suggests that the quantity and quality of the weapons lost and recovered by the government is a good indicator of the progress of the insurgency. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgencies*, 39-41. On the other hand, today, capturing government arms might not be as important an objective, especially if there are neighboring countries that sympathize with and support the insurgents.

³⁵ Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 48-33. The specifics of these tactics are detailed by Mao in his pamphlet, "Guerrilla Warfare," published in 1937. See, Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. and ed. Brigadier-General Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Praeger, 1961), 46-47.

when the rebel forces are strong enough, they form a conventional army with large units and heavy weapons such as tanks and artillery and engage government forces in set-piece, positional battles designed to deliver the final blow. This 'war of movement' represents the third stage of the insurgency.³⁶ In theory, at this stage the rebels are strong enough to defeat the government's forces on the battlefield. On the other hand, for the rebels, knowing when to make this transition to positional war can be critical and difficult.³⁷ If the transition is made too hastily, they can be defeated on the battlefield, derailing the entire insurgency. Just such a premature transition was responsible for the decimation of the communist forces in China in 1930.³⁸ In Sri Lanka, similarly, the Tamil Tigers paid a heavy price for attempting to hold the city of Jaffna against superior Indian forces.

The above broad sketch should be used with care because no two insurgencies follow the same path. Even rural, communist insurgencies, inspired by the Maoist

³⁶ Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, 5; Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, 53-58; Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgencies*, 42-43.

³⁷Of course, all these are pure categories. In reality, these stages might be mixed, and it is not always possible for contemporary observers to decide what stage the insurgency is at.

³⁸ Rice, *Wars of the Third Kind*, 82-83, 88; Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgencies*, 42-43. See also Gerard Chaliand, *Terrorism: From Popular Struggle to Media Spectacle* (London: Saqi Books, 1987), 58-59.

pattern, show considerable variations. For example, the Vietnamese insurgency, both against the French as well as against the United States, varied considerably from the Chinese pattern, though both were rural in nature and the Vietnamese took inspiration from the Chinese experience.³⁹ Similarly, despite its rural nature, the Cuban insurgency led by Fidel Castro also played out very differently from the classic pattern set out above. For the Cuban revolutionaries, the Chinese pattern would have been suicidal, given the difficulty of setting up an anti-government organizational infrastructure in the face of severe state repression. Thus the Cuban model stressed the conduct of guerrilla operations by a small nucleus of rebels as the first stage, before trying to convince the peasants and farmers to join them. In order to maintain itself, this small rebel band, or "*foco*," operated in remote areas, away from population centers, and indeed, independent of them. Recruitment of the population began only after the guerrillas had demonstrated their own capability as well as the vulnerability of the government through military action.⁴⁰ This turned on its head the Maoist pattern in which establishment of the rebel organization among the rural population was the first step.

Many insurgencies, of course, do not even follow the

³⁹Blaufarb, *The Counterinsurgency Era*, 11-15.

⁴⁰*Ibid.*, 13-15.

communist pattern. What is common to all insurgencies, Maoist or otherwise, is the guerrilla war stage.⁴¹ In examining counterinsurgency military strategy and doctrine, I only look at the guerrilla war stage, because it is only during this stage that the military is engaged in a war that is different from conventional positional war. In the first stage, the military typically does not play any role; the government, if it is aware at all of the beginnings of an insurgency, uses political measures or at most, police repression, to deal with the rebels. Though the military is involved in the third stage, I do not examine this stage because by this stage the war takes on the characteristics of a conventional positional war, and principles of such war are not different from the principles employed by the military in any positional war.

The Military Strategy and Doctrine of Insurgents

What is the strategy of guerrilla warfare? Guerrilla strategy is determined by the weakness of the guerrillas in relation to the military forces of the state. This weakness precludes a direct trial of strength with the military forces of the state. The guerrillas therefore follow a strategy of denial, of progressively weakening and ultimately denying the government control over its

⁴¹Heilbrunn provides the best account of guerrilla operations, which he calls 'partisan warfare.' See his *Partisan Warfare*, chapters 4, 5.

territory and population which leads to a corresponding rise in the strength of the insurgency. In other words, the guerrilla stage of an insurgency is aimed at the progressive reversal of the balance of power between the insurgents and the government, which allows the guerrilla forces to turn into an orthodox, conventional military force that can defeat the government in a direct confrontation.⁴² A strategy of denial, by definition, does not require the guerrillas to control either the territory or the population; all that is required is for the guerrillas to use their limited capability to prise away the government's control over its population. This denial strategy is accomplished by selective attacks and ambushes on isolated outposts and lines of communications which exposes the vulnerability of the government's military forces. The purpose of these attacks is not to defeat the state forces, or even to eliminate the unit that is targeted. The purpose is to force persistent vulnerability on the army and force it to into defensive passivity. Mao argued that in "protracted war," it is vitally important for the guerrillas to maintain their own initiative and force the enemy into passivity: "Passivity is . . . always disadvantageous and one must try to get out of it by all means."⁴³

⁴²Mao, *On Guerrilla Warfare* , 56-57.

This strategy of denial is supported by a guerrilla military doctrine which stresses three basic principles: secrecy, surprise, and speed.⁴⁴ Secrecy is possible as the guerrillas gain the support of the people and conversely, as the government can no longer depend on the population for intelligence and information. Surprise is the result of careful preparation before operations and is essential because of the weakness of guerrillas. Speed is a function of the mobility of the guerrillas, who generally carry only light equipment. Another fundamental principle of guerrilla military doctrine is pragmatism in operations. In practice, this means that the guerrillas maintain the engagement only as long as they have the advantage, and break off contact when the advantage shifts to the enemy.⁴⁵ The Viet Minh manual on guerrilla warfare, for example, suggests withdrawal in the face of a superior enemy and warns against obstinacy in pressing home attacks unless

⁴³ Mao Tse-tung, "On Protracted War," in *Selected Works* Vol. II (London, 1954): 211, as cited in Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 56. Of course, if chance does present itself, the guerrillas will attempt to eliminate the unit that they have attacked.

⁴⁴ Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 92, citing the Viet Minh manual. In Sri Lanka, an Indian journalist recounts a Tamil Tiger commander's instructions to his "boys" before he sends them into battle: "stealth, speed and surprise." See Shyam Tekwani, "Sri Lanka: In the Tiger's Den," *India Today*, 15 November 1987, 32.

⁴⁵ Julian Paget, *Counterinsurgency Operations*, 25. Mao, for example, suggests: "When the guerrillas engage a stronger enemy, they withdraw when he advances, harass him when he stops; strike him when he is weary; pursue him when he withdraws." Mao, *On Guerrilla War*, 46.

victory is assured.⁴⁶ The point is to make government forces vulnerable, even without winning every engagement. When attacking weakly protected convoys or isolated military posts, the guerrillas may press their attacks because they enjoy the necessary superiority to eliminate the enemy. On the other hand, because the purpose is harassment rather than victory, the attack can be broken off quickly and the guerrillas withdrawn and dispersed when they have caused enough damage or when the battle begins to turn against them.⁴⁷

The guerrilla strategy of isolated but sharp and frequent attacks on the military presents the government with a dilemma. In order to maintain its control over the territory and the population, the government is forced to deploy its forces in a widely dispersed pattern which stretches its forces thin. Moreover, maintaining such a pattern of deployment requires extended lines of communications, which are vulnerable to attack. As such attacks increase, governments usually withdraw their more exposed and vulnerable posts and consolidate them in stronger positions. This reduces the problem of

⁴⁶Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 78-79.

⁴⁷ The Viet Minh manual suggests two types of operations that aim at the annihilation of the enemy, the "surprise attack" and the "commando raid." However, both assume superiority of the guerrillas at the point of engagement. Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 94-95.

vulnerability of the deployed forces and also shortens the lines of communications. On the other hand, this also leaves vast stretches of territory under the control of the guerrillas. Guerrilla strategy thus succeeds in denying the government control over its territory and population.

Defeating Insurgencies: The Objectives of Counterinsurgency

What are the appropriate objectives for the government in counterinsurgency warfare and how do these affect counterinsurgency military strategy and doctrine?⁴⁸ Successful counterinsurgency efforts have aimed at preventing the insurgents from replacing state authority over its population and territory. If control has already been lost, such efforts have aimed at not just regaining control but more importantly at retaining control. Retaining authority over all parts of the country simultaneously requires spreading the government's forces thinly across the territory, despite the above mentioned

⁴⁸Counter-guerrilla war is a more accurate description of this type of warfare than counterinsurgency. However, counterinsurgency is the more widely accepted and used term. Besides the military counter-guerrilla operations form a component of a larger political-military counterinsurgency strategy. Making a distinction between the broader counterinsurgency policies and the specific military counter-guerrilla strategies may be useful in other instances but is unnecessarily cumbersome for my purposes. In addition, for the military itself, there is little distinction between counterinsurgency and counter-guerrilla war. Rather, the distinction is between these types of wars and conventional war. So counterinsurgency is as appropriate a term as counter-guerrilla to describe these kinds of wars. What is lost in accuracy will hopefully be compensated by the convenience of the usage.

vulnerability of such diluted and dispersed deployment. The vulnerability of such forces has to be accepted because, in contrast to positional war, destroying the enemy's military capabilities is not the primary objective in counterinsurgency warfare. Success and failure in an insurgency is determined by who controls the population and territory, not by which side wins more engagements. The U. S. Army in Vietnam clearly won more engagements, killed more enemy soldiers, and proved its superiority in military capabilities but still lost the war.⁴⁹ American forces were deployed mainly in well protected bases, rather than dispersed among the population in rural areas.⁵⁰ Similarly, the success of the British counterinsurgency effort in Malaya was at least partly the consequence of the British refusal to withdraw from rural areas after the Malayan People's Anti-British Army (MPABA), military wing of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP), began the insurgency 1948. Instead, the British put up defensive systems around

⁴⁹Colonel Harry Summers' confrontation with a Vietnamese officer that was narrated in chapter 1 illustrates the differences between a conventional war approach, which Colonel Summers represented, and the objectives of an insurgency, which the Vietnamese officer was well aware of. Harry G. Summers, *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (Novato, CA.: Presidio, 1982), 1.

⁵⁰ The major exception to this pattern were the Combat Action Platoons (CAP's) of the Marines, which were deployed in small units in villages and which were relatively successful. Michael E. Peterson, *The Combined Action Platoons: The U.S. Marines' Other War in Vietnam* (New York: Praeger, 1989).

population centers, manned by the civilian Special Constabulary, which thwarted the objectives of the insurgents.⁵¹ Likewise, the French instituted the 'quadrillage' or the grid system in Algeria, which emphasized holding on to population centers. The system was effective, especially during the early stages of the insurgency.⁵²

Achieving the Objective: Counterinsurgency Strategy

Reasserting such control over the territory and population can be accomplished through a number of different strategies. The specific strategy adopted is determined by the situation and the capability of the military commanders. Specific strategies to retake and retain government control over territory and population include resettlement of vulnerable population to isolate them from the guerrillas, various types of clear and hold strategies such as the "outward blockade," which the

⁵¹Edgar O'Ballance, *Malaya: The Communist Insurgent War, 1948-60* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1966), 82-84. To some extent, the British were aided by the sheer incompetence of the MPABA during the early stages of this struggle.

⁵²Edgar O'Ballance, *The Algerian Insurrection, 1954-62* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon books, 1967), 64-66; Alistair Horne, *A Savage War of Peace: Algeria 1954-1962* (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), 165-69. The effectiveness of the French 'grid' system was wasted, however, because of indiscriminate French violence against Algeria's civilian population, both through retaliatory killings and the use of torture as semi-official policy. On the use and consequences of this policy, see Horne, *A Savage War of Peace*, 195-207.

British army used during the Boer war and the Japanese army used in the North China plains during the second World War, and the "oil-spot" strategy, in which the military spreads outwards like an expanding oil spot, to bring more and more territory under government control.⁵³ All these strategies have the same objective: reasserting the governments' control over its territory and population. Of course, once territory is retaken, the government has to maintain its control over the retaken territory. This requires diluted and dispersed deployment of forces. Counterinsurgency military doctrines must reflect this requirement by emphasizing such deployment patterns and prescribing methods for conducting such operations.

In addition, as a corollary to retaining control over the territory and population, the government has to aim at keeping the insurgents on the defensive and away from population and economic centers. Forcing the guerrillas on the defensive requires the military to seek out the guerrillas and deprive them of the capability to concentrate their forces unmolested. However, large-scale operations designed to clear guerrillas from specific areas, the classic "search-and-destroy" mission, will be unsuccessful because guerrilla forces can easily detect and avoid such cumbersome assaults. Most successful counter-

⁵³Rice, *Wars of the Third Kind*, 92-103; Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgencies*, 111-17; Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 66-67.

guerrilla operations have used offensive patrolling units which operate just like guerrillas. Small, highly mobile, and operating around and beyond the protected areas, such units are difficult for the guerrillas to detect in advance and are thus more likely to defeat the guerrillas. This strategy, which is an imitation of the guerrilla's own strategy, was used with great effectiveness by the German army *Jagdkommando* (commando hunters) units in Russia and by the British "ferret force" in Malaya.⁵⁴ Such strategies allow the government forces to prevent the guerrillas from asserting their control over rural areas, even if the government cannot maintain a continuous and permanent presence in these areas. The small size of such units also prevents them from being betrayed, even when operating among clearly hostile populations, as was the case with the *Jagdkommando's* in Russia. In addition, such operations allow the state forces to gain much needed intelligence and information and decreases the vulnerability of state forces that are deployed in fixed positions. In short, successful counterinsurgency strategy emphasizes the use of small unit rather than large-unit operations.

Counterinsurgency Doctrine and the 'Principles of War'

Counterinsurgency military doctrines have to reflect

⁵⁴Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 65-69; O'Ballance, *Malaya*, 87-88.

the prominent, if not the exclusive, use of small unit rather than large unit operations. Such operations emphasize different skills, weapons, and even attitudes. Counterinsurgency military doctrines must reflect this also.⁵⁵ Thus counterinsurgency doctrines must emphasize diluted and dispersed deployment of military force and independent small unit operations. The doctrinal requirements of both the dilution and dispersal of forces across the theater of operations, as well as the conduct of small-unit offensives against guerrillas, present difficulties for conventional armies. Diluted deployment of forces contradicts a fundamental principle of positional war, the principle of mass, which is deeply ingrained in military minds.⁵⁶ Though military theorists emphasize that

⁵⁵Though small-unit operations are most prominent, larger-scale operations might sometimes be useful. If large concentrations of insurgents are located, the government forces can use large-units in encirclement operations. However, such operations are difficult to coordinate and are only rarely successful. At best, such operations have provided the government temporary relief by dislocating the insurgents from their base areas. Examples of such encirclement operations include the Russian operations in the Caucasus against the forces of Imam Shamil in the 1850's, the Chinese Nationalist offensives against Mao's Red Army bases in the Jiangxi province, especially the fifth offensive, and various German and Italian offensives against Tito's forces in occupied Yugoslavia during the second World War. Rice, *Wars of the Third Kind*, 98-99; Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 66-67. I do not include these operations in studying counterinsurgency wars, both because such operations are neither prominent nor useful, and because they reflect conventional doctrinal influences.

⁵⁶The 'principle of mass' is also sometimes

all principles, including that of mass, are meant only as guidelines, conventional armies habitually prefer to concentrate their forces. In addition, the principle of mass only refers to the application of maximum force at the point of decision, and thus should be as applicable to guerrilla war as to conventional, positional war.⁵⁷

However, conventional armies have generally interpreted this principle to mean consolidation of forces in large units. Thus, the counterinsurgency doctrines adopted by conventional armies also tend to emphasize large-unit operations, the reflection of the armies' positional-war orientation. This positional-war bias in the counterinsurgency doctrine leads to an emphasis on ineffective, large-unit operations when such conventional armies engage in guerrilla wars.

On the other hand, such a deployment pattern may be unavoidable in a conventional positional war. Diluted deployment when facing a conventional enemy can lead to military disaster because thinly deployed forces are highly vulnerable to conventional adversaries. Two instances from

referred to as the 'principle of concentration.' Major-General D. K. Palit, *The Essentials of Military Knowledge* (London: C. Hurst, 1968), 128-31; Julian Linder, *Military Theory*, 222; Hew Strachan, *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 1-2, 73; and J. F. C. Fuller, *The Conduct of War, 1789-1961* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1961).

⁵⁷In fact, Mao's writings as well as the Viet Minh manual stress the concentration of superior forces against the enemy during combat. Mao, *On Guerrilla War*, 102-103; Heilbrunn, *Partisan Warfare*, 56-57 and especially, 96-97.

recent South Asian military history can illustrate this. In 1962, the Indian army was deployed thinly along the Himalayan border with China, responding to a political imperative of maintaining a presence along that disputed frontier. When the Chinese army attacked, they quickly overpowered and penetrated the weak Indian line, routing the Indian army.⁵⁸ Later, in 1971, the Pakistani army was similarly thinly deployed along the India-East Pakistan border to defeat what was expected to be a limited Indian probe. The Indian army took advantage of this thin deployment to carry out a Blitzkrieg that netted more than 90,000 prisoners of war and dismembered the eastern wing of Pakistan to form the new state of Bangladesh.⁵⁹ Thus, though it is inappropriate in guerrilla war, the principle of mass is not easy for conventional armies to ignore.

To summarize, the objectives of counterinsurgency war require dispersal and dilution of forces. Such a pattern of deployment contradicts one of the fundamental principles of positional war, the principle of mass, which is the

⁵⁸Brigadier J. S. Dalvi, *Himalayan Blunder: the Curtain Raiser to the Sino-Indian War of 1962* (Bombay: Thacker and Company, 1969); Sita Ram Johri, *Chinese Invasion of Ladakh* (Lucknow, India: Himalayan Publications, 1968); Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest for Security: Defence Policies, 1947-1965* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1967).

⁵⁹Pran Chopra, *India's Second Liberation* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1974); K. Subramanyam and Mohammad Ayoob, *The Liberation War* (New Delhi: S. Chand, 1984).

basis of the organization of conventional forces. Thus, most conventional armies tend to adopt counterinsurgency doctrines that exhibit a positional-war bias by emphasizing concentration of forces and large-unit operations. Counterinsurgency doctrines with such positional-war bias lead to the defeat of conventional armies in guerrilla wars.

Explanations and Hypotheses About Inappropriate Doctrines

I suggested in the previous section that conventional positional-war doctrines are required by the exigencies of the international situation and are in addition deeply ingrained in the psyche of military organizations. Conveniently, these two suggestions correspond to the explanations provided by the two major theoretical approaches to the study of international politics, the organizational culture approach and the neorealist approach. The task now is to examine in greater detail these explanations and draw hypotheses from them about why military organizations adopt inappropriate doctrines. I first examine the organizational culture perspective. Subsequently, I will discuss the neorealist perspective.

Organizational Culture and Military Doctrine

The organizational culture approach has evolved as a challenge to classic theories of organizational behavior.

Scholars using this approach assert that the behavior of organizations will be determined by the values shared within the organization rather than by some universal characteristics that all organizations share. However, there are serious disagreements about how to define and determine what these values are. For some, culture explicitly prescribes action; the culture of the organization directly dictates its behavior. Others see culture as a set of values that color the organization's view of the world and thus indirectly determine how organizations behave. Despite this difference, both cultural approaches to organizational behavior refute the earlier standardized view of organizational behavior. Examining how the cultural and the classical approaches explain state behavior is a good way of illustrating the differences between them.

Classic organization theory explained state policies as the outcome of politics between bureaucracies as well as the internal dynamics of organizations charged with making state policies.⁶⁰ Bureaucracies, like other large organizations are more concerned with increasing their size and autonomy, and tend to favor policies that protect the interests of the bureaucracy rather than promote the

⁶⁰The insights from organization theory were suggested as an alternative to the Realist perspective by Graham Allison in his seminal work *The Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

interests of the state. In addition, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), developed to help the bureaucracy perform its functions, limit the policy choices that decision makers are provided with, and thus prevent optimal policies from being taken.⁶¹

This early model of organizational behavior suggested that all bureaucracies shared some common tendencies, especially in terms of the pursuit of power and autonomy.⁶²

⁶¹ These represented two distinct characteristics of organizational behavior, and corresponded to Allison's Model III, the "bureaucratic politics" model and Model II, the "organizational process" model, respectively. However, in examining the bureaucratic influence in policy making, most scholars have either conflated these two models, or focused on the bureaucratic politics model. David Welch argues that Allison was himself responsible for this trend. See David Welch, "The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigms: Retrospect and Prospect," *International Security* 17:2 (Fall 1992): 118. As I shall suggest later, some organizational culture perspectives come close to duplicating Allison's Model II, the "organizational process" model.

⁶² Allison's perspective did not go unchallenged. For some early critiques of Allison's work, see Robert J. Art, "Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique," *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973): 478-80; Stephen D. Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland)," *Foreign Policy* 7 (Summer 1972): 159-79. For more recent assessments, in addition to Welch, "The Organizational Process and Bureaucratic Politics Paradigm," see also Jonathan Bendor and Thomas H. Hammond, "Rethinking Allison's Models," *American Political Science Review* 85 (June 1992): 301-22. Stuart J. Kaufman found that the bureaucratic politics model was only partly successful in explaining Soviet military policies. See his "Organizational Politics and Change in Soviet Military Policy," *World Politics* 46:3 (April 1994): 355-82. On the other hand, Edward Rhodes found that organizational "interest" was not a good determinant of policy. See Edward Rhodes, "Do Bureaucratic Politics Matter? Some Disconfirming Findings From the Case of the U.S. Navy," *World Politics* 47:1 (October 1994): 1-41. Similarly, David

Extending this argument to military doctrinal preferences, Posen, as well as Jack Snyder, argue that the imperatives of organizational needs would lead to military doctrines that are poorly matched to political requirements.⁶³ Posen argues that organizational needs would lead to offensive military doctrines because they reduce uncertainty by allowing militaries to structure the battle, increase organizational size and wealth, and enhance military autonomy.⁶⁴ Similarly, Snyder traces the offensive military doctrines of the great powers prior to the First World War to organizational biases of the various military organizations.⁶⁵ Both Posen and Snyder also suggest that civilian intervention could correct such biases. This standardized view of the offensive doctrinal preferences of military organizations and the need for external, civilian intervention to mold them to political requirements has been challenged by Stephen Rosen, who argues that military organizations can innovate and change doctrines without

Welch and James Blight argued that heads of bureaucracies did not behave parochially, reflecting only the interests of the agency, during the Cuban missile crisis. See, David A. Welch and James G. Blight, "The Eleventh Hour of the Cuban Missile Crisis: An Introduction to the ExComm Transcripts," *International Security* 12:3 (Winter 1987-88): 5-29.

⁶³Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, Jack Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive: Military Decision Making and the Disasters of 1914* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

⁶⁴Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 47-50.

⁶⁵Snyder, *The Ideology of the Offensive*, 16.

civilian intervention. For Rosen, military innovations and doctrinal change require a new "theory of war" which finds acceptance within the military hierarchy.⁶⁶ More recently, institutionalist theory has been used to suggest that the design of domestic political institutions impinges on military autonomy and its ability to innovate, which again questions the standardized view of military preferences.⁶⁷

Culture and Military Behavior

The most serious challenges to Posen's and Snyder's perspective on the organizational imperatives of military behavior have come from theoretical developments within organizational research which have undermined the generalized expectations of organizational preferences. Specifically, the evolving 'organizational culture' perspective suggests that organizational preferences have to be seen as the consequence of the culture and ethos of particular organizations rather than as the result of a standardized set of preferences that all organizations share.⁶⁸ Thus, in dealing with military behavior, all

⁶⁶Stephen Peter Rosen, *Winning the Next War: Innovation and the Modern Military* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁶⁷Deborah D. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*. For an assessment of Avant's arguments, see pp. 12-13. See also, Barry Posen, review of *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons From Peripheral Wars*, by Deborah D. Avant, in *Political Science Quarterly* 110 (Summer 1995): 319-20.

military organizations may not prefer offensive doctrines; the organizational culture perspective suggests that doctrinal preferences of military organizations cannot be specified without reference to the values and meanings that members of the organization share.

The organizational culture perspective is rooted in studies of business organizations and it promises to explain variations in the structuring, behavior and performance of business organizations. Though the cultural approach has taken center-stage in organizational research, it is still fragmentary and diverse.⁶⁹ This fragmentation is evident also in the use of culture to explain foreign and security policies of states. Here,

⁶⁸Two recent works on military behavior that use the organizational culture perspective provide useful reviews of the debates and developments within this perspectives. See Jeffrey W. Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) and Elizabeth Kier, *Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines*.

⁶⁹Mark Ebers, "The Framing of Organizational Cultures", in Samuel B. Bacharach, Pasquale Gagliardi and Bryan Mundell eds. *Research in the Sociology of Organizations, Studies of Organizations in the European Tradition*, vol. 13 (Greenwich, Connecticut: JAI Press, 1995), 129-31. One review of organizational culture research opened pessimistically, stating that researchers "do not agree about what culture is and why it should be studied. They do not study the same phenomenon. They do not approach the phenomenon they do study from the same theoretical, epistemological, or methodical point of view. These fundamental disagreements have impeded the exchange of ideas and the ability to build upon others' empirical work." See, "Introduction : Ten Empirical Studies of Culture," in Peter J. Frost, Larry F. Moore, Meryl Reis Louis, Craig C. Lundberg and Joanne Martin, eds. *Reframing Organizational Culture* (Newbury Park, California: Sage Publications, 1991), 7.

culture was not originally used to explain organizational preferences; it made its first impact in the study of "strategic culture" to explain differences in Soviet and American nuclear strategies.⁷⁰ Arguing that the Soviet Union might not see the feasibility of fighting limited nuclear war in the same way as American war planners did, Jack Snyder coined the term "strategic culture" to explain differences between Soviet and American war plans.⁷¹ The literature that Snyder's insight spawned generally focused on national cultures and differences in national cultures to explain strategic choices made by national elites.⁷²

⁷⁰Alastair Iain Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," *International Security*, 19:4 (Spring 1995): 36. The following discussion is based on Johnston review of the development in the study of strategic culture. See also his recent book, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995) especially chapter 1.

⁷¹Jack Snyder, *The Soviet Strategic Culture: Implications for Limited Nuclear Operations* (Santa Monica, CA.: Rand, 1977), as cited in Jack Snyder's later essay, "The Concept of Strategic Culture: Caveat Emptor," in Carl G. Jacobsen, Ken Booth, William Kincade and David R. Jones eds., *Strategic Power: USA/USSR* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 3. In this later essay, Snyder, while not denying the need for more careful analysis of the cultural roots of strategy, disagrees with much of the subsequent writings about strategic culture. For a more optimistic view of the utility and power of the strategic culture approach, see Ken Booth, "The Concept of Strategic Culture Affirmed" in Jacobsen, et al, *Strategic Power: USA/USSR*, 121-28, and Yitzhak Klein, "A Theory of Strategic Culture," *Comparative Strategy* 10 (1991): 3-23.

⁷²Johnston himself used strategic culture to explain Chinese grand strategy in Ming era China, though he suggests that there might not be much variation between different strategic cultures. See his *Cultural Realism*.

This had considerable drawbacks: as Alastair Johnston argues, the concept of a national strategic culture was amorphous and unwieldy and it wrongly assumed the existence of a single strategic culture across a society that consistently led to one type of behavior.⁷³

The organizational culture perspective has been a more recent entrant into the study of military policies and its increasing prominence reflects some of the disadvantages of using national cultures to explain state policies. The organizational culture perspective suggests that the source of state policies lies in the culture of the organizations that are charged with making state policies. Studies of state behavior using this perspective have traced the impact of culture in specific outcomes, either in organizational behavior or in organizational preferences. Jeffrey Legro's work on cooperation between adversaries during the Second World War is one example.⁷⁴ Legro argues that cooperation in the non-use of some weapons such as chemical weapons, as well as the failure of restraint and the consequent escalation in other areas such as strategic bombing and submarine warfare can be explained by the organizational cultures of the various military organizations engaged in the conflict. For example, the

⁷³Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," 37-38. See also Snyder, "The Concept of Strategic Culture: *Caveat Emptor*."

⁷⁴Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*.

organizational culture of the German Navy, which gave primacy to submarine warfare, led to German escalation in submarine warfare despite strict orders from the political leadership not to provoke neutral states like the United States with unrestricted submarine warfare. In this case, organizational culture of the German Navy was more important than the balance-of-power considerations of the civilian leadership.⁷⁵

Similarly, Elizabeth Kier's work on the cultural sources of military doctrines in interwar Europe focuses on the cultural values of the French and British militaries to explain their doctrinal preferences.⁷⁶ Kier explicitly moves away from previous uses of culture to explain macroscopic outcomes, arguing that cultural effects are better seen in studies of specific policy outcomes.⁷⁷ Kier sees culture as determining organizational interests and choices but these interests and choices are not directly dictated by culture. Culture interprets the choices available to the organization. Thus, culture permits certain choices to be made and prevents others from being considered. These choices have to be made within the constraints that the domestic political environment imposes

⁷⁵Ibid., 60-62.

⁷⁶Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines."

⁷⁷Ibid., 47-57.

on the military organization. For Kier, culture provides the clues that allow the organization to 'see' the choices available to it. For example, the French Army 'saw' conscript troops as unsuitable for complex, mobile, offensive operations. Thus, once the French government reduced the term of conscription to one year in 1928, the French Army changed its doctrine to a defensive one. Because different organizations have different cultural values and interpret environmental constraints differently, other military organizations might make different choices. The German Army, which did not attach the same values to using conscript troops, employed offensive doctrines even though they also used conscript troops. Kier sees the differences in the military doctrines between France and Germany as the result of the differences between the cultures of the two organizations.⁷⁸

⁷⁸Of course, this thesis is valid only if it can be demonstrated that the French doctrine was "offensive" till 1928, and became "defensive" after that point. French doctrine had changed by 1921, and this was reflected in the 1921 Field Service Regulation, which stressed the importance of firepower and the methodical battle. The stress on the importance of firepower and the methodical battle remained the same when the new Field Service Regulations appeared in 1936. See Doughty, *The Breaking Point*, 27-29. Moreover, the 1921 regulations, while not abandoning the offensive, had already tilted towards the defense, and this also did not change when the new Field Service Regulation came out (though the defensive trend did become noticeably more pronounced). See Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster*, 9-11. French strategy towards Germany did change; French war plans were offensive till the late 1920's and became defensive after that. However, this reflected the changing French perception of the balance of

Though both Legro and Kier use organizational culture as the independent variable, there are important differences in the way they conceive of organizational culture and its effects. Legro sees culture as directly "causing" behavior -- culture is ". . . a pattern of beliefs prescribing action."⁷⁹ Thus IBM's culture prescribed wearing white shirt and dark suit; U.S. naval culture saw battleships as the primary tools of naval war and thus prevented attention to submarine warfare; Germany's attention to continental, land war prevented the *Luftwaffe* from developing a strategic bombing capability and so on.⁸⁰ Legro's approach brings a "smoking-gun" quality to culture that is refreshingly different from the usual vague characterizations of culture and its effects. On the other hand, Legro's approach to organizational culture comes close to being simply a sophisticated version of Graham Allison's Model II, the "organizational process" model. Though the culture of the organization permits it to 'see' only certain choices, culture itself appears to be identical to the organization's routines and processes.

power between France and Germany. Till, the late 1920's, France believed that it was strong enough to conduct an offensive into Germany. This perception changed as Germany became stronger, and French war plans became correspondingly defensive. See Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster* 33-36, 180.

⁷⁹Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*, 19.

⁸⁰ On IBM's culture, see *Ibid.*, p. 22, on the U.S. Navy's battleship culture, see pp. 85-87, and on the *Luftwaffe*'s land-war commitment, see pp. 110-16.

Current preferences, institutionalized as Standard Operating Procedures (SOP's), seem to point to similar future behavior.⁸¹

Moreover, it is possible that the culture itself is the consequence of other environmental factors. Thus, though the *Luftwaffe's* land-war culture prevented it from developing a strategic bombing capability, it is difficult to explain this land-war culture without reference to Germany's strategic situation.⁸² Though Legro argues that he pays sufficient attention to make sure that these cultural attributes are not the caused by international systemic factors,⁸³ in many of his cases, balance-of-power considerations appear to have determined these cultural attributes.⁸⁴

⁸¹Thus, the U.S. Navy's SOP prescribed seeking fleet battles, with battleships as the central players, and the *Luftwaffe's* SOP prescribed support for army operations, which required close-support aircraft rather than strategic bombers.

⁸²Legro does acknowledge the importance of these factors in "causing" the *Luftwaffe's* culture. Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*, 117-18.

⁸³*Ibid.*, 24, fn. 68.

⁸⁴In addition to the earlier mentioned case of the *Luftwaffe*, the original restraint on strategic bombing by the RAF is also traced to balance of power factors (p. 125), and RAF's escalation in strategic bombing was at least partly the consequence of the pressure that the Fighter Command was under during the Battle of Britain (which was relieved by the *Luftwaffe's* turn to strategic bombing in response to the RAF's escalation) rather than by cultural factors. Admittedly, the restraint showed by all the powers in chemical warfare is difficult to explain in terms of balance-of-power, though even here, there are

Kier approaches culture differently, seeing it more as a set of codes that enable or constrain preferences and behavior rather than directly prescribe these choices.⁸⁵ French Army culture did not directly dictate a defensive doctrine, but it 'saw' short-term conscripts as being capable only of defensive operations. Thus culture worked its effects indirectly. There are two weaknesses to this conception: if all outcomes can be traced to cultural codes, such explanations might be spurious, because variations in behavior is at least partly determined by environmental factors.⁸⁶ For example, changes in French military doctrines could not have taken place without the changes in the environment, the term of conscription. Another problem is that of instrumentality. Cultural symbols can be manipulated: as David Laitin argues, to say ". . . that businessmen . . . attribute poverty to the actions of the poor smacks of self-interest rather than culture."⁸⁷ Similarly, to argue that the French Army

indications that Britain did consider using chemical weapons, if Germany had invaded late 1940, and in response to German V-rocket assaults in 1944. Ibid., 158-77.

⁸⁵This is similar to the views of Aaron Wildavsky, "Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions: A Cultural Theory of Preference Formation," *American Political Science Review*, 81:1 (March 1987): 3-21. See also Ann Swidler, "Culture in Action: Symbols and Strategies," *American Sociological Review*, 51 (April 1986): 273-86.

⁸⁶Legro, 25, especially, fn. 72.

⁸⁷David Laitin, "Political Culture and Political

fought against the reduction of the term of conscription to one year because they wanted an offensive doctrine ignores what else might have motivated their opposition to the one year term (especially since the French Army had already given defense prominence over the offense).⁸⁸

A more fundamental issue in any approach that uses culture as an explanatory variable is that of the power of cultural explanations.⁸⁹ Scholars using cultural explanations have not resolved whether all behavior has to be seen as culturally determined or if some behavior can be acultural (or rational).⁹⁰ Scholars favoring the former

Preference," *American Political Science Review*, 82:2 (June 1988): 590. This also corresponds to the views of what Johnston characterizes as the second generation strategic culture theorists, who argued that strategic culture is manipulated by political elites. Johnston, "Thinking About Strategic Culture," 39.

⁸⁸For example, one of the major considerations of the French military leadership was the size of the Army. This was one reason for their reluctance to accept the one-year term, because a one-year term would reduce the size of the army. In fact, the term of service was increased in 1935, precisely because of the concern over the size of the Army. Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster*, 20-22. On some of the other demands of the French military leadership, see Richard D. Challener, *The French Theory of the Nation in Arms 1866-1939* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1965): 170.

⁸⁹As opposed to the use of culture as a descriptive tool, as Clifford Geertz does with his argument for "thick description." See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973).

⁹⁰See, for example, Anne Mayhew, "Culture: Core Concept Under Attack," *Journal of Economic Issues* 21:2 (June 1987): 587-603; Marc M. Tool, "Culture Versus Social Value? A Response to Anne Mayhew," *Journal of Economic Issues* 24:4 (December 1990): 1122-33; Wildavsky, "Choosing Preferences by Constructing Institutions"; Laitin, "Political Culture and Political Preferences."

position argue that pan-cultural rationality, or what Anne Mayhew calls Elemental Human Strategy, simply disguises value judgments: it is impossible to determine what is rational outside of the cultural context.⁹¹ Proponents of the latter position argue not only that some pan-cultural explanations are possible, but that no student of culture can truly be value-free.⁹² This debate is not entirely about values: to accept pan-cultural rationality is also to accept the universality of acultural structural theories. Neither Kier nor Legro take any position on this larger debate, but both argue that organizational interests and rationality can only be understood from within the logic of the military organization's culture, which suggest that they support the latter position.⁹³

Doctrinal Expectations of the Organizational Culture Perspective

What should the organizational culture perspective lead us to expect about military doctrinal preferences? More specifically, how would this perspective explain the persistent use of clearly inappropriate military doctrines,

⁹¹Mayhew, "Culture: Core Concept Under Attack," 589-91.

⁹²Tool, "Culture Versus Social Values?" 1123, 1127-30.

⁹³Kier, *Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines*, 29. Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*, 21.

as in the case of conventional armies using positional war-oriented counterinsurgency doctrines to fight guerrilla wars? An initial and very general hypothesis can be drawn to suggest that military doctrines will have to fit the organizational culture of the military organization. However, this can become tautological, because the organizational culture itself could have been determined by other environmental factors. For example, if a "conventional war culture" is found within the Indian army, it would be difficult to determine whether such a culture came about as a consequence of dominant conventional threats (for example, from Pakistan or China), or whether the prior existence of such a conventional war culture (for example, left over from the colonial-era British Indian Army) determined that conventional threats would be considered paramount. Additionally, starting with a given doctrine and seeking some source for it in the organization's culture would almost certainly lead to finding some cultural source, if the search is motivated enough. This would not necessarily indicate that culture determined the doctrine.⁹⁴

Thus, this broad hypothesis will have to be supplemented with narrower ones. One such modified hypothesis could follow the pattern outlined by Legro, in

⁹⁴However, such search can be useful in identifying possible cultural sources that can be examined more thoroughly.

which culture directly prescribes behavior. Culture, under such a hypothesis, must prescribe a pattern of behavior which shaped military doctrine. Indian military culture should be expected to prescribe conventional, high-intensity war as the most likely form of combat. Legro suggests that this approach is more useful in explaining continuity than change; therefore, it should be particularly well-suited to explaining the inflexibility of conventional military forces to the needs of counterinsurgency warfare.

Similarly narrow hypotheses can be drawn on the basis of the alternate view of organizational cultural effects presented by Kier. Some elements of the Indian Army's culture must oppose the counterinsurgency war, either directly or indirectly. Without a closer study of the culture, more specific hypothesis cannot be generated. However, it is possible to speculate about some elements of opposition to counterinsurgency operations within the Indian army's culture. One might be the high value and pride that the Indian Army attaches to its non-involvement in domestic politics. This is indicated by the generally negative view that is attached to Army officers who are seen as 'political.'⁹⁵ This opposition to political

⁹⁵The well-publicized antagonism among senior officers toward the politically well-connected Lieutenant General Brij Mohan Kaul in the early 1960's is one example of this. On Kaul's political connections and the resentment toward him within the officer corps, see Neville

involvement might partly dictate the reluctance of the Army to engage in frequent 'aid-to-the-civil' operations, as counterinsurgency operations are called in India. In addition, the army also sees its primary purpose as defending India from external threats. This might also explain its reluctance to engage in domestic counterinsurgency operations. Explaining doctrinal preferences of the Indian Army, especially with the narrowed definition of doctrine that I have suggested, should therefore be easy for the organizational culture approach. The above hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

- i. The army's culture, which specifies conventional, high-intensity war as the mode of future war, leads to the positional-war bias in the army's counterinsurgency doctrine;
- ii. Elements of the organizational culture of the army must resist development of appropriate counterinsurgency doctrines.

Studying the Indian Army's Culture: Methodology

The task of studying cultures is difficult, but I follow the path laid down by Kier, Legro, and others.⁹⁶ I examine the artifacts of culture such as writings by members of the military, both official writings (where available) as well as their memoirs. I supplement these

Maxwell, *India's China War*, (N.Y.: Pantheon Books, 1970), 185-91.

⁹⁶See also, Karen O. Dunivin, "Military Culture: Change and Continuity," *Armed Forces and Society* 20:4 (Summer 1994): 531-47

with interviews with Indian military officers. Previous works on military organizational culture have primarily focused on the official record; this is difficult to do in the Indian case because of the general secrecy surrounding defense related matters in India. I therefore depend primarily on publicly available writings, such as articles written by army officers, unit histories and dissertations written by officers in military schools.

Neorealism and Military Doctrine

The realist approach to international politics focus attention on the importance of power in the relations between states. Realists believe, as Robert Gilpin writes, that ". . . the final arbiter of things political is power."⁹⁷ The absence of a sovereign to provide order and arbitrate disputes forces states to rely on themselves, the logic that Waltz refers to as "self-help." This compels states to build up their own power, worry about the power of other states and define their interests in terms of power. Though this pursuit of power can sometimes become an end in itself, it is mainly caused by the insecurity of states, condemned to existence in an anarchic international

⁹⁷Robert Gilpin, "The Richness of the Tradition of Political Realism," in Robert O. Keohane, ed. *Neorealism and Its Critics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986): 304.

order.⁹⁸ However, attempts to increase one's own power can threaten other states, who are forced to keep pace, thus reducing security all around. This security dilemma is an enduring characteristic of the anarchic international order. Arms races, shifting alliances, and war are the consequences of this security dilemma.

Though all realists see the anarchic nature of the international political order as the most important permissive cause of the security dilemma and war, many realists also count human nature as an important variable in explaining the pursuit of power by states. A few, variously described as neorealists or structural realists, focus on the influence of the international system as an intervening variable in explaining international politics and the behavior of states. While not denying the existence or influence of human nature as a factor in international politics, they nevertheless see human nature as an unnecessary ingredient in explaining international politics. The most comprehensive and rigorous statement of this brand of Realism is provided by Kenneth Waltz in his *Theory of International Politics*.⁹⁹ In developing hypotheses about neorealist explanations of military doctrine, I draw exclusively on Waltz's perspective.

⁹⁸Kenneth Waltz, "The Origins of War in Neorealist Theory," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 18 (Spring 1988): 615-28.

⁹⁹Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

Waltz's Neorealism: The Problem of Indeterminacy

Though Waltz's theory is very rigorous, there are two fundamental drawbacks to his approach which present problems for generating hypotheses and testing theory. The first, and most basic, is that Waltz's theory is very indeterminate, as Waltz himself points out. Waltz focuses on the effect of the structure of the international system on the behavior of states and on international outcomes. Structures, Waltz argues, work their effects indirectly and indeterminately:

Structures limit and mold agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality of outcomes even though the efforts and aims of the agencies vary. Structures do not work their effects directly. Structures do not act as agents and agencies do . . . *In itself a structure does not directly lead to one outcome rather than another.*¹⁰⁰

Waltz's explication of the balance of power theory includes similar disclaimers about the determinacy of the theory:

Though balance-of-power theory offers some predictions, the predictions are indeterminate. Because only a loosely defined and inconstant condition of balance is predicted, it is difficult to say that any given distribution of power falsifies the theory . . . Because the theory does not give precise answers, falsification . . . is difficult.¹⁰¹

In addition to the general indeterminacy of his

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 74. Emphasis Added.

¹⁰¹Ibid., 124.

systemic theory, a second difficulty is that theory does not seek to explain foreign policy. Waltz focuses on international outcomes and the constraints in the international system that states have to deal with, rather than explain or predict the behavior of states. A theory of international politics Waltz argues, "bears on the foreign policies of nations while claiming to explain only certain aspects of them. It can tell us what international conditions national policies have to cope with. To think that a theory of international politics can in itself say how the coping is likely to be done is the opposite of the reductionist error."¹⁰² Writing about the balance of power theory, Waltz elaborates on the inadequacy of the theory in explaining state behavior:

Balance-of-power theory is a theory about the results produced by the uncoordinated actions of states. A theory makes assumptions about the interests and motives of states, rather than explaining them. What it does explain are the constraints that confine all states. The clear perception of constraints provides many clues to the expected reactions of states, but by itself the theory cannot explain these reactions. The theory explains why a certain similarity of behavior is expected from similarly situated states. The expected behavior is similar, not identical.¹⁰³

For Waltz, the only way to explain the behavior of a state is by adding a theory of the state, which will look

¹⁰²Ibid., 72.

¹⁰³Ibid., 122.

at domestic factors, to his systemic theory. The task he sets out to do, however, is to explain the systemic influences on international outcomes and state behavior, not specific international outcomes or state behavior. Thus, for Waltz, these inadequacies in determinacy are unimportant.

Applying Waltz: The Continuing Indeterminacy Problem

This is however a problem for those who seek to use Waltz's perspective to explain particular international outcomes or state behavior, and there have been several such attempts, including those by Barry Posen, by Jack Snyder and Thomas Christensen, and by Stephen Walt.¹⁰⁴ Posen attempts to explain the military doctrines of European great powers during the interwar years and Snyder and Christensen build on some of the insights provided by Posen. Walt's attempt has significantly improved balance of power theory. Yet, these efforts have failed in overcoming the difficulties that Waltz envisaged in using his systemic approach as a theory of foreign policy, and suggest another, more limited way of using Waltz's approach to explain state behavior.

¹⁰⁴Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrines*; Jack Snyder and Thomas Christensen, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks: Predicting Alliance Patterns in Multipolarity," *International Organization* 44:2 (Spring 1990): 137-68; Stephen M. Walt, *The Origins of Alliances*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987).

Posen draws on Waltz's systemic approach, but in framing hypotheses about the realist perspective on military doctrine, he admits to moving away from structural realism to the classical, prescriptive view of realism, or *realpolitik*.¹⁰⁵ Posen's solution to the indeterminacy problem in Waltz's theory is to add greater detail and additional assumptions. Instead of Waltz's general assumption about state behavior -- that at the least they seek survival and at the most universal domination¹⁰⁶ -- Posen attempts to specify both the international circumstances facing particular states and the motives that drive the state. Because such internal and external conditions can vary widely, Posen is forced to draw thirteen different hypotheses, corresponding to a variety of state circumstances. Thus, offensive doctrines are favored by expansionist powers, states fearing high collateral damage, states "suffering (power) erosion," states facing multiple adversaries, states geographically encircled, states without allies, and states with far-flung dependencies. States with dependencies might also accept deterrent doctrines, as would small states. *Status-quo* states will generally prefer defensive doctrines.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Note that my definition of doctrine differs from Posen's. His typology of doctrines is mostly a typology of strategies.

¹⁰⁶Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 118.

¹⁰⁷Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrines*, 67-79.

However, even with this high level of specification of state circumstances, many hypotheses are still indeterminate. As Posen points out, states in alliances might prefer either defensive or offensive doctrines. *Status-quo* states might opt for offensive, deterrent or defensive doctrines. Small states could opt for either deterrent or offensive doctrines. In short, despite specifying the international circumstances of states, it is still not possible to determine doctrinal preferences.

On the other hand, this eliminates one of the greatest advantages of Waltz's theory: its parsimony. This is not to suggest that parsimony is the sole criterion of a good theory. As Keohane suggests, it is well worth sacrificing a little parsimony if such sacrifice improves the explanatory power of the theory.¹⁰⁸ Unfortunately, Posen sacrifices parsimony without gaining much in explanatory power. The sensitivity that Posen displays in his analysis clearly indicates his awareness of the problem. Posen's failure only reaffirms Waltz's conviction that structural realism provides few determinate predictions about state behavior.

Could it be that Posen's attempt to include additional variables to Waltz's theory to make it more

¹⁰⁸Robert O. Keohane, "Theory of World Politics: Structural Realism and Beyond," in Robert O. Keohane, ed. *Neorealism and Its Critics*, 188.

determinate did not go far enough? Could the addition of more factors, the specifying of more conditions, make Waltz's theory more determinate? Jack Snyder and Thomas Christensen attempt to do just this. Waltz had suggested, consistent with his argument about the indeterminacy of his structural theory, that in a multipolar world, states might choose to either "chaingang" themselves to reckless allies, or do exactly the opposite, pass the cost of balancing to others ("buckpassing"). Posen had suggested, in trying to explain these contradictory tendencies, that perceptions of offensive or defensive military advantages might explain the variations. Perceptions of offensive advantages led to chainganging tendencies before 1914, while perceptions of defensive advantages led to buckpassing tendencies before the Second World War. Snyder and Christensen add to this Robert Jervis's hypothesis that offensive technological or geographical advantages lead to more intense security dilemmas, and defensive advantages lead to lesser security dilemmas. In addition, they explain the mistaken perceptions of the offense-defense balance by reference to the formative experiences of each generation. Thus, where Waltz would argue that no determinate predictions could be made on the basis of his structural theory about balancing or bandwagoning tendencies of states in a multipolar world, Snyder and Christensen would argue that such determination can be made if we know the formative experiences of

leaders, if we know the pattern of civil-military relations, as well as the geographical and technological factors that determine the offense-defense balance. However, the inclusion of these additional variables does not help in increasing determinacy. Snyder and Christensen admit that explaining the stability of the 1880's requires the use of more variables, such as Bismarck's diplomatic skills.¹⁰⁹

Yet another attempt to solve the determinacy problem is undertaken by Stephen Walt. Walt's attempt alters and improves existing balance of power theory by focusing on the perception of threat rather than the international power balance. Though Waltz's theory expects states to balance in general against threats in the international system, it is not clear from his theory how states determine threats and which threats they will balance against. Though military power is in general the greatest source of threat, it cannot be concluded that states will define threats on the basis of the balance of power alone. Walt suggests that states will attempt to balance against the greatest threat in the international system, and outlines four factors that determine such perceptions of threat: aggregate power, geographic proximity, offensive power and aggressive intention.¹¹⁰ This modification of

¹⁰⁹Snyder and Christensen, "Chain Gangs and Passed Bucks," 167.

¹¹⁰Walt, *Origins of Alliances*, 21-26.

traditional balance of power theory acknowledges the problem of indeterminacy of the old theory but like other attempts examined above does not solve it. "Aggressive intentions" and even "offensive power" cannot be determined objectively. Cuba is considered a greater threat by the United States than by its smaller Caribbean neighbors. These different perceptions of the threat Cuba poses have to be taken as given; they cannot be determined *a priori*.¹¹¹ The problem of indeterminacy, of course, is not limited to simple determination of threat; it also presents itself in determining how to meet the threat.

Clearly, the problem with developing determinate predictions from Waltz's systemic theory is not the result of the parsimony of Waltz's theory, which is how Posen and others have viewed it. If indeterminacy were a consequence of the parsimony of Waltz's theory, then additional or maybe even different factors, could help in making the theory more determinate. This error, the assumption that indeterminacy is the result of parsimony, results from the belief that the international system "teaches" states to behave in particular manner, that the international system provides incentives for one type of behavior rather than another. In particular, there is a tendency among realists to argue that balancing behavior is more common than

¹¹¹I have benefited from discussions with Himadeep Muppidi on this point, who also suggested this example.

bandwagoning behavior. As Fareed Zakaria argues, "defensive realists" like Posen, Walt and Snyder mistake the effects of the international system on the states with the lessons they believe states *should* learn from the operation of the international system.¹¹² Waltz suggests that through socialization and competitive selection, the range of outcomes and behavior is reduced within the international system.¹¹³ Waltz explicitly discounts that the international system teaches states any particular behavior.¹¹⁴ As Zakaria points out, to say that socialization and competition makes states more alike does not mean that the system teaches states wisdom.¹¹⁵

The Use of Incentives and Constraints in Walt's Neorealism

The belief that the international system provides incentives for one type of behavior rather than another follows from a mistaken readings of the effects of the

¹¹²Fareed Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics: A Review Essay," review of *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition*, by Jack Snyder in *International Security* 17:1 (Summer 1992): 195. The term "defensive realism" is used by Jack Snyder in *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and International Ambition* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 10-13. See also John Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," *International Security* 19:3 (Winter 1994-95): 11-12 on the differences between defensive realism and offensive realism. Mearsheimer classifies Waltz also as a defensive realist.

¹¹³Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 74-77.

¹¹⁴*Ibid.*, 74.

¹¹⁵Zakaria, "Realism and Domestic Politics," 193.

international system in Waltz's approach. Waltz sees the international system encouraging certain behaviors and discouraging others. Defensive realists focus on the first part, the incentives provided by the international system. A misreading of Waltz is probably responsible for this, though, admittedly, Waltz himself is not very clear on this point. In writing about the effect of the international system on the units, he sometimes talks about the system as a constraining force:

If the same effects follow from different causes, then constraints must be operating on the independent variables in ways that affect outcomes. One cannot incorporate the constraints by treating them as one or more of the independent variables with all of them at the same level, because constraints may operate on all of the independent variables and because they do so in different ways as systems change. (p. 68)

Structure designates a set of constraining conditions. (p. 73)

Structure explain why methods (of *Realpolitik*) are repeatedly used despite differences in the persons and states who use them. (p. 117)

To the extent that dynamics of a system limit the freedom of its units, their behavior and the outcomes of their behavior become predictable. (p. 72)

At other times he suggests that the international system encourages particular kinds of behavior:

Systems theories are . . . theories that explain how the organization of a realm acts as a constraining and disposing force on the interacting units within it. (p. 72)

Structures limit and mold agents and agencies and point them in ways that tend toward a common quality

of outcomes (p. 74)

Structures select by rewarding some behaviors and punishing others (p. 74)

It is more likely that Waltz sees constraints and incentives as two sides of the same coin; through constraints, the system disposes states toward some choices. Whatever Waltz intended, scholars who have used Waltz's theory have seen the international system more as encouraging certain behavior rather than as constraining state behavior.

A more appropriate way to think of the effect of the international system on states might be to see it as a set of constraints that limits the choices that states have. States behave as they do because they have few other viable choices, given their international circumstance. Examples of such constraints in operation can illustrate this point. One example can be American and Soviet Third World policies during the cold war years. There is a striking similarity in what Waltz calls American and Soviet "overreactions" in various parts of the third world.¹¹⁶ "Defensive Realists," believing that American overreactions were unnecessary because any Soviet expansion would create opposing balances even without American involvement, called for "finite containment."¹¹⁷ They argued that the United States was

¹¹⁶Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 170-73.

¹¹⁷Stephen Walt, "The Case for Finite Containment:

mistaken in assigning value to distant conflicts in the Third World. This assumes that the United States -- and the Soviet Union -- had a choice about being involved in these conflicts; they were involved in these conflicts precisely *because* they did not have any choice in the matter. Through leadership changes in both countries, through the cold war, détente, and the new cold war, through direct and indirect involvement, American and Soviet Third World policies step-danced with each other. Both sides also recognized the costs of such involvement, and tried to reduce them to no avail. Though specific strategies adopted by the two powers changed, the international systemic constraints prevented any change in their in their fundamental commitment to their Third World allies. Not surprisingly, the collapse of the Soviet Union, a change in the structure of the international system, also removed the Third World as a source of conflict between the United States and the Soviet Union.

Sometimes the effect of such constraints can be reflected in more specific policy choices. Posen points

Analyzing U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 14:1 (Summer 1989): 5-49. Walt made this argument first in *The Origins of Alliances*, 282. Barry Posen and Stephen Van Evera makes a similar argument in "Reagan Administration Defense Policy: Departure From Containment," in Kenneth Oye, Robert J. Lieber and Donald Rothchild, eds., *Eagle Resurgent? The Reagan Era in American Foreign Policy* (Boston, MA.: Little, Brown and Company, 1987), 94-97. See also, Michael C. Desch, "The Keys That Lock Up the World: Identifying American Interests in the Periphery," *International Security* 14:1 (Summer 1989): 86-121.

out that one of the factors that prevented the French Army from changing its military doctrine before the Second World War was the fear that such change could not be completed while the threat of war remained high. War might break out before the transition to a new doctrine could be made, leaving the army unable to fight at all.¹¹⁸ Armies in the midst of organizational and doctrinal changes are highly vulnerable to attack.¹¹⁹ Thus the expectation of war prevented France from changing its stagnant military doctrine.¹²⁰ The international system determined behavior in this case not by providing incentives for one doctrine rather than another, but by eliminating the possibility of changing an inadequate doctrine.

On the other hand, such a constraint based view explains very little about the specifics of state behavior. For example, states facing international threats are

¹¹⁸Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrine*, 132-33.

¹¹⁹*Ibid.*, 30-31.

¹²⁰Obviously, a much closer study would be required to determine the validity of this thesis. French doctrine had been stagnant for most of the interwar years. Thus it is possible that France would not have changed its doctrine, even if there was no immediate threat of a German attack. On the other hand, French military strategy did undergo dramatic change, entirely out of character with its strategy of the previous two decades, when war broke out in 1940 (as indicated by the Breda variant of Plan Dyle). French strategy had been as stagnant during the interwar years as French doctrine was. This suggests that innovation and change was neither foreign to the French Army nor entirely determined by the experience of the interwar years.

expected to balance against this threat. This says little about how states will balance, given the policy choices they have in attempting to balance. States could attempt to balance threats with their own resources (internal balancing) or seek out other states that share their fear and ally with them (external balancing). The limitations of this view of the effect of the international system are clear in the examples above. American and Soviet Third World policies in general are amenable to such explanations; why the United States decided to ally with Pakistan rather than India in South Asia cannot be explained by reference to systemic forces. Similarly, the pattern of French military doctrines for most of the interwar years is left out of the above explanation. This would be a problem if Waltz's theory claimed to explain all or most of the behavior of states. Such a claim would require the theory to provide a much fuller explanation, detailing, for example, why France chose or did not choose particular military doctrines. Since it claims to explain only some aspects of state behavior, this is not a major problem.

Thus, neorealism expects state choices to be limited by international constraints. Because structural constraints have general impact, they are usually better at explaining general rather than specific policies. On the other hand, such systemic forces can, at times, also

explain specific policies. Such instances are admittedly limited; thus this approach is too indeterminate to be a general theory of foreign policy.

Doctrinal Expectations of Neorealism

What should this constraint-based neorealist perspective lead us to expect reveal about military doctrinal preferences? Specifically, how would this perspective explain the persistent use of clearly inappropriate military doctrines, as in the case of armies using counterinsurgency doctrines with a positional-war bias? An initial, general hypothesis can be proposed that military doctrines of states will be optimized to meet international threats. Note that this does not specify how the threat is determined. International threat to the state is primarily, but not solely, determined by the balance of international power. Thus a systemic theory by itself cannot specify which international threats would be considered paramount by a particular state, though in general it suggests that this will be determined by the balance of power.¹²¹ On the other hand, this broad expectation is clearly too indeterminate to draw specific conclusions about such military doctrines. This cannot tell us whether the military doctrine emphasizes initiative

¹²¹As Waltz argued, a theory of foreign policy is also required to make such determinations. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, 121-23.

and mobility, as the German doctrine did during the Second World War, or a carefully directed operation, as the French did in the same war. Such questions can be answered only by reference to the army's perspective on contemporary war, even though some idea about the probable adversary also will play a part.

On the other hand, the theory does expect states to balance against the greatest threat. Given a variety of threats, therefore, we should expect that the state is expected to focus on the most severe of these threats. This does not mean that other threats are ignored. This does mean that the more severe the perception of one primary threat, the greater the attention paid to this threat, or, to put it in theoretical terms, the greater the balancing efforts.¹²² This greater attention to the primary threat should be reflected in military doctrines, force structures, and budgets. India and Pakistan provide good examples of this dynamic in operation. Throughout the 1950's, though China was militarily the greater threat, Indian military doctrine, force structure and deployment reflected India's perception of threat from Pakistan. Most of the Indian Army was equipped for and taught to fight a

¹²²This is similar to Walt's expectation that the greater the vulnerability of the state to external threat -- in other words, the greater the perception of threat -- the greater the balancing effort. For Walt, of course, this balancing behavior is reflected in the pursuit of alliances.

war with Pakistan rather than with China. Even after the 1962 war with China, when India finally acknowledged the Chinese threat, India's primary concern remained Pakistan, and this was also reflected in military doctrines and force structure.

If the severity of threat perceptions are important, then other, narrower expectations follow: the greater the perception of one threat the more specific and narrow military doctrines should become in dealing with this threat. French military doctrine before the Second World War is a good illustration of this. The French perception of threat from Germany was so severe that its military doctrine became narrowly focused on meeting a German invasion. The French spent enormous resources on stopping a German invasion with the Maginot Line fortifications, which had little utility for any purpose other than a defensive war against Germany.¹²³ American military doctrines during the cold war years are also a good example, focusing very narrowly on defeating a Soviet invasion of western Europe, even though such a focus cost it the war in Vietnam.

The reverse, however, is not necessarily true. If the severity of the threat perception declines, it is

¹²³This does not discount the debate about whether the Maginot Line could be used for offensive purposes. However, this debate was in the context of an overall defensive war against Germany, not for an offensive war against it.

possible, but not necessary that this change would be reflected in military doctrines. Existing military doctrines might not be changed unless new threats emerge that require a different military doctrine. In the post cold war world, American military doctrine pays greater attention to new tasks such as peacekeeping, but because no new dominant threat has emerged, there has been no radical change in American military doctrines.

A further corollary to the above argument is that the greater the perception of the primary threat, the more rigid doctrines will become. Rigidity here does not refer to stagnation. Whether a doctrine will be stagnant or innovative will be difficult to determine on the basis of systemic theories. Rigidity here suggests that military doctrines will become intolerant of other doctrinal requirements. Given one primary threat, states will attempt to meet other threats with the existing military doctrine, even if they are ineffective, rather than change existing military doctrines. This is not a problem, of course, if other threats can be met with existing doctrines. American military doctrine, designed to deal with a Soviet invasion of western Europe, dealt successfully with Iraq in the Gulf war. However, new threats sometimes cannot be met with existing doctrines. American military doctrines were incapable of defeating the Viet Cong in the counterinsurgency war in Vietnam, despite

vast superiority in material capability. This ineffectiveness did not lead to changes in American military doctrines. As long as the Soviet Army remained the primary threat, and as long as conventional, high-intensity war in central Europe remained the main mission, American military doctrines could not be changed to deal with the needs of counterinsurgency warfare. Israel, similarly, with an enormously effective military capability against its Arab adversaries, remains incapable of dealing with the Islamic guerrillas in southern Lebanon. In both these cases, as well as in other similar cases, the necessary doctrinal changes needed to deal with secondary threats were not made because they would have interfered with the capacity to deal with the primary threat. A different military doctrine might have made the United States Army more effective in Vietnam, but it might also have made it less effective in the central European theater against the Soviet Army.

This suggests that doctrinal innovations are partly determined by international-structural factors. Lack of required doctrinal innovation might very well be the result of bureaucratic forces, or of the lack of civilian attention to doctrinal needs, as Posen suggests, or of the lack of a new "theory of war" as Rosen suggests. The hypothesis suggested by systemic theory does not necessarily contradict these, but it does suggest that

doctrinal innovations will have to be consistent with systemic demands. An innovation consistent with international-structural requirements might still fail for other reasons, but no innovation inconsistent with this requirements will succeed. This should be expected to limit innovations in counterinsurgency doctrines: counterinsurgency doctrines will have a positional-war bias not because of any general resistance to change, but because of resistance to particular kinds of change. Systemic forces should not be expected to explain why one doctrine is chosen over another, if both are designed to deal with the primary threat. It should be able to explain why one military doctrine is chosen over another, if only one is consistent with systemic requirements. These hypotheses can be summarized as follows:

- i. The positional-war bias in counterinsurgency doctrine is caused by external threats.;
- ii. External positional-war threats prevented the army from making innovations to its counterinsurgency doctrine that threatened the positional-war requirements of the army.

Studying International-Structural Effects: The Methodology

Examining these hypotheses in the Indian case requires first determining what threats India considered paramount, and looking at the influence of such threat perceptions on army doctrine. The hypotheses also suggests that innovation in military doctrines, if it did take place, would have focused on the primary threat, which can

be tested by examining which doctrinal innovations were successful and which were not. My redefinition of both military doctrines and the expectations of Realism should make the task of Realism both harder and easier. The task for Realism should be harder because doctrine, as I have defined it is largely conditioned by the prevailing view of war, technology and other non-systemic factors. Of course, systemic factors also influence doctrines, but only indirectly. Systemic factors are not expected to dictate doctrinal choices, only to limit them. On the other hand, this reduces the explanatory expectations of Realism, which makes the task of Realism easier. In the case of Indian Army doctrines, it is not required to explain the particulars of offensiveness or defensiveness of the doctrine. It is only required to explain the general type of doctrine. This, it should be able to accomplish.

Summary

In this chapter, I have argued that military doctrines should be defined narrowly and should exclude components of military strategy. In addition, I have explained anomalous outcomes as the consequences of inappropriate doctrines and explained these inappropriate doctrinal preferences from the perspective of two major theoretical approaches. The following chapters will be devoted to determining if these explanations are valid.

CHAPTER THREE

TAMING THE TIGERS: THE IPKF IN SRI LANKA

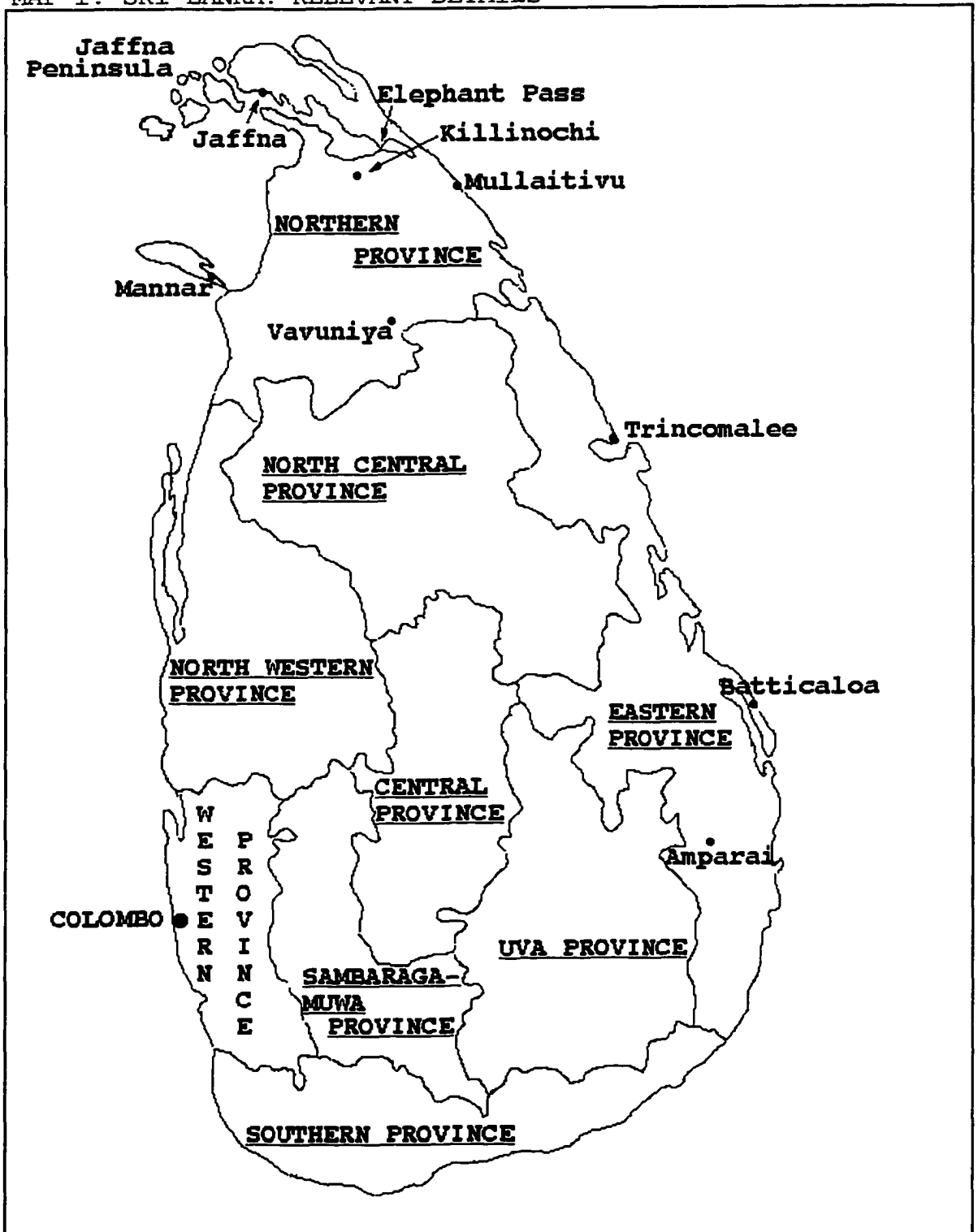
In chapter 2, I argued that the counterinsurgency doctrines of many regular armies have a positional-war bias. In this chapter, I argue that such a positional-war bias in the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine was responsible for the army's failure to defeat the Tamil guerrillas of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). The IPKF's failure, of course, was only one of the reasons for the failure of Indian policy in Sri Lanka. Other factors, including domestic political changes in both India and Sri Lanka, are important factors that are not considered here. They are not considered here because the focus of this study is on why the Indian army failed in its military tasks, which was only one part of the overall failure of Indian policy.

The war between the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) and the LTTE proceeded in two phases. The first phase involved a conventional war for the city of Jaffna. Jaffna was the center of the LTTE's military and political power, and thus a prize target for the IPKF. The IPKF made serious strategic and tactical blunders in its assault on Jaffna, mistakes that should have cost it victory. On the

other hand, the LTTE's military performance was close to perfect. Still, the LTTE lost the battle for Jaffna. The IPKF's eventual victory was an expensive one, but it was a victory nonetheless. The IPKF's victory shows how mistaken the common assumption is that highly motivated guerrilla forces will always defeat conventional forces. The LTTE lost the battle for Jaffna because it adopted the wrong doctrine: positional warfare against a far larger and better endowed force is suicidal, even for a highly motivated guerilla force.

In the second phase, the LTTE changed its military doctrine to guerilla warfare, and contented itself with hit and run attacks, never holding fixed positions, retreating from even their most elaborate and important bases when attacked by Indian forces. The IPKF's doctrine also changed to adapt to the conditions of guerilla war, but this change was superficial: the IPKF changed the types of military operations it conducted but not the manner in which it was conducting them. Indian counterinsurgency doctrine still revealed a positional-war bias in its stress on large-scale military operations and control over territory. In fact, every major weakness demonstrated by the Indian forces in fighting the LTTE guerillas can be traced to the Indian army's emphasis on conventional war and its preparations for such a war. This positional-war bias was the primary reason for the IPKF's failure to

MAP 1: SRI LANKA: RELEVANT DETAILS



Map by author/Boundaries approximate/Not to scale

defeat the LTTE in the second phase of the war.

The first section of this chapter provides the background to the deployment of the IPKF. The second and third sections detail the two phases of the war and the military strategy and doctrine of the opposing sides. In the concluding section, I argue that the IPKF failed to win the guerrilla phase of the war because of the positional-war bias in its counterinsurgency doctrine.

The Background to the Deployment of the IPKF

By 1986, most of the Jaffna peninsula in the Northern province was effectively under control by the LTTE.¹ Though various rebel groups had vied for leadership of the military struggle, the LTTE had gained clear supremacy, especially in the Jaffna peninsula.² In addition to

¹The Northern and Eastern provinces were the focus of the Tamil rebellion. The Tamils constituted 96 percent of the population in the Northern province. In the Eastern province, the Tamils only constituted 42 percent of the population, with Muslims comprising 32 percent and Sinhalas making up 25 percent of the population. One of the main Tamil demands was for the merger of the Northern and Eastern provinces, which would have given the Tamils a 70 percent majority in the combined province. Not surprisingly, the Muslims and Sinhalas of the Eastern province objected to such a merger. See Shelton V. Kodikara, "The Continuing Crisis in Sri Lanka: The JVP, the Indian Troops and Tamil Politics," *Asian Survey* 29:7 (July 1989): 716-24.

² The other groups which had, at one time or another, fielded forces in Jaffna included the Tamil Eelam Liberation Organization (TELO), which was destroyed by the Tigers in the summer of 1986, and the Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Force (EPRLF), which was destroyed by the Tigers in December 1986. On the politics between these groups, see Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "The Tamil

defeating the other Tamil groups, the Tigers also successfully defended the Jaffna peninsula against the Sri Lankan Army (SLA). Operation Short Shrift, launched by the SLA in May 1986 to recapture the Jaffna peninsula from the Tigers, had ground to a halt weeks later after little success.

The situation, however, was somewhat different in the Eastern province. Neither the Tigers nor other Tamil groups had as much success in building strong military forces there, given its far more complicated ethnic mix. Thus, though the LTTE was probably the most powerful guerilla force in the Eastern province, the other groups, especially the EPRLF, continued to field capable military forces.

In January 1987, the Tigers announced plans for establishing a separate Tamil administration in Jaffna, a move widely seen as a stepping-stone to a declaration of independence. The Sri Lankan government responded by placing an embargo on fuel supplies to the Jaffna peninsula. In addition, it began preparations for yet another military assault, preparations which included the strengthening of various army camps and bases, and the

Militants: Before the Accord and After," *Pacific Affairs* 61:4 (Winter 1988-89): 603-619. An account of the Tigers' rise to dominance and of their brutality toward other groups is provided in M.R. Narayanan Swamy, *The Tigers of Lanka: From Boys to Guerillas* (New Delhi: Konark Publishers, 1994). See also Edgar O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka, 1973-88* (London: Brassey's, 1989), 61-62, 67, 77.

launching of some preliminary probes into Tamil controlled areas.³ There was also much open talk in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, about a major offensive in the Jaffna Peninsula.⁴ This offensive, called Operation Liberation, began in May.

The Indian army began contingency planning for an intervention in Sri Lanka sometime in April 1987.⁵ It is reasonable to assume that this was prompted by the SLA's very visible preparation for Operation Liberation. Initially, this planning was confined to the Army headquarters in New Delhi but around the time the SLA launched Operation Liberation, the Indian army's Southern Command in Pune was brought into the contingency planning process by army headquarters.⁶ The Indian government had several causes for worry in the deteriorating situation in Sri Lanka.⁷ There was fear that the Sri Lankan government

³By late 1985, SLA presence in the Northern and Eastern provinces was confined mainly to its military bases and camps, of which there were eleven in the Jaffna peninsula and forty-nine in the Eastern province. O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 51-52, 58.

⁴O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 79.

⁵Rajesh Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco: Peace Keepers at War* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1990), 17-19. See also, Depinder Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi: Trishul Publications, 1992), 33. Lieutenant General Depinder Singh was the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) of Southern Command at this time and subsequently headed the IPKF mission to Sri Lanka.

⁶Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 33.

would seek a military solution to the ethnic conflict, which would have created serious political problems for the Indian government among its own Tamils, in addition to the inevitable refugee problems. Such fears grew when the Sri Lankan government publicly called Operation Liberation 'a fight to the finish.'⁸ In addition, Sri Lankan attempts to seek external military assistance, especially from countries such as the United States, Israel and Pakistan, was considered a direct threat to Indian security.⁹ There was also some fear of a military coup in Sri Lanka, led by factions in the military opposed to any compromise with the

⁷Many of these concerns are set out in Jyotindranath Nath Dixit, "The IPKF in Sri Lanka," *USI Journal* 119 (July-September 1989): 248-62. Dixit was then the Indian High Commissioner in Sri Lanka.

⁸Rohan Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka: The Role of Indian Intelligence Agencies* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: South Asian Network on Conflict Research, 1993), 176.

⁹The Indian government was sufficiently concerned about others' foreign military presence in Sri Lanka to seek an explicit and written commitment from the Sri Lankan government on this issue. This commitment, though made as part of the overall understanding between India and Sri Lanka, was not part of the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement (ISLA), but was set out in an exchange of letters between Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi and Sri Lankan President J. R. Jayewardane. See External Publicity Division, Ministry of External Affairs, *The Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement* (New Delhi: Ministry of External Affairs, n.d.). The text of the ISLA and the letters are also reproduced in, among other places, Patricia Hyndman, *Sri Lanka: Serendipity Under Siege* (Nottingham, England: Spokesman, 1988), 139-45. See also Ralph R. Premadasa and S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: The Indo-Lanka Peace Accord," *Asian Survey* 28:6 (June 1988): 676-90 and S. D. Muni, *Pangs of Proximity: India and Sri Lanka's Ethnic Crisis* (New Delhi: Sage, 1993), 93-94.

Tamils.¹⁰ Given the wide variations in these scenarios, the Indian army prudently began preparing for all of these contingencies. None of the plans, however, foresaw the possibility of a peacekeeping or a peacemaking mission.

In early June, the head of the Southern Command, Lieutenant General Depinder Singh, was issued a Chiefs-of-Staff Committee Directive, appointing him Overall Forces Commander (OFC) of the planned operation.¹¹ Two infantry divisions, one armoured brigade and an (independent) infantry brigade group (which was the only formation in the Indian army that had any experience in amphibious landings) were earmarked for the operation. In addition, both naval forces as well as combat and transport aircraft from the Indian Air Force (IAF) were assigned to the operation.

The shape of the planned operation was still unclear. The Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement (ISLA) was several weeks away. Uncertain of the circumstances under which they would carry out the intervention, and uncertain about whom

¹⁰The fear of a military coup increased after the ISLA was signed and an Indian warship was stationed in full view of the capital to deter the Sri Lankan military. Until at least October 1987, the Indian Army appears to have considered the possibility of going to war with the SLA far greater than the possibility of fighting the Tamils. General Krishnaswamy Sunderji, interview by author, 7 August 1996, Wellington, India, written notes. Gen. Sunderji then headed the Indian Army. These concerns are also clearly evident in Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 31-32.

¹¹The details about the Indian planning that follow are from Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 33-40.

they would be fighting, the Indian army had decided on a sizable force that would be able to deal with any possible contingency, including a full-scale invasion. As Sri Lanka's Operation Liberation progressed, however, concerns about its consequences increased in New Delhi.¹² The Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) of the Cabinet Secretariat, India's external intelligence agency, reported that despite all their efforts, the LTTE would not be able to hold Jaffna against a determined SLA assault.¹³ In addition to a foreign policy disaster, Indian decision-makers also faced possible domestic repercussions if Operation Liberation succeeded: the Intelligence Bureau (IB), India's internal intelligence service, projected that four to five Army divisions would be needed to keep the peace in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu, the home of India's Tamils, if the SLA captured Jaffna. Indian Tamils took a keen interest in and were sympathetic to the Tamil minority in Sri Lanka. In fact, most of the Sri Lankan Tamil militant groups maintained bases in Tamil Nadu and took part in the politics of the state.¹⁴ Indian Tamils

¹²All the details about Indian decision-making that follow are based on my interview with Gen. Sunderji.

¹³The R&AW had consistently underestimated the military capability of the Tigers and this appears to have been another such underestimation. The Tigers did manage to slow down and eventually stop Operation Liberation. For a different account of the R&AW's assessment, see Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, 166.

were not expected to take kindly to New Delhi's inactivity in the face of a successful Sri Lankan assault on Jaffna.

Indian decision-makers faced three choices: do nothing; invade Sri Lanka and partition it to create a Tamil homeland (Eelam); or persuade the Sri Lankan government and the Tamil rebels to come to an agreement that would resolve not only Sri Lanka's problems but also those of the Rajiv Gandhi government in New Delhi. With the frightening scenario presented by the R&AW and the IB, and the domestic political compulsions, doing nothing was not considered to be an option.¹⁵ The Indian army favored and advocated the second option because it promised a militarily straightforward and relatively easy task. However, forcibly partitioning a second neighbor did not appeal to the Indian government. Thus, the third option was chosen, leading to the signing of the ISLA on July 29, 1987. Though signed between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments, the ISLA committed the Sri Lankan government to making domestic constitutional and administrative

¹⁴Some details of the involvement between Sri Lankan Tamil militants and Tamil political parties in India are narrated in Kandath Mohandas, *MGR: The Man and the Myth* (Bangalore: Panther Publishers, 1992).

¹⁵In retrospect, the first option appears to have been the best one, since the situation in Jaffna was not as serious as the R&AW had projected. On the other hand, without a permanent solution, Sri Lanka would remain a domestic political problem for the Indian government. One senior army officer stated in an interview that the main objective of the India's Sri Lanka initiative was 'to get Tamil Nadu off Rajiv Gandhi's back.'

changes to give its Tamil minority greater political power, in return for the Tamils giving up their military struggle for an independent Tamil state. Neither the Sri Lankan government nor the Tamils were happy with the terms of the agreement, but both sides acquiesced.

The Indian military mission envisaged under the ISLA was a considerably different and much more ambiguous one than the direct intervention that was the basis of the original contingency plans drawn up by army headquarters. Under the agreement reached between the the Indian and Sri Lankan governments, the Indian army was asked to provide a buffer force between the opposing sides. The SLA would be withdrawn to its camps in the Tamil areas and the Tamil rebels would surrender their arms to the Indian army. While the various constitutional and administrative provisions of the ISLA were being carried out by the Sri Lankan government, the IPKF would enforce the ceasefire and would be in charge of collecting weapons handed over by the Tamil militants and ensuring the dismantling of the the SLA camps established after May 1987.¹⁶

In response to this changed mission, the Indian army decided to deploy a much smaller force in Sri Lanka than what was originally allocated in the contingency plans. In the army's view, the IPKF mission did not warrant a larger

¹⁶Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 43-44. See also, Premadasa and Samarasinghe, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict: The Indo-Lanka Peace Accord."

force. Moreover, the Indian army did not want to deplete its reserve forces, in case they were needed to meet any of the more traditional contingencies along India's borders.¹⁷ Thus, only one division was inducted, the 54th Infantry Division, which was then based in Hyderabad. This division was being converted from an infantry division into an air assault division, and formed part of the Indian army's strategic reserves. The 36th Infantry Division and other smaller units that were also originally allocated to the Sri Lanka mission under the contingency plans were left behind in India.

Deploying the IPKF

The Indian army's mission as a peacekeeping force in Sri Lanka was doomed from the start because neither side in the conflict was especially interested in peace. The LTTE, in particular, was unwilling to give up its objective of creating a separate Tamil Eelam. Given the complexities of the ethnic conflict, it is not surprising that the ISLA unraveled. Nevertheless, the IPKF failed to anticipate or prepare for such for such a contingency.

As soon as the ISLA was signed, the IPKF was ordered to move to Sri Lanka. Within hours, an Indian Air Force (IAF) advance team landed at the Palaly air base in the Jaffna peninsula to set up a communications base. Lead

¹⁷Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 43-44.

units of the IPKF ground forces began landing almost immediately. Within a week, the entire 54th Division had been moved into Sri Lanka. The operation was far from trouble-free: the IPKF faced serious logistical difficulties because of the poor facilities that were available for landing the thousands of soldiers who were arriving in Sri Lanka. Only the port of Trincomalee, in the Eastern province and far from Jaffna, was capable of handling the heavy loads of the IPKF. The only port in the Jaffna peninsula, at Kankesanthurai, could accept only light loads.¹⁸ Though the IAF mounted an impressive airlift, its capabilities alone were insufficient to meet the huge needs of the IPKF. In addition, they were expensive.¹⁹ Thus, most of the heavy equipment, including armor, artillery and transport vehicles, was sent to Trincomalee, while troops and light equipment landed at either Palaly or Kankesanthurai. This dispersal created yet more problems, because the troops were separated from their essential equipment. In some cases, it took several weeks to bring them back together, seriously limiting the

¹⁸Lieutenant Commander J. Chandrasekharan, "Logistics in an Overseas Operation: The IPKF," (M.A. Dissertation, Defense Services Staff College, Wellington, India, 1994), 17. See also, Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 158-59

¹⁹Between July 29, 1987 and February 1989, the IAF flew over forty-five thousand transport sorties, carrying several hundred thousand IPKF troops back and forth. "An Integrated Effort," *Frontline*, 18-31 March 1989, 21.

capability of the forces that had actually landed.²⁰ Also, as a result of LTTE objections, the IPKF's heavy vehicles and equipment could not be moved from Trincomalee to Jaffna, thus hindering the mobility of the IPKF units in Palaly and Jaffna.²¹ The LTTE's objection to the IPKF's presence in Jaffna was matched by the SLA's objection to any IPKF presence in Trincomalee.²² The SLA, unhappy with the provisions of the peace agreement and suspicious of Indian intentions, tried to confine the IPKF to the Jaffna peninsula, insisting that the IPKF bring in all its forces through Kankesanthurai and Palaly. Though Indian officials eventually managed to convince the SLA of the necessity of using the port facilities at Trincomalee, the SLA demanded that all forces that did stage through Trincomalee had to be moved immediately to the Northern province. However, due to security concerns for the forces that were disembarking at Trincomalee, the IPKF insisted on deploying its own protection force in Trincomalee. Because of the strong suspicion among Indian civilian and military

²⁰Chandrasekharan, "Logistics In An Overseas Operation: The IPKF." The logistical difficulties faced by the IPKF suggests that an invasion, an option the Army favored, would have been far more troublesome than the Army anticipated.

²¹Lieutenant General K. S. Khajuria, interview by author, 27 June 1996, New Delhi, written notes. Lt. Gen. Khajuria was the Director-General of Military Intelligence (DGMI) at the time, and was also briefly assigned to the IPKF as Deputy OFC.

²²Gen. Sunderji, interview by author.

officials about the SLA's commitment to the peace agreement and the fear that the IPKF might be involved in a military conflict with the SLA, Indian officials thought it was not prudent to let the primary disembarkation point be controlled by the SLA.

The 54th Division, headed by Major General Harkirat Singh, was composed of the 46th, 76th and 91st Infantry Brigades. The division left most of its heavy equipment behind: it was also seriously under-strength, with some units having only one-half to two-thirds of their full complement.²³ Divisional headquarters was established at Palaly. The 91st Brigade was given sole responsibility for the Jaffna peninsula; the 76th Brigade was based in Trincomalee, and the 47th Brigade was given charge of the Vavuniya district, south of the Jaffna peninsula.

The political-military complexities of the IPKF mission became apparent immediately. Though welcomed by the Tamils in general, the Tigers were less than happy about the provisions of the ISLA, and the Tiger's chief Velupillai Prabhakaran made clear the LTTE's unhappiness in several public pronouncements.²⁴ It was also clear from Prabhakaran's statements that the Tigers had accepted the

²³This situation remained unchanged till the war began in early October. Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 146.

²⁴"Interview with Prabhakaran" *Frontline* 22 August- 4 September 1987, 113. See also, "Prabhakaran: We Reviewed Our Stand," *India Today* 15 August 1987, 78-79.

agreement only because they did not want to oppose India at the time.²⁵ The Tigers were surprised by the agreement, but they did not expect the the ISLA to last and were unwilling to give up their political objective of an independent Tamil Eelam. They also reluctantly began turning over their weapons, but clearly only a small fraction of their arsenal was being surrendered and these were mainly their older, cruder or inoperable weapons.²⁶ The Tigers also pursued their quest for total dominance of the Eelam struggle by continuing their assault on other militant groups, especially in the Eastern province.²⁷ The

²⁵"Interview With Prabhakaran," *Frontline*. In a major public speech in Jaffna about the ISLA, which came to be known as the 'We Love India' speech, Prabhakaran restated his opposition to the accord as well as his reason for accepting it. For a text of the speech, see, Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco*, 168-171. See also "Sri Lanka: Cautious Optimism, *India Today* 31 August 1987, 69.

²⁶India's High Commissioner to Sri Lanka, J. N. Dixit, stated in a newmagazine interview that 65% of all weapons held by the Tamil groups had been surrendered, including 85% of the heavy weapons. With the benefit of hindsight, this appears to have been an overly optimistic assessment. See "Through Tact, Persuasion," *Frontline* 5-18 September 1987, 17. The IPKF, however, appears to have been more aware of the Tamils' failure to hand over their weapons, and the OFC of the IPKF repeatedly pointed this out to the various militant groups. Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 55-56. See also O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 95.

²⁷The Tigers' viciousness towards other groups reached such heights that many militants from other groups began to surrender to the hated and feared Sri Lankan forces in order to escape the Tigers' wrath. O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 97. The IPKF attempted to mediate between these groups, sometimes successfully, as when they intervened to release thirteen members of the EPRLF who had been abducted by the LTTE. "Sri Lanka: Cautious Optimism,"

Tiger's degradations forced an expansion of the IPKF's mandate to include also maintenance of law and order.²⁸ This put the IPKF squarely in the middle of intra-Tamil squabbles, which the LTTE took advantage of, blaming the IPKF as well as the R&AW for supporting anti-LTTE Tamil groups. Effective Tiger propaganda slowly eroded general Tamil support for the IPKF, with the Tamils now blaming the IPKF for these intra-Tamil conflicts.²⁹ A fast-unto-death by the the LTTE's propaganda chief Rasaiah Parthipan, known more popularly as Thileepan, was turned into an occasion for anti-Indian and anti-IPKF propaganda, and Thileepan's death after a twelve-day fast raised tensions between the Tigers and the IPKF.³⁰ Given the general opposition to the IPKF's presence in Sri Lanka within sections of the Sri Lankan government as well as in the majority Sinhala community, the IPKF's loss of support among the Tamils by September 1987 had made the IPKF's mission an unenviable

India Today, 31 August 1987, 67-69.

²⁸Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 57.

²⁹There is little evidence that the IPKF encouraged anti-LTTE groups or supported them at this stage. Moreover, such blood-letting had been an endemic feature among the Tamil guerrilla groups, and the LTTE had been mostly the aggressor. Once the guerilla war began, the IPKF did cooperate with groups like the EPRLF against their common adversary, the LTTE.

³⁰"Return to Violence," *India Today*, 15 October 1987, 35-36; "Through Tact, Persuasion," *Frontline*, 5-18 September 1987, 12-18.

and eventually an unviable one.³¹

Despite clear evidence that the LTTE was intent on destroying the ISLA, senior IPKF officers remained unwilling to face the reality of the LTTE's intransigence. LTTE leaders, including Prabhakaran, had made clear their opposition to the ISLA on many occasions. The LTTE's anti-IPKF and anti-India propaganda blitz should have provided further evidence of the LTTE's intentions. Other warnings about the probability of war with the LTTE came from Army headquarters and Indian diplomats.³² On the ground, however, senior IPKF officers remained unconcerned, focussing more on meeting the LTTE's increasingly unreasonable demands.³³ Partly, this is explained by the

³¹A good account of the LTTE's carefully orchestrated anti-IPKF propaganda campaign is provided in Swamy, *The Tigers of Lanka*, 254-68.

³²Ambassador J.N. Dixit, interview by author, 14 August 1996, New Delhi, written notes. Also, Gen. Sunderji, interview by author. See also Muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, 126. On the other hand, the IPKF was also told that they might have to fight the SLA, in case it conducted a coup against the Jayewardene government. In fact, the latter contingency was considered at least as probable as the former.

³³The refusal to listen to Indian diplomats' warnings, in particular, might have been the consequence of the poor working relationship between Indian diplomats and soldiers in Sri Lanka. Officers of the IPKF in Sri Lanka complained about what they characterized as interference from the Indian High Commission in Colombo. Indian diplomats on the other hand felt that the IPKF was not sufficiently cooperative and did not fully understand the complexities of a mission that was as much political as it was military. Neither was shy about letting their feelings be known. Ambassador Dixit, interview by author; Gen. Sunderji, interview by author.

military balance in the Jaffna Peninsula, where the IPKF headquarter was established. The LTTE clearly dominated the Jaffna area and IPKF officers were thus forced to give greater credence to the LTTE's demands.³⁴ In addition, many IPKF commanders had great admiration for the LTTE, for their dedication to their cause, and their discipline. The LTTE also successfully built up personal relationships with IPKF officers, which partly prevented IPKF officers from seriously considering the possibility of fighting the LTTE.³⁵ Finally, the Indian government was itself following a policy of appeasing the LTTE, and this could also have prevented the IPKF from seriously considering the possibility of going to war with the LTTE.³⁶

³⁴This partiality towards the LTTE led to disputes between the IPKF and the other Tamil militant groups. See Swamy, *The Tigers of Lanka*, 257-58, 262-63.

³⁵According to Lt. Gen. Singh, he as well as Maj. Gen. Harkirat Singh and other senior officers "had become emotionally attached to the LTTE." Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 78. Lt. Gen. Singh's assessment of the lead up to the war is a good example of the feelings of senior officers. Even though written with the benefit of hindsight and even while narrating various events to illustrate the LTTE's intransigence, he still appears to have difficulty facing up to the fact of having to war against the LTTE, clearly seeing the outcome as an unfortunate one between friends. See, Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 84-88. See also, Swamy, *Tigers of Lanka*, 257-58.

³⁶For example, though the Indian government had agreed in July that all militant groups would be given representation in the 12-member Interim Administrative Council that was being set up in the Northern as well as the Eastern Provinces, it changed its mind under pressure from the LTTE. Other groups were excluded, and the LTTE

The death of Thileepan was followed by increasing anti-IPKF protests outside IPKF camps, apparently orchestrated by the LTTE.³⁷ On two occasions, such protests led to confrontations that ended with the IPKF shooting to disperse the protestors. The shootings were meant to be demonstrative, but in at least one of these incidents, outside an IPKF camp in Mannar, one demonstrator was killed.³⁸ Another protest, in Kiran in the Batticaloa district, was dispersed without any casualties.³⁹ The final event in the drama was the capture of seventeen LTTE militants, including the regional military commanders of Jaffna and Trincomalee, Kumarappa and Pulendran, by the Sri Lankan Navy on 3 October. They were caught smuggling arms into Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan government, especially its hardline National Security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali, insisted on taking the prisoners to Colombo from their temporary prison in Palay. The LTTE objected, citing the peace accord, and the captured militants threatened to commit suicide if they were forcibly taken to Colombo. Caught in the middle, IPKF commander Lt. Gen. Singh attempted to convince President Jayewardane to relent,

was given a majority of the seats as well as the chairmanship of the council.

³⁷Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 72-73.

³⁸"Through Tact, Persuasion," *Frontline*, 15-30 October 1987, 13-15.

³⁹Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 73.

without success. The Indian government also recalled Ambassador Dixit, who was away on a vacation, to negotiate with President Jayewardane. It is not clear if the President agreed to surrender the prisoners to the IPKF; even if he did, the compromise came too late, as the Sri Lankan forces had already begun to transfer the prisoners, under orders from Athulathmudali.⁴⁰ As they had threatened, the prisoners swallowed their cyanide and all but two died. The LTTE quickly and savagely avenged the death of its militants by massacring over two hundred innocent Sinhala villagers and executing eight Sri Lankan soldiers who were being held as prisoners. This ended any hope that the ISLA could be implemented peacefully.

On 6 October, Indian army Chief General Sunderji arrived at Palaly for consultations with Lt. Gen. Singh about the deteriorating situation in Jaffna. Subsequently, along with the Indian Defense Minister K. C. Pant, he met President Jayewardane. On 7 October, the IPKF was ordered

⁴⁰According to Ambassador Dixit, President Jayewardane did agree to surrender the militants to the IPKF, but Athulathmudali ordered the transfer of the prisoners before the President's decision could be communicated to the Sri Lankan officers holding the prisoners. Ambassador Dixit, interview by author. No independent verification of this version of the episode is available. All previous accounts assert that Jayewardane refused to surrender the militants to the IPKF and Jayewardane himself has never acknowledged changing his mind about the transfer of prisoners. See, for example, Muni, *Pangs of Proximity*, 132-33. However, all accounts squarely blame the hard-line Athulathmudali for insisting on the transfer of the prisoners to Colombo.

to use force against the LTTE.⁴¹ Seeking to avoid the impending clash, Lt. Gen. Singh held one last meeting with the LTTE, to no avail. Around this time, the LTTE launched their first direct military attack on the IPKF. On 9 October, the IPKF retaliated by attacking the militants' camps. With this, the first phase of the war, the battle for Jaffna, began.

The First War: The Battle for Jaffna

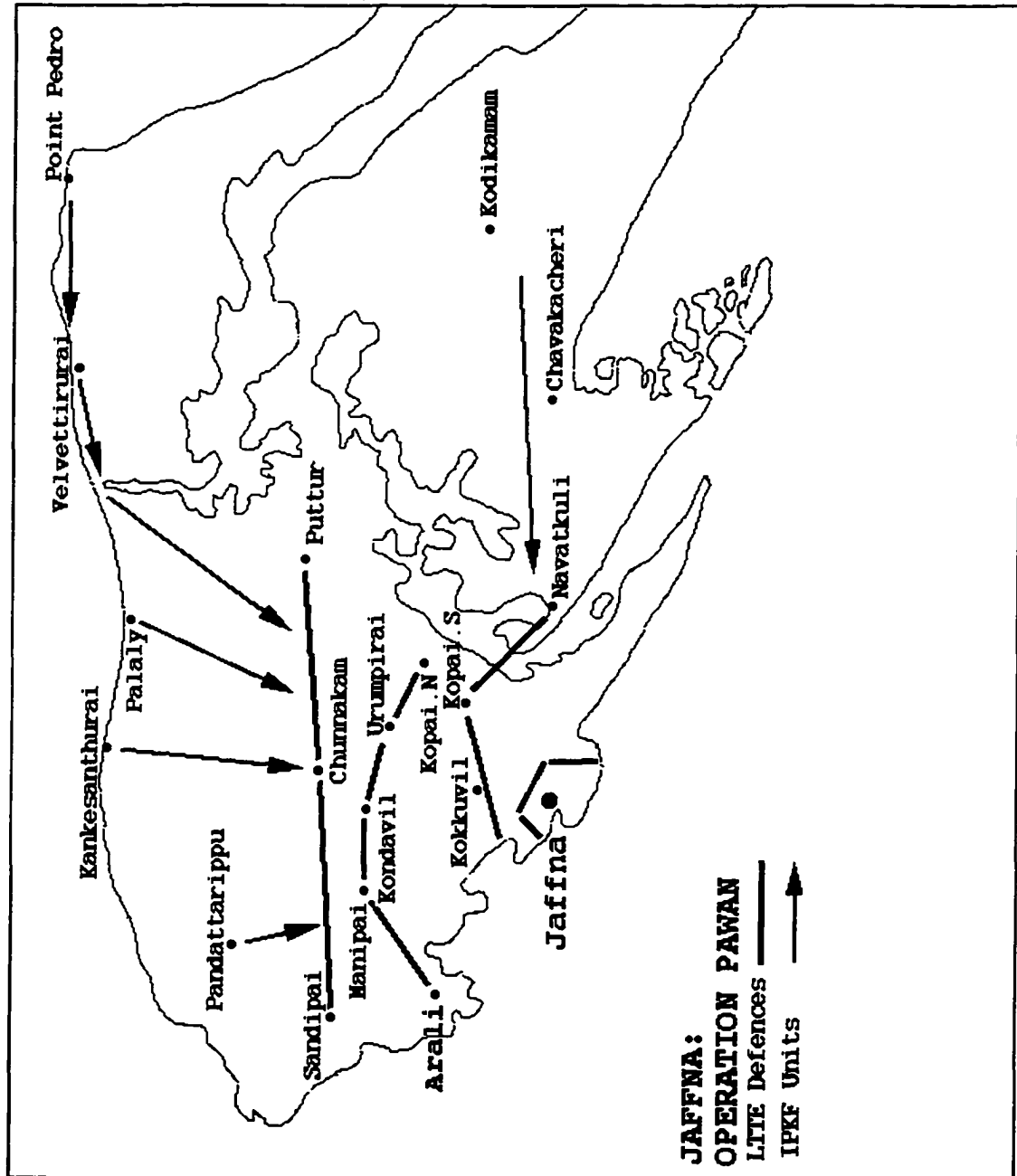
The objective of 'Operation Pawan,' as the first phase of the war was called, was the city of Jaffna. It was a straightforward objective and well-suited to the doctrinal and material capabilities of the Indian army. Though attacking a built-up area was recognized as difficult, capturing Jaffna was important because "Jaffna had come to symbolize LTTE power and authority."⁴² Jaffna housed LTTE headquarters, training facilities, and ammunition factories. Moreover, the LTTE had defended Jaffna successfully against the SLA.⁴³ All this made Jaffna the center of the LTTE's real and symbolic power, and thus an important objective for the IPKF.

⁴¹These orders were radioed in the clear, probably in an attempt to communicate its seriousness to the LTTE, who were presumably monitoring IPKF communications. Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 84.

⁴²Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 90.

⁴³*Ibid.*

MAP 2: OPERATION PAWAN



Map by author/Not to scale

Sources: Depinder Singh, *IPKF in Sri Lanka* (New Delhi, Trishul Publications, 1992) 91-93, 96-98; "A Bloodied Accord," *India Today* 15 November 1987, 34; Edgar O' Ballance, *The Cyanide War: Tamil Insurrection in Sri Lanka, 1973-88* (London: Brassey's, 1989)

The IPKF's Strategy and Doctrine:

The IPKF's strategy was to assault Jaffna from several directions on land and sea, while simultaneously attacking LTTE headquarters deep inside Jaffna with helicopter-borne forces. With half-a-dozen different thrusts aimed towards Jaffna, the LTTE was not expected to be able to defend everywhere effectively.⁴⁴ Once the defenses were breached along any one axis, other defenses would become untenable. Jaffna was expected to fall "within four days."⁴⁵ Given the nature of the objective -- a heavily defended, built-up area -- this was a sensible and pragmatic strategy. However, poor operational planning, partly the consequence of over-optimism, seriously compromised the strategy. Drawn up well before it had to be implemented, the strategy assumed far greater troop strength and logistical capabilities on land, at sea, and in the air than were available when the assault began. For example, the original war plan called for an assault by five brigades. Since each brigade normally included three battalions, the plan assumed the availability of about fifteen battalions rather than the four that the IPKF actually had available when the assault began.⁴⁶

⁴⁴Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco*, 39.

⁴⁵Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 93.

⁴⁶The details of the original strategy and war plan for the assault are provided in *Ibid*.

Similarly, the amphibious assault on Jaffna was given up because no landing ships were available. The helicopter-borne assault was also weakened because of the lack of both troops and helicopters: instead of the battalion-sized assault that was intended, a company-sized assault was launched which ended up becoming a platoon-sized assault because sufficient numbers of transport helicopters were not available for transporting even the company that was available.⁴⁷

There is no explicit statement of the Indian army's doctrine, but it is possible to discern some of its major elements. The doctrine emphasized fighting in large units, usually at division strengths, with close supervision and direction from higher command. It placed greater emphasis on consolidating lines of advance and sticking to given objectives and orders rather than exploiting battle opportunities. In general, whether intended or not, it discouraged initiative at lower echelons.⁴⁸ One effect of this emphasis on close supervision was the phenomenon of officers leading from the front, a proud tradition in the

⁴⁷This is one of the best documented episodes of the war. Accounts of this episode are given in "The Lost Offensive," *India Today*, 31 January 1988, 74-75. See also, Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 98-100.

⁴⁸The lack of initiative among junior officers was a well-acknowledged phenomenon in Sri Lanka. See, Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1992), 149; Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 178; Captain Ajoy Bakshi, "Operations in Sri Lanka," *Combat Journal*, 18:1 (April 1991): 41-49.

Indian army. Such habits, however, also had their negative side: during the early stages, some troops would not fire back even when they were fired upon, until they received shouted orders.⁴⁹ A more serious repercussion was the propensity of the advance of a unit to halt when the commanding officer was killed.⁵⁰ The LTTE, having carefully noted this dependence on unit leaders, specifically targetted them, one of the reasons for the higher proportion of officer casualties in Sri Lanka as compared to previous wars.⁵¹

The LTTE's Strategy and Doctrine

It now appears that the Tigers' leadership had made a strategic miscalculation in deciding to fight for Jaffna. It is clear that the Tiger leadership calculated that the IPKF could not or would not launch an all-out assault on Jaffna. However, the miscalculation is evident only with

⁴⁹Major A. K. Rajput, "Lessons Learnt in Operation Pawan," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 52-57.

⁵⁰O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 102; Shankar Bhaduri and Afsir Karim, *The Sri Lankan Crisis* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1990), 73; Shekhar Gupta, "In A Rush To Vanquish," *India Today* 31 January 1988, 72-76.

⁵¹The ratio of officers to other ranks killed was 1:9.3 in the 1965 war with Pakistan, and 1:9.8 in the Bangladesh war in 1971. In Operation Pawan, the ratio was 1:7.5. As cited in Gupta, "In A Rush To Vanquish," 75. The LTTE was able to target leaders of units because of the distinctive rank-badges they wore. The IPKF learned quickly to do without such badges. Major L. S. Sundaram, "Op Pawan: A Frank Appraisal," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 38-41.

the benefit of hindsight: for the LTTE leaders, this might have seemed like a shrewd and safe decision for several reasons. Though the Indian army had relatively inexhaustible resources to employ in a war against the LTTE, the force sent to Sri Lanka was rather small and weak. The IPKF had only four battalions available to assault Jaffna on 9/10 October, a force that was no larger than the one employed by the Sri Lankan Army in their failed Operation Liberation earlier that year. The IPKF was no better endowed with material capabilities, as it was almost entirely devoid of armor or artillery, and had poor logistical support since most of it was either left behind in India or was stuck in Trincomalee. Given the excellent intelligence resources that the Tigers had, it is unlikely that they were unaware that the IPKF had made no preparations for war, had set up no intelligence network and was devoid of most of its heavy equipment. The LTTE probably did not expect the reinforcements that arrived after the war started. It is also possible that they did not expect the IPKF to launch a full-scale assault on Jaffna, given the possibility of high civilian casualties.

To stop the IPKF assault, the LTTE set up a four-tiered defense around Jaffna.⁵² The outermost defense line ran east-west, intersecting the main highway between Kankesanthurai and Jaffna at Chunnakam, roughly half-way

⁵²Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 91-93.

between the two towns, extending between Puttur on the right flank and Sandipai on the left. The second-tier, a few miles south, was a rough semi-circle around Jaffna, starting at Kopai North and running through Urumpirai, Kondavil and Manipai to Arali in the east. The third-tier ran a few miles north of Jaffna, beginning on the western coast and running through Kopai South to Navatkuli. The final line ran along the edge of Jaffna town.

The LTTE's doctrine could be characterized as one that was in the process of transformation from a guerilla war doctrine to that of positional war. In the Jaffna peninsula in particular, the LTTE had acquired sufficient military capability to conduct positional warfare, as they demonstrated by stopping the SLA's attempts to retake Jaffna. However, this was a limited capability: the LTTE had not acquired sufficient capability to stop a force that was as powerful as what the IPKF would eventually become. The LTTE lost the war for Jaffna because it adopted a doctrine that was inappropriate to its military capabilities. This is not to suggest that the insurgents would have held Jaffna with a guerilla war doctrine either; but with a guerilla war doctrine, holding Jaffna would itself have become unimportant and, indeed, unnecessary.

On the other hand, given the transitional nature of their doctrine, the LTTE was also able to slip back to guerilla warfare once its positions had been over-run.

Thus, while defending most cross-roads leading to Jaffna with considerable strength, once these positions were lost, the Tigers infiltrated behind IPKF lines, attacking rear-echelons and supplies, forcing the IPKF to repeatedly launch clearing operations to maintain its lines-of-communications.⁵³ The IPKF's propensity to stick to the roads was of considerable assistance in this regard.

The LTTE performed well partly because the IPKF performed so badly. The LTTE performed well also because of the urban nature of the battlefield, which is always far more advantageous to the defender than it is to the attacker. In addition, the IPKF's self-restraint in the employment of its much greater firepower capability also levelled the balance between the two forces somewhat.⁵⁴ In the end, opting to hold Jaffna cost the LTTE dearly, though no reliable casualty figures are available.⁵⁵

⁵³Using a variety of stratagems, they also repeatedly slowed and stopped IPKF units which had no clear idea about the nature of their adversary. In some instances, IPKF units were pinned down by small numbers of defenders, who rapidly changed their firing positions, thus giving the impression of being a much larger force. In at least one instance, an IPKF unit was stopped in its tracks by setting off fire-crackers that mimicked gunfire. Lt. Gen. Khajuria, interview by author.

⁵⁴The IPKF did show restraint in its use of firepower in order to reduce civilian casualties, but two caveats need to be added here: first, the IPKF *did not* have very much firepower in Sri Lanka at this time anyway, and second, it is not clear that heavy firepower is particularly useful in urban fighting since it simply creates more rubble in which the defenders can hide.

⁵⁵The IPKF estimated that it killed 1100 guerillas;

The Progress of Operations:

In a rather controversial decision, the IPKF decided to launch Operation Pawan even though sufficient forces were not available. At the same time, the IPKF began a frantic effort to bring in reinforcements from India.⁵⁶ The 36th Division, which had originally been part of the army headquarters' contingency plans for operations in Sri Lanka, but which had been held back in India, was sent to Sri Lanka. The problem, however, was not the lack of forces in Sri Lanka, but the lack of forces in the Jaffna peninsula. Counting the brigades of the 36th Division, the IPKF had a total of six brigades in Sri Lanka. However, only two were available for operations in the Jaffna area: the newly-arrived 18th Infantry Brigade at Elephant Pass, and the 91st Infantry Brigade in the Kankesanthurai area. Even these two did not have their full complements: the 18th Brigade had only two battalions and one of the battalions of the 91st Brigade was stuck inside Jaffna fort, where it remained helplessly inactive during most of

the Tigers claimed they lost fifty fighters. Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 111; O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 105-106. Neither appears particularly credible.

⁵⁶Though some commentators like Shekhar Gupta have suggested that political pressure lay behind the IPKF's haste, Lt. Gen. Singh has argued that if the operation had not been launched when it was launched, the Palaly air base, through which most IPKF supplies and reinforcements came and where the 54th Division's headquarters was established would itself have come under LTTE attack. See Gupta, "In A Rush To Vanquish"; Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 113.

the assault. Effectively, therefore, the IPKF had only four battalions taking part in the offensive against Jaffna city when operations began on 10 October.⁵⁷ Though additional forces were being brought in, it would be at least two more days before these new forces would be available. Then, because of their lack of preparedness for the operation, many of these units performed poorly.

An Indian Army battalion is roughly one thousand strong: thus about four thousand troops took part in the initial assault on Jaffna. The actual number was probably closer to three thousand or even less, because most of these battalions were under-strength. Opposing them were about three thousand Tigers, in well-prepared defensive positions. The normal rule-of-thumb for offensive operations called for at least a three-to-one advantage over the defender for success. Attacking a built-up-area such as Jaffna city required many times that. Against such a requirement, the IPKF employed barely as many troops in the attack on Jaffna as there were LTTE defenders. The difficulties faced by the Indian Army are therefore not that surprising.

In addition to the paucity of its forces in Jaffna, the IPKF also faced command and control problems. Many units had been taken away from their mother formations and

⁵⁷For a breakdown of these forces, see Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 92-95.

hurriedly attached to other formations. For example, when the offensive began, of the three brigades of the 54th Division, only the 91st Brigade was under its command. The other two brigades, the 76th and 47th Brigades, were still in Trincomalee and were therefore placed under the command of the 36th Division. On the other hand, one of the brigades of the 36th Division, the 18th Infantry Brigade, was temporarily placed under the command of the 54th Division, since it had been air-lifted to Jaffna directly. Normally, such transfers would not present too many difficulties since all were similar infantry units. However, making such transfers in what was essentially a combat situation did lead to difficulties in Sri Lanka.⁵⁸

The lack of a sufficient intelligence capability was another serious problem faced by the IPKF. The IPKF depended to a large extent on the R&AW for its intelligence, but this was inadequate. Though the IPKF did have Intelligence and Field Security Units with it, they specialised more in protection than in intelligence collection. One specialised intelligence unit was subsequently sent to Sri Lanka from northeast India but this was insufficient.⁵⁹ The IPKF was also deficient in

⁵⁸Bhaduri and Karim, *The Sri Lankan Crisis*, 70-71; Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 113. The 18 Brigade had been rushed in from India just days before the assault started, and it did not have its full complement of battalions.

⁵⁹Due to bureaucratic bungling, this unit was grouped with a brigade that was being transferred to south

maps, having with it only maps that were out of date by several decades.⁶⁰ Eventually, air force photo-reconnaissance produced large scale 'verticals,' huge photo-maps of the entire peninsula, which improved the situation, at least at the higher levels of command.⁶¹

The IPKF's operational planning compounded its other difficulties. Troops were asked to 'advance to contact' along major road axes to secure a particular area or axis.⁶² Once they established contact, set-piece attacks were to be launched to capture the objective. Partly due to inadequate intelligence, the IPKF rarely ventured from the main roads. When the IPKF did occasionally try to outflank the LTTE with the help of local guides, the guides turned out to be LTTE sympathisers who led them into

India and spent two weeks on a train with them, before being pulled out and flown to Sri Lanka. Lt. Gen. Khajuria, interview by author.

⁶⁰Gunaratna claims that Indian intelligence had mapped Sri Lanka, but this seems unlikely given the widespread difficulties reported by Indian military units because they did not have maps. Gunaratna, *Indian Intervention in Sri Lanka*, 161.

⁶¹Only four such verticals were produced, and one each was given to the IPKF headquarters in Madras and the 54th division headquarters in Palaly. The other two copies were with the Army headquarters in New Delhi and the IAF. Verticals are produced by taping together large numbers of smaller photographs, but the one given to the 54th division was apparently never put together. The IAF eventually sent down its prepared map to Palaly. Gen. Sunderji, interview by author and Lt. Gen. Khajuria, interview by author.

⁶²Colonel Manoranjan Singh, "Reducing Casualties: An OP Pawan Experience," *Combat Journal* 18:1 (April 1991): 55-61.

ambushes.⁶³ The IPKF's reluctance to leave the main roads suited the LTTE as it had mined most roads with Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and established strong defensive positions.⁶⁴ In addition, infantry units also tended to advance along a narrow frontage, one unit following the other, and violated other elementary principles such as dispersing to deny the enemy consolidated targets.⁶⁵

The assault on Jaffna began on 9 October, with the IPKF carrying out some "demonstrative raids" against the camps of both the LTTE and other militant groups.⁶⁶ Early on the morning of 10 October, the 1st Maratha Battalion launched attacks against LTTE printing presses, radio and television stations. The battalion, which belonged to the 91st Brigade, then withdrew to its base inside Jaffna fort.⁶⁷ The assault began in earnest the next day, with

⁶³Lt. Gen. Khajuria, interview by author.

⁶⁴The LTTE had mastered the art of laying huge IED's that could blow up even heavy vehicles like Armoured Personnel Carriers and Main Battle Tanks. For IPKF troops, the IEDs were probably the greatest menace, because they were extremely powerful, almost impossible to detect and the most common form of LTTE action.

⁶⁵The tendency of IPKF troops to "bunch-up" would have made its casualties much higher if the LTTE had artillery or heavy mortars. Singh, "Reducing Casualties: An Op Pawan Experience."

⁶⁶Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 85.

⁶⁷According to Gen. Sunderji, the withdrawal of the entire battalion back into Jaffna fort was a mistake; he had suggested that some troops be left behind as pivots inside the city, but local commanders had not complied.

the 4th Mahars and the 12th Grenadiers moving towards Jaffna from the Elephant Pass area east of Jaffna. Simultaneously, the other two IPKF battalions, the 5th Mahars and the 8th Mahars, both of the 91st Brigade, attacked south from the Kankesanthurai area towards Jaffna. In addition, the IPKF attempted to "take out" the LTTE headquarters in the Jaffna university complex, deep inside Jaffna city, with a bold helicopter-borne assault. This operation ran into an LTTE trap, possibly because the LTTE had learned of the plan by monitoring the IPKF's radio communications, and the mission failed, with heavy IPKF casualties.⁶⁸

Other parts of the Indian plan also ran into trouble because of the persistent pattern of inadequate strength, intelligence and preparations. The two battalions of the

Gen. Sunderji, interview by author.

⁶⁸The assault was planned as a battalion-plus strength assault. According to the plan, one company of 10 Para-Commando battalion would land first and secure the area. The main assault force, the 10 Sikh Light Infantry battalion, would then arrive. However, only one company of the 10 Sikh Light Infantry arrived in Sri Lanka, because of transportation difficulties, and this company had arrived only hours earlier after a tiring journey. In addition, only four Mi-8 troop helicopters were available and they managed to transport just the Para-Commando company and one platoon of the 10 Sikh Light Infantry before suffering several hits that made it impossible to transport the remainder of the company. The assault was abandoned as was the force that had already been sent in. Though the Paracommandos managed to hang on until ground forces fought their way to them, only one man in the seventy-man Sikh Light Infantry platoon survived. See, "The Lost Offensive," *India Today* 31 January 1988, 74-75; Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 98-100; Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco*, 43-44.

18th Brigade were both halted, the 4th Mahars at Kopai North, and the 12th Grenadiers at Navatkuli. The two battalions of the 91st Brigade, the 5th Madras and the 8th Mahars, were also halted, at Chunnakam and Navanturai, respectively. At the same time, more troops were landing at Palaly. The 72nd Infantry Brigade arrived in Palaly on 12 October, with the 4/5th Gorkha Rifles and the 13th Sikh Light Infantry (SLI). Only two companies of the 13th SLI arrived, however, because mechanical problems had diverted the aircraft carrying the remaining companies to Agra. Even the companies that did land were short by one platoon which had been lost in the disastrous raid on the LTTE headquarters.

By 12 October, therefore, the IPKF nominally had three brigades pushing towards Jaffna. Every one of these brigades was under-strength, and two of the three had arrived just days, or in the case of the 72nd Brigade, just hours before they were committed to battle. Many units that landed were launched piecemeal into action to relieve units that had already been bogged down. Intelligence, and even clear instructions was lacking for the newly arriving units. According to one officer, "A total sense of vagueness dominated the mind and attitudes of all commanders and more so of the men."⁶⁹ Not surprisingly,

⁶⁹Major P.P. Ganapathy, interview by Major Ashok Singh, n.d., transcript in Major Ashok Singh, 'Urban Insurgency and Countermeasures,' (M.A. dissertation,

none of the brigades fared very well. On 15 October, the 41st Infantry Brigade under Brigadier Manjit Singh arrived at Palaly air base, with the 5th and 19th Rajputana Rifles, and was also immediately committed to battle.⁷⁰ The 5th Rajputana Rifles claimed to be the first to enter Jaffna.⁷¹ By 19 October, yet another brigade, the 115th Infantry Brigade, had also arrived and was launched into operations

Defense Services Staff College, Wellington, India, 1990). It is worthwhile to recount his experience here, which was typical: his mechanised company was moved overnight from Agra to Jaffna, and it went into operation within hours of landing. His only guidance after landing in Sri Lanka was "a very perfunctory briefing" in which "the forward edge of own troops alignment was given. No other info was provided of the LTTE, their methods, etc. After the briefing, the same evening, the company was grouped to an infantry battalion and operations of the brigade commenced."

⁷⁰As with other details of the operation, there is some confusion over the operations of the 41st brigade. Kadian states that the brigade was used to augment the 91st brigade's assault. However, all other accounts suggest that the 41st brigade looped west of the 91st Brigade. According to Singh, the 54th division headquarters originally wanted to use the 41st brigade to augment the 91st and 72nd brigade thrusts, but he personally vetoed the idea and ordered the 41st brigade to loop around the western coast in order to make up for the lack of an amphibious assault. Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco*, 48. Singh, *IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 101-102.

⁷¹Major General Chand N. Ram, *The Rajputana Rifles: A Brief History*, (New Delhi: Reliance Publishing House, 1995), 75. The experience of this battalion is typical: according to the regimental history, the battalion was committed to battle almost as soon as it landed, which, incidentally, contradicts Singh's account that the battalion started operations only on 17 October. Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 102, Ram, *The Rajputana Rifles*, 75. In other ways also, the experience of the 5th Rajputana Rifles is typical: in its fifteen months in Sri Lanka, the battalion fought in three of the four regions in which the IPKF operated, and served under twelve different brigades and three different divisions.

to augment the 18th brigade, which had been held up at Kopai South. With five IPKF brigades now involved in the assault on Jaffna, LTTE resistance began to crumble. By 22 October, the various brigades had contacted Jaffna, and the fighting moved into the city itself. As the various axes began to link up, the LTTE guerillas began to withdraw from the city, either through the Jaffna lagoon or by mingling with the refugees. Paracommandos of the IPKF attempted to seal the escape route through the lagoon by destroying LTTE boats, with the Indian Navy providing artillery support. Despite such combined operations, the vast majority of the surviving LTTE guerillas managed to escape from Jaffna. By 26 October, Jaffna was in IPKF hands.

The IPKF won the war for Jaffna clearly and unambiguously, though the victory itself was slow and painful in coming. The IPKF won despite immense blunders. On the other hand, the Tigers lost despite great advantages: they had a simple and effective plan for the defense of Jaffna, they were thoroughly familiar with the terrain, had unsurpassed intelligence capability, and outstanding military leaders. They lost because they adopted an objective that was ill-suited to their military doctrine.

The Second Phase: Guerrilla War

After losing the battle for Jaffna, the LTTE began a

guerrilla war against the IPKF. The guerrilla war lasted two years, and ended with the IPKF's withdrawal in 1990. To fight the guerrilla war, the IPKF doubled its forces by bringing to Sri Lanka two additional infantry divisions. The additional forces included the 57th Mountain Division, which had long experience in counterinsurgency operations in northeastern India. The IPKF's two-year counterinsurgency effort had some successes: the IPKF managed to establish control over the urban areas and helped to conduct provincial and national elections. Nevertheless, the IPKF ultimately failed to achieve its most important, and fundamental, objective: to either defeat the LTTE or force it to accept the ISLA.

Because the Indian army believed that "no insurgency has ever been or can ever be settled militarily," the IPKF's objective for the second phase of the operation was to create the conditions necessary for a political solution.⁷² Specifically, this meant creating conditions on the ground in which elections could be held.⁷³ Holding elections would be the culmination of the IPKF's task, but elections could not be held as long as the LTTE continued to hold sway over the population. Not only did the direct

⁷²Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 115. Lt. Gen. Singh continued to lead the IPKF until February 1988, when Lt. Gen. A. S. Kalkat took over. Nevertheless the mission did not change. Lt. Gen. A. S. Kalkat, interview by author, 29 June 1996, New Delhi, tape recording.

⁷³Lt. Gen. A. S. Kalkat, interview by author.

control of the LTTE over the population have to be broken, but the LTTE itself had to be marginalised in order for the political process within the Tamil community to restart. Creating these necessary conditions required a two-pronged approach. First, the IPKF had to gain "operational domination" over the LTTE.⁷⁴ Second, the IPKF had to "win the hearts and minds" of the civilian population by restoring normal life.

The IPKF's Strategy and Doctrine:

The strategy to achieve these objectives aimed to isolate the LTTE from the population.⁷⁵ Though not sufficient, physical isolation was seen as the first step. This required removing the LTTE from its urban bases and those jungle bases that were proximate to the urban centers. The LTTE, now aware of the IPKF's capabilities, prudently withdrew from its bases when challenged. In addition to removing the overt symbols of LTTE control, the IPKF's task of restoring normalcy also meant establishing law and order and making available the requisites of ordinary life such as communications, electricity and essential government services.

The IPKF's counterinsurgency doctrine emphasised

⁷⁴Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 115; Lt. Gen. Kalkat, interview by author.

⁷⁵Lt. Gen. Kalkat, interview by author.

holding urban areas in strength and employing of cordon and search operations to 'sanitize' specific areas.⁷⁶

Restoring normalcy also required maintenance of communication links such as roads and railways. The doctrine called for 'road-clearing,' which, next to cordon and search operations, were probably the most common type of activity that the IPKF conducted. The IPKF also conducted raids on LTTE bases and ambushes on LTTE militants, where specific intelligence was available. Such intelligence depended on informers or electronic snooping. The IPKF did not use long-range patrolling as a means of intelligence gathering: Indian infantrymen's patrolling-skills were weak, and the routine 12-mile patrols that were sent out were regularly ambushed.⁷⁷ Thus, except for those rare occasions when good intelligence was available, the IPKF was mostly unsuccessful in detecting and raiding LTTE bases. Luck also played its part: on a few occasions, the IPKF stumbled on the LTTE's jungle bases. In most cases,

⁷⁶In 'cordon and search' operations, an area such as a village, is surrounded and then systematically searched for guerrillas and weapons. It is a difficult operation because large numbers of troops are required to establish a cordon from which guerrillas cannot escape. On the other hand, moving large numbers of troops to form a cordon also provides adequate warning for guerrillas to escape before the cordon is fully established.

⁷⁷Both the failure to conduct long-range patrolling for intelligence gathering, as well as the repeatedly demonstrated weakness of IPKF troops in patrolling skills are indicators of the Indian Army's reluctance to stress small unit operations, even in counterinsurgency operations.

the size of the IPKF units was counterproductive, giving the LTTE sufficient time to detect and avoid the Indian units blindly 'bashing' the jungle.

In all these operations, the IPKF exhibited a persistent tendency to operate in large numbers, whether in occupying static posts or in conducting mobile operations. Rarely did it operate below company strength: in most cases, operations were carried out with multiple companies or battalion or even brigade strength. The IPKF's favourite type of operation, the cordon and search, could not be done with less than several companies and the larger the cordon, the greater the strength needed. Such large-scale operations continued despite the fact that most officers, from commander of the IPKF, to divisional commanders, to junior officers understood that such operations were wasteful and ineffective and should be replaced with small-unit operations.⁷⁸

Weaning the population away from its support of the LTTE required "winning the hearts and minds" of the people. The IPKF set out to achieve this by rebuilding the institutional and physical infrastructure in Tamil areas, especially in Jaffna, restoring hospitals, schools, banks and postal services. Though the Indian Army had little

⁷⁸See, for example, the expressions of such sentiments in Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 147; Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 54; Thakur, "Infantry Training for Counterinsurgency."

experience in running civil administration, it now attempted to do this by establishing a Town Commandant for Jaffna (TCJ).⁷⁹ Though the Indian Army claimed success for the initiative, support for the LTTE does not appear to have noticeably diminished in Jaffna, though this was at least as much a consequence of fear of the LTTE as support for it.⁸⁰

The LTTE's Strategy and Doctrine:

The LTTE had three objectives in the post-Jaffna period: to demonstrate its continuing military capability and dispute the IPKF's control; to ensure survival of its remaining forces; and to rebuild its weakened forces. These were not always complementary objectives, and the LTTE always chose survival and rebuilding over fighting the IPKF. After October 1987, for example, the LTTE never again challenged the IPKF in set-piece battles.⁸¹

The need to challenge the IPKF's control without having the capability for a direct confrontation led to a

⁷⁹Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 6-8.

⁸⁰Ibid, 19.

⁸¹Another indicator of the weakness of the LTTE was its response to the holding of elections in the Tamil areas. Though it threatened to kill Tamils who took part in the elections, it was strangely quiet through the election period of late 1988 and early 1989, surprising even senior Indian officials. Gen. Sunderji, interview by author and Lt. Gen. Kalkat, interview by author. See also, "A Vote for Peace," *India Today* 15 December 1988, 90-92.

strategy of guerilla warfare. Thus, the LTTE resorted to hit and run attacks, mostly through carefully planned and prepared ambushes. The favourite targets were IPKF patrols, road and rail clearing crews and, occasionally, IPKF posts. The weakness in Indian infantry training helped, as IPKF patrols followed regular patterns, and were rarely skilled enough to fight their way out of such ambushes.⁸² Similarly, road and rail clearing operations had to be conducted at least once a day, especially in the remoteness of the Vavuniya sector, and these were also frequently ambushed. Some units developed improved and innovative ways of conducting these operations, but these were the exceptions.⁸³ In common with other successful guerilla forces, careful preparation was the hallmark of LTTE operations. It rarely fought an unprepared battle: in chance encounters, the LTTE preferred to retreat rather than fight.

The Progress of Operations:

The assault on Jaffna destroyed the LTTE's control

⁸²Major N. J. Nair. "Routine Patrolling in Insurgency Areas," *The Infantry* (March 1986): 24-27. Though this essay was written based on experience in the Indian northeast, many of the problems mentioned here are equally applicable to IPKF counterinsurgency operations.

⁸³Brigadier J. K. Ralli, "Innovations in Counterinsurgency," *The Infantry* (April 1993): 30-34; Major L. S. Sundaram, "Op Pawan: A Frank Appraisal," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 38-41.

over Jaffna but large numbers of LTTE fighters escaped southward. The LTTE's radio-based command and control system also began to break down because of effective Indian electronic intelligence efforts. Though one of the reasons for many of the early IPKF failures was the weakness of Indian signal intelligence, this was itself the consequence of underestimating LTTE capabilities rather than any weakness in IPKF signal intelligence capability. Once the IPKF realised its mistake and brought its considerable signal intelligence capability to bear, the LTTE faced great difficulty in maintaining its radio-based command and communications network.⁸⁴ The LTTE also faced ammunition shortages, probably because of the loss of its many ammunition dumps in Jaffna, now occupied by the IPKF.

Since one of the objectives of the IPKF was to remove the LTTE from its urban bases, the LTTE's withdrawal to remote jungle bases in the aftermath of its defeat in Jaffna was not an unwelcome development. Holding peaceful and open elections required wresting the control over the population from the LTTE. There was also a military imperative for forcing the LTTE into the jungles, as this allowed the IPKF to bring to bear its considerable

⁸⁴"Jaffna: A Confused Populace," *India Today* 15 December 1987, 78-80. The LTTE eventually managed to reestablish its command and control network, but depended to a far greater extent on physical networks and runners rather than on radio. Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 10-11.

firepower, which it had hitherto been constrained from doing for fear of civilian casualties.⁸⁵ Two major Operations were launched, Operation Checkmate in May 1988, and Operation Mahan Kartavya in October 1988. Operation Checkmate was designed to drive the LTTE from the urban areas as well as from its known jungle bases, so as to put pressure on the LTTE and cripple its capacity to interfere with the elections. Once this was accomplished, the IPKF launched Operation Mahan Kartavya, in which the IPKF pulled back to provide physical security for the elections by holding the urban areas in strength. These operations were so successful that the IPKF held conduct three peaceful elections in late 1988 and early 1989 without any serious challenge from the LTTE.⁸⁶ At the same time, the Indian government also attempted to lure the LTTE into the political process. The R&AW negotiated with Sathsivan Krishnakumar, more popularly known as 'Kittu,' the LTTE

⁸⁵Lt. Gen. Kalkat, interview by author.

⁸⁶In November 1988, Provincial Assembly elections were held in the Northern and Eastern Provinces. The LTTE boycotted the elections but other Tamil rebel groups joined the fray. In December, Presidential elections were held. Both elections were held peacefully in the Tamil areas, but the Jaffna population heeded the LTTE's call for a boycott of the polls and the voter turn-out was negligible. Tamils outside Jaffna participated more vigorously in these elections. In February, national parliamentary elections were held; this time, the Jaffna Tamils also participated in the elections. See, "A Vote for Peace," *India Today*; "Sri Lanka: Ballot over Bullet," *India Today* 15 January 1989, 44-46; "Sri Lanka: Ballots vs Bullets," *India Today* 15 March 1989, 122-24.

representative in Madras. These negotiations were unsuccessful, and the LTTE did not take part in the elections.

The IPKF divided its area of responsibility into four sectors, two each in the Northern and Eastern provinces.⁸⁷ The Northern province was divided into the Northern sector and the Central sector. The Northern sector included the Jaffna peninsula and extended down to Killinochi, just south of the Elephant Pass. The Central sector included the Vavuniya and Mannar districts, including the Wanni jungles and Mullaitivu in the east. The Eastern province was divided into the Eastern sector and the Southern sector. The Trincomalee district became the Eastern sector, while the Southern sector included both the Batticaloa and Amparai districts.

By February-March 1988, most of the IPKF was in place, and these sectors were assigned to the four Army divisions that had been deployed. The 54th Division, which had captured Jaffna, was given responsibility for the Northern/Jaffna sector. The 36th Division, which arrived in Sri Lanka in October 1987, and was originally responsible for all areas other than the Jaffna peninsula, was given the Eastern/Trincomalee sector. The two new divisions that were inducted were given the remaining two sectors: the 4th Infantry Division was given the

⁸⁷Lt. Gen. Kalkat, interview by author.

Central/Vavuniya sector, while the 57th Mountain Division was sent to the Southern/Batticaloa sector.⁸⁸ By February 1988, the IPKF also had a new commander: Lt. Gen. A. S. Kalkat replaced Lt. Gen. Depinder Singh.

The IPKF's counterinsurgency operations were carried out independently in each sector. Though the IPKF headquarters laid down the broad policy, there was apparently very little cooperation between the various sectors in the pursuit of their operations.⁸⁹ However, despite the wide variations both in the nature of the terrain and the types of units undertaking the operations, the pattern of military operations remained the same: cordon and search, road-clearing drills, raids, ambushes and patrolling. The differences in the effectiveness of these tools had partly to do with the strength of the LTTE in the various sectors and partly with the quality of the leadership of the IPKF units. As with the pattern of operations, the difficulties that the IPKF faced were also similar in the different sectors, pointing toward a general

⁸⁸Ibid. Hereafter, I will refer to these sectors by their more popular district names, rather than their geographical names: the Jaffna (Northern), Vavuniya (Central), Trincomalee (Eastern), and Batticaloa (Southern) sectors.

⁸⁹For example, both the 54th division in Jaffna and the 57th division in Batticaloa offered to supply troops to other sectors where they were badly needed, but their offer was rejected. Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 55; Maj. Gen. Ashok Mehta, interview by author, 16 August 1996, New Delhi, Written notes.

pattern that afflicted all Indian troops rather than the weaknessss of any particular unit.

The Northern/Jaffna Sector:

The Jaffna sector fielded the strongest IPKF contingent. The 54th Division, which was in charge of this sector, deployed anywhere between sixteen and twenty battalions, much larger than its normal complement.⁹⁰ Though Jaffna was the smallest sector in size, it contained a third of the entire population of the Northern and Eastern provinces. The massive IPKF strength in this sector allowed the IPKF to control not only the major roads and highways, but even the 'kurukvazhi,' or crooked paths, that the LTTE cadres used.⁹¹ On the other hand, Jaffna had been also been the center of the LTTE's power and a covert and potent support base remained in the peninsula and continued to assist the LTTE in carrying out ambushes and setting off IEDs.⁹² This allowed the LTTE to maintain a

⁹⁰Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 66-67.

⁹¹"A Confused Populace," *India Today*, 78-80.

⁹²The IEDs remained the biggest menace to IPKF operations, in Jaffna and in other sectors. One report estimated that seventy percent of IPKF casualties were caused by IEDs, though this seems high. See, Brigadier S. S. Chandel, "Tackling the IED Menace," *Combat Journal*, 18:1 (April 1991): 80-83. Other reports suggested much lower casualties (35-40%) as a consequence of IEDs. See, Major Binay Kumar, "Improvised Explosive Devices Encountered by IPKF in Sri Lanka and its Countermeasures," *The Infantry* 62 (december 1989): 44-51. See also, Colonel I. J. S. Chugh, "Improvised Explosive Devices Disposal," *Pratividrohi* 3:2

presence and keep the IPKF busy and on edge. In addition, the weakness of other Tamil rebel groups in this area, especially those opposed to the LTTE, also reduced the IPKF's intelligence capability in Jaffna, notwithstanding the occasional successes.⁹³ Thus, despite the strength of the IPKF in this sector, it was difficult to detect the movements of LTTE fighters. Given the urbanization and the high density of population in the peninsula, the Tigers were able to mingle with the general population. The LTTE also reduced the size of its units: instead of using their normal 10-15 person groups, the guerrillas began using 3-5 person groups for movement, making it even more difficult for the IPKF to detect them.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, Indian special forces, using unconventional tactics did achieve a few successes.⁹⁵

The IPKF had closer contact with the populace of Jaffna than that of other sectors. Under pressure from various citizens' groups, therefore, it agreed to a ceasefire in September 1988, in the hope that the citizens

(September 1991): 52-64.

⁹³For an account of one such success, see Captain J. N. S. Bisht, "A Raid on LTTE Hideout at Chulipuram," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (March 1989): 17-22.

⁹⁴Lt. Col. R. P. S. Malhan, "Counterinsurgency Operations in Sri Lanka," *Pratividrohi* 1:1 (March 1989): 17-22.

⁹⁵See, for example, an account of a successful raid by team from the 5 Paras on an LTTE group in Brigadier N. S. Gill, "Raid on Delft Island," *Combat Journal* 18:1 (April 1991): 71-75.

groups would be able to bring the LTTE into the political process. But this was rejected by the LTTE, and the fighting resumed.⁹⁶ Around this time, the LTTE also began to infiltrate its cadres back into Jaffna, leading to increased encounters with the IPKF. Though they never attempted to establish bases, the Tigers' increasing presence in the peninsula made the population generally far less friendly towards the IPKF. Thus, very few Tamils in the peninsula voted in the series of elections held in late 1988 and early 1989.

As in other sectors, the IPKF operations in Jaffna were also predominantly fruitless cordon and search operations. Occasionally, as in one instance at Urelu in December 1987, the IPKF did manage to gain useful intelligence in time to conduct a successful cordon and search operation.⁹⁷ However, even such 'successful' cordon and search operations barely netted a dozen insurgents.⁹⁸ In the early days of the counterinsurgency phase, the 54th

⁹⁶Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 74-77.

⁹⁷Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 98-102.

⁹⁸In the Urelu operation, seven companies of troops and a platoon of mechanized infantry were used to cordon and search a sparsely populated five kilometer area. Despite surprising the militants and successfully establishing a cordon, about three-quarters of the militants escaped. It is not difficult to imagine how unsuccessful other cordon and search operations were, given that most were conducted under far less favorable circumstances. An account of this operation is provided in *Ibid.*

Division also repeatedly and fruitlessly chased 'Prabhakaran sightings' all over the Northern province. In late January 1988, one such reported sighting led the 54th Division to concentrate almost two brigades, supported by a squadron of tanks and a company of mechanised infantry along with helicopter gunships and Indian Navy warships off-shore, to search a 150 square kilometer area near Keerimalai.⁹⁹ Less than a month later, an even larger force was sent to hunt for Prabhakaran in the forests of Skandapuram, south of the peninsula, again on the basis of a reported sighting.¹⁰⁰ Neither of these huge operations caught anybody more important than a few low-level LTTE cadres. On the other hand, constant ambushes and IED blasts took a steady toll on IPKF soldiers until the end of operations in 1990.

Though the IPKF managed to restore a modicum of normal life to Jaffna, it had little success in completely uprooting the LTTE. By the close of IPKF operations, the LTTE was as strong in Jaffna as it was before they were expelled by the IPKF in October 1987.

The Vavuniya/Central Sector:

The Vavuniya sector, the largest in area, contained within it the Vanni jungles, which the LTTE had made the

⁹⁹Ibid., 102-105.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., 105-110.

base of its power. Though originally under the 36th Division, the sector was given to the newly arrived 4th Division in February 1988. The 4th Division had a deployed strength of about a dozen battalions, far fewer than it needed, given the size and importance of this sector.

The sparsely populated jungle terrain provided both advantages and disadvantages for the IPKF, allowing the IPKF to use its much superior firepower without fear of civilian casualties. On the other hand, the difficult terrain made locating the LTTE bases an almost impossible task. In addition, none of the other Tamil guerrilla groups such as the EPRLF had any presence in the area and the population was totally dominated by the LTTE. Whatever intelligence the IPKF managed to collect was usually outdated, spurious and often enough planted by the LTTE.¹⁰¹ However, even here, Indian special forces, operating in small numbers and imitating guerilla tactics, performed far better than the regular infantry.¹⁰²

Though it was well known that the LTTE's major bases were located in the Vanni jungles, the IPKF was rarely able

¹⁰¹Brigadier R. R. Palsokar, "Intelligence in Counterinsurgency," *Combat Journal*, 18:2 (August 1991): 27-32.

¹⁰²One of these special forces unit, the 9 Paras, had some spectacular successes beating the LTTE at its own game. See, Major A. N. Nayer, "Op Merry Lane," *Pratividrohi* 6:1 (March 1994): 43-45 and Captain Sanjay Thakur, "Stand-Off Ambush," *Pratividrohi* 4:2 (September 1992): 43-47.

to find them. In a few cases, entirely by chance, the IPKF stumbled into some of these bases while conducting cordon and search operations. Most such operations were conducted without adequate or confirmed intelligence and on the basis of vague orders and objectives, making these operations futile 'jungle bashing' exercises.¹⁰³ The first phase of these operations, code-named Trishul and Viraat, took place between April and June 1988. By this time, the LTTE had managed to consolidate its strength in the various jungle bases. The main bases were apparently located along the eastern and western coastal areas, which provided the easy access to the sea that was essential both in order to smuggle supplies from outside and to escape in case of an IPKF assault. Some of the largest of these camps were located near Alampil and Nittikaikulam, northeast of Vavuniya. During Operation Trishul, the IPKF ran into these camps, but the LTTE, reportedly including its top leaders, managed to escape.¹⁰⁴ As the November provincial council elections approached, the IPKF withdrew from these operations to provide security for the elections. Once these security tasks were completed, the IPKF returned to the jungle area. In March 1989 it launched Operation Baaz and once again ran into elaborate LTTE camps and bases, a situation that forced the LTTE to stand and fight. The

¹⁰³Sundaram, "Op Pawan: A Frank Appraisal."

¹⁰⁴O'Ballance, *The Cyanide War*, 119.

IPKF quickly concentrated almost a division of troops in the area, supplemented with helicopter gunships and artillery. As usual, the difficulty of coordinating a tight cordon in thick jungle conditions allowed the LTTE to escape, albeit with heavy casualties.¹⁰⁵ In June 1989, as one of its last major series of operations, the IPKF conducted Operation Toofan, designed to increase the security along the lines of communication and put pressure on the LTTE.¹⁰⁶ With the agreement about the IPKF's withdrawal coming soon afterward, no other major operations were launched.

The IPKF had even less success in the Vavuniya sector than in the other sectors, which is surprising considering the Indian army's previous experience in jungle warfare against guerrillas. Though the LTTE had made the Vanni jungles its main base, the IPKF was unsuccessful in either eliminating these bases or in capturing LTTE leaders. Even those LTTE bases that the IPKF did destroy were quickly re-established by the LTTE once the IPKF withdrew. The IPKF's failure to evict the LTTE from the Vanni jungles allowed the LTTE to rebuild its strength and re-emerge as the primary Tamil guerrilla group after the IPKF's withdrawal.

¹⁰⁵"The Price of Peace," *Frontline* 18-31 March 1989, 17-21; "In Their Lair," *Frontline* 1-14 April 1989, 102.

¹⁰⁶Some details of the operations are available in Thakur, "Stand-Off Ambush."

The Eastern/Trincomalee Sector

This sector had a substantial concentration of IPKF forces. The sector was originally under the 36th Division, commanded by Major General R. P. Singh, which had started arriving in Sri Lanka before the offensive began against the LTTE in October 1987. However, many of its component units were stuck in the Jaffna area: both the 72nd Brigade and the 18th Brigade were temporarily assigned to the 54th Division for the assault on Jaffna. On the other hand, two of 54th division's brigades, the 47th and 76th Brigades, were under the 36th Division's command. In addition, the 36th Division also had the 340th (Independent) Brigade, the only unit in the Indian army which had any amphibious assault training, along with two squadrons of the 65th Armoured Regiment, an artillery regiment and two companies of mechanized infantry. The 47th Brigade was based in the Vavuniya-Mannar area, while the 76th Brigade was sent south to the Batticaloa-Amparai region.¹⁰⁷

The Trincomalee sector was relatively quiet during the early stages of the IPKF's deployment there. When the IPKF assault on Jaffna began, the LTTE attempted no major operations in Trincomalee. The primary objective of the 36th Division was to keep up the pressure on the LTTE through cordon and search operations, raids and ambushes,

¹⁰⁷Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 43, 94. See also Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco* 41.

in order to prevent the Trincomalee-based LTTE cadres from sending reinforcements to Jaffna. In addition, the division had also been ordered to keep the main highway between Trincomalee and Vavuniya and the Elephant Pass open so that the forces that were arriving at Trincomalee by sea from India could be moved to Jaffna, where they were sorely needed.¹⁰⁸

Once the assault on Jaffna was over, the 36th Division's area of responsibility was considerably reduced, with both the northern Vauniya area and the southern Batticaloa area being given to new formations that arrived in February-March 1988. The Trincomalee sector now consisted of just the Trincomalee district, and the 36th Division deployed about nine battalions to deal with the LTTE presence in this area.¹⁰⁹ The Trincomalee sector in general was a quiet one, and the IPKF focussed on containing the LTTE in its jungle bases. As in other areas, the main weakness that the IPKF faced was in intelligence. The IPKF cultivated other Tamil guerrilla groups, but found it difficult to cultivate civilians, since the money allotted to pay informers was scanty. Though known LTTE sympathisers could be persuaded to give information occasionally, this was almost always stale.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸Singh, *The IPKF in Sri Lanka*, 107.

¹⁰⁹Sardeshpande, *Assignment Jaffna*, 67.

¹¹⁰Interview with Major J. Jayaprakash, as cited in

The IPKF confined itself to conducting cordon and search operations, and though LTTE militants usually managed to bluff their way out of such attempts, it did succeed in forcing the LTTE out of the urban areas.

The IPKF had greater success in this sector than it did either in the Jaffna or the Vavuniya sector. However, this was primarily because the LTTE was relatively weaker in this sector than in the Jaffna or in the Vavuniya sectors. However, the final outcome was no different in Trincomalee than in the other sectors: even though the IPKF managed to contain the LTTE better, the LTTE could not be defeated.

The Southern/Batticaloa Sector:

The Batticaloa sector included the districts of Batticaloa and Ampari. It was the southern-most sector of operations of the IPKF. LTTE presence in this area was much smaller than in Jaffna; moreover, the population was much more mixed, with significant numbers of Muslims and Sinhalese inhabiting the territory along with the Tamils. In fact, in the Ampari district, the Muslims comprised the largest community. Though they were also Tamil-speaking and some even joined the LTTE, they were also suspicious of the LTTE and Tamil agenda to unite the Northern and Eastern

Ashok Singh, "Urban Insurgency and Countermeasures," 63-64. Major Jayaprakash served in the Trincomalee sector from January 1988 until March 1989.

provinces, expecting that such a merger would make them a minority. The LTTE, in turn, expected the Muslims, along with the Sinhalese, to vote against the merger and began a series of massacres that were designed to drive the Muslims and Sinhalese from the Eastern province, a policy that would now be called ethnic cleansing.¹¹¹ The Muslims and Tamils were spread mainly along the coast, with the Sinhalese occupying the interior, bordering the predominantly Sinhala North-Central Province and Uva Province.¹¹²

The IPKF's strength in the Batticaloa sector was minimal during the early stages of the IPKF deployment, consisting of a battalion with a strength of just two companies.¹¹³ On the other hand, this was also where the LTTE was weakest. Thus, the IPKF had a relatively easier time here than in the other sectors.¹¹⁴ Moreover, other Tamil guerrilla groups, especially the EPRLF, also had significant presence in Batticaloa, and they cooperated with the IPKF against the LTTE, giving the IPKF a much

¹¹¹Marshall R. Singer, "Sri Lanka in 1990: The Ethnic Strife Continues," *Asian Survey* 31:2 (February 1991):140-45. See also William McGowan, *Only Man Is Wile: The Tragedy of Sri Lanka* (Calcutta: Rupa & Co., 1992) 241, 251-54.

¹¹²Brigadier G. K. Duggal, "Peacekeeping in Amparai: Some Reflections," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 13-19.

¹¹³Nair, "IPKF Operations in Batticaloa."

¹¹⁴Maj. Gen. Mehta, interview by author.

better intelligence capability here as compared to the other sectors.¹¹⁵ This was not all one-sided: the EPRLF and other guerrilla groups, long at the receiving end of LTTE ire, took the opportunity offered by the presence of the IPKF to attack the LTTE as much as possible.

The LTTE had a number of bases in the sector, the main ones being the Batticaloa town base, the so-called Beirut Base southwest of Batticaloa, the Baron's Cap base, Pulipanchigal base and the smaller Thandiyadi, Pullumalai and Mayankhloa bases. As the IPKF offensive against Jaffna began, most of the LTTE cadres pulled out of these bases and moved towards Jaffna to assist in the defense of the city. By the end of October, however, with the battle for Jaffna lost, these cadres returned to Batticaloa.¹¹⁶

Given the thin IPKF presence in this region in the early days of the deployment, Indian commanders limited their objectives to reducing the LTTE's influence along the coastal belt and ensuring secure lines of communications. The IPKF carried out a series of cordon and search operations in populated areas and conducted extensive patrolling and ambushes, and where specific information was available, launched raids on LTTE bases and hide-outs.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁵"A Winning Strategy," *India Today*, 15 June 1988, 98-101.

¹¹⁶Nair, "IPKF Operations in Batticaloa."

¹¹⁷*Ibid.*

Most of these were relatively small-scale operations; no major operations could be launched till February 1988, when additional forces moved into the sector. By February 1988, the 57th Mountain Division under Major General T. P. Singh, normally headquartered in Silchar in the northeastern Indian state of Assam, was sent to the Batticaloa sector. The 57th Mountain Division was one of the two divisions in the Indian army which had the most experience in counterinsurgency operations. It had been engaged in this role for close to two decades in India's insurgency-ridden northeast.¹¹⁸ The division included the 24th, 59th and 76th Infantry Brigades. The 76th Brigade was deployed in Batticaloa proper, while the 59th Brigade was sent to Vanthramulai, about ten kilometers north of Batticaloa and the 24th Brigade was deployed about fifty kilometers south, in Kalmunai, which was a predominantly Muslim area.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁸The other division which had similar experience, the 8th Mountain Division, was never sent to Sri Lanka. This was partly due to concerns that moving both divisions to Sri Lanka would denude the northeast of any formation with counterinsurgency experience. However, even the deployment of the 57th division does not appear to have been determined by its counterinsurgency experience, but rather because the division was available, the same reason why other divisions were selected for these operations. The Indian army does not recognize the 8th and 57th divisions as counterinsurgency divisions, their primary mission being the defense of the Himalayan border with China. Moreover, given that the component units of each division in the Indian army rotate every two years, there are no "counterinsurgency" battalions or brigades in the Indian Army. Lt. Gen. Kalkat, interview by author.

¹¹⁹Interview with Maj. Gen. Mehta. See also "A Winning Strategy," *India Today*.

When it arrived in Batticaloa, the 57th Mountain Division found the LTTE well-entrenched in parts of the township, so much so that it was not safe for IPKF personnel to drive around without clearing the roads.¹²⁰ On 12 February, the 70th Brigade conducted Operation 'People's Chase,' a "sweep-information check," searching every house for weapons and LTTE cadres, after asking all able-bodied men to assemble in the stadium. On February 28, Batticaloa was declared 'open.'¹²¹

With the Tigers now cleared from the towns, the next phase was to launch cordon and search operations against the major LTTE bases in the jungles in the sector. The most important of these was Operation 'Blooming Tulip' at the end of March, which flushed out the Tigers from the Beirut Base.¹²² Other cordon and search operations such as 'Rolling Trumpets,' 'Red Rose,' 'Lilac,' 'Sweepstake,' 'Steelgray' and 'Swordfish' targetted the other major bases in the area, especially the larger ones like the Pulipanchigal Base. These operations, in which the IPKF occupied these bases, forced the LTTE deeper into the jungles. This disrupted LTTE activities, though the guerrillas continued their hit and run attacks. However, even these bases were vulnerable to IPKF attacks, since

¹²⁰Interview with Maj. Gen. Mehta.

¹²¹"A Winning Strategy," *India Today*.

¹²²*Ibid.*

LTTE radio communications allowed the IPKF at times to locate such bases.

On the other hand, the terrain made it difficult to concentrate large IPKF forces; moreover, once they made it through, they usually found these bases empty because the LTTE had sufficient warning as the IPKF slogged through the jungles. For example, the 1/11th Gorkhas attempted to attack the Mawila base near Verugal river in Operation Kiranti, but it took them four days to reach their target, by which time the LTTE had fled. In another similar assault, the 4th Biharis launched Operation Angelfire to seek out the Topimalai base in the Kanjikudiam jungles, with similar results as the Gorkhas.¹²³ These operations forced the LTTE deeper into the jungles and sometimes into neighboring Sinhala provinces where the IPKF was not nominally permitted to operate.¹²⁴ In general, the IPKF left alone Sinhala areas and villages, even those within the IPKF area of operations. A tacit understanding was reached with the SLA, which took care of the Sinhala areas, even though they were supposed to be confined to their bases and camps under the ISLA.¹²⁵ However, the IPKF

¹²³"Valuable War Lessons," *India Today*.

¹²⁴This did not always stop the IPKF, who, in hot pursuit, crossed over to the Sinhala provinces occasionally to hunt the LTTE. See Major Rajeshwar Singh, "How We Nabbed the LTTE," *Combat Journal*, 17:3 (November 1990): 71-73.

¹²⁵Interview with Maj. Gen. Mehta.

refused to take any other assistance from the SLA, for reasons of both politics and prestige, even though such cooperation would have helped in dealing with the Tigers' propensity to seek sanctuary in the neighboring Sinhala provinces.¹²⁶ The various IPKF operations did weaken the LTTE sufficiently in this sector to prevent them from interfering with the three major elections held in late 1988 and early 1989. In late October 1989, the last IPKF forces in the southernmost district of Amparai moved out of their camps at Kalmunai and Akkaraipattu to Batticaloa and Trincomalee.

The IPKF had its greatest success in the Batticaloa sector but even this success was limited to pushing the LTTE out of the populated areas and into the jungles. The LTTE suffered serious reverses but was never defeated. Despite the 57th Mountain Division's great experience in counterinsurgency operations in northeast India, its strategy, doctrine and success did not differ much from that of the other formations that operated in Sri Lanka. The better performance of the 57th Mountain Division was partly the consequence of better and more aggressive commanders, but also the result of more favourable

¹²⁶According to Maj. Gen. Mehta, the LTTE was successful in seeking refuge in the neighboring Sinhala provinces because the IPKF could not go there, and this generally appears to have been true. Major Rajeshwar Singh's account of chasing the LTTE into a Sinhala province was apparently an isolated incident.

circumstances: the weakness of the LTTE, the relative strength of the other Tamil guerrilla groups such as the EPRLF, the nature of the terrain which made it easier to isolate the militants from the population centers and the demographics of the region, which presented considerable difficulties for the LTTE. Most importantly, neither the strategy nor the doctrines differed in any significant manner from the other divisions in other sectors.

The IPKF's Withdrawal

In addition to the operational failures of the IPKF, other geo-political factors also doomed the Indian venture in Sri Lanka. The Indian objective was to ensure that Sri Lankan Tamils would be granted some modicum of political autonomy within a united, federated Sri Lanka. This objective ran into opposition from both the LTTE as well as Sinhala extremists, both within the Sri Lankan government and outside. The LTTE's objections were clearly stated by Prabhakaran in his "We love India" speech, just days after the accord.¹²⁷ Within the Sri Lankan government, the opposition came primarily from the hard-line National security Minister Lalith Athulathmudali. Outside the government, opposition among the Sinhalese led to the rise of the ultra-nationalist Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP),

¹²⁷The text of the speech is provided in Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco*, 168-71.

which took the lead in the antiaccord agitation.¹²⁸

The accord also suffered from a lack of public support in both India and Sri Lanka. Within Sri Lanka, in addition to the Sinhalese, the Tamils were also ambivalent about the accord. Most Tamils appear to have viewed the Indian intervention as the prelude to an independent homeland and were disappointed when the accord failed to deliver Tamil Eelam.¹²⁹ Though many Sri Lankan Tamils initially welcomed the IPKF, they were also unwilling to take sides against the LTTE.¹³⁰ Opinions among Indian Tamils were also ambivalent: a national survey found greater support for the IPKF among Tamils (73%) than among other Indians (72%), but the survey also found that a larger proportion of Tamils saw the LTTE as either "freedom fighters" (45.2%) or as "misguided youth" (30.6%) than as "terrorists" (13.4%).¹³¹

¹²⁸Kodikara, "The Continuing Crisis in Sri Lanka."

¹²⁹It is difficult to gauge Sri Lankan Tamil public opinion. These conclusions are based on the observations of scholars and journalists. See, for example, Premadas and Samarasinghe, "Sri Lanka's Ethnic Conflict."

¹³⁰According to Hellmann-Rajanayagam, the Tamils had always viewed the LTTE as a "necessary evil," feared for their authoritarian attitudes but admired for their commitment and sacrifices to the cause of Tamil Eelam. See, Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "The Tamil Militants: Before the Accord and After."

¹³¹As quoted in Hellmann-Rajanayagam, "The Tamil Militants: Before the Accord and After," p. 611. The survey was conducted at the time of the initial IPKF assault on Jaffna.

Political support for the Indian mission in Sri Lanka also evaporated quickly in India. There was increasing popular opposition in India to the fruitless and open-ended IPKF mission.¹³² Indian opposition parties made the IPKF an election issue, with the National Front coalition making the withdrawal of the IPKF from Sri Lanka a key element of its election manifesto.¹³³ Even more seriously, there was increasing suspicion that the Tamil Nadu government was, at the least, permitting the LTTE to maintain a clandestine network within Tamil Nadu.¹³⁴ Such developments reflected the lack of political consensus behind the ISLA that further damaged the prospects of a political settlement in Sri Lanka.

Other political developments further eroded the

¹³²V. R. Krishna Iyer, "Tamil Tragedy in Sri Lanka and Contradictory Strategy by India-1," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay) 9 July 1988, 1417-19; "IPKF in Sri Lanka: Superpower Compulsions," *Economic and Political Weekly* (Bombay) 15 July 1989, 1574.

¹³³IDR Comment, "The South Asian Scene," *Indian Defense Review* (January 1990): 18.

¹³⁴Whether the Tamil Nadu government, then led by the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) supported the LTTE is hotly disputed. A commission of enquiry appointed by the government of India to investigate the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in 1991 in Tamil Nadu has, according to leaks in the Indian press, accused the DMK of supporting the LTTE. See, "Jain Commission Indicts DMK: Weekly," *The Hindu*, 9 November 1997, 1. The DMK has rejected such accounts, arguing that its policy towards the LTTE was approved and supported by the Rajiv Gandhi government. See, "Letters reveal moves to open channel with LTTE," *The Hindu*, 22 November 1997, 15, and "Rajiv wanted DMK to broker pact with Prabhakaran," *Indian Express*, 17 November 1997. The commission's report has yet to be made public.

prospects for the ISLA. Ranasinghe Premadasa was elected as the Sri Lankan President in February 1989. Premadasa had opposed the signing of the ISLA and the presence of the IPKF in Sri Lanka, and had made election promises to expel the IPKF. As soon as he was elected, he demanded that the IPKF leave by June 1989, a demand that the Indian government rejected, claiming that it violated the Indo-Sri Lankan Agreement. More seriously, he started negotiations with the LTTE, undermining IPKF military operations. Eventually, agreement was reached on the phased withdrawal of the IPKF, though disputes continued about the pace of the withdrawal and the obligations of the respective governments. By the end of the year, however, the political equation in New Delhi had also changed, with the defeat of the Rajiv Gandhi-led Congress Party in the national election. V. P. Singh, who took over as the Prime Minister in the new coalition government, had already promised to withdraw the IPKF, and an agreement was quickly reached with the Sri Lankan government that led to the complete withdrawal of the IPKF by late March 1990.

Explaining the IPKF's Failure: Operational Problems

The IPKF won the first phase of the war, the battle for Jaffna, but lost the second, guerrilla, phase of the war. The IPKF lost the guerrilla phase of the war despite being better prepared and despite having more and better

forces than it had during the battle for Jaffna. What explains the IPKF's failure to win the guerrilla war? Articles and books written by IPKF officers mention some of the problems that they faced and certain weaknesses in IPKF operations.

Urban Insurgency: Some Indian army officers have argued that the IPKF performed badly because it was fighting an urban insurgency in which the army had no prior experience; the army's previous counterinsurgency experience had all been with rural, jungle-based insurgents.¹³⁵ This is not a satisfactory explanation because the IPKF actually performed well in the urban areas in Jaffna, Trincomalee, Batticaloa and Amparai. Indeed, it was in the Vanni jungles that the IPKF had the greatest difficulty. The reasons for the IPKF's failure clearly lies elsewhere.

Intelligence Failure: One of the IPKF's major weakness was in its intelligence gathering capability.¹³⁶ To some extent, this differed from sector to sector. The presence of fairly capable anti-LTTE Tamil guerrilla groups in the Batticaloa sector reduced this weakness in Batticaloa but the situation was very different in other sectors. In the Vavuniya sector, for example, such anti-LTTE groups were

¹³⁵See, for example, Lt. Col. R. P. S. Malhan, "Counterinsurgency Operations in Sri Lanka."

¹³⁶Almost every analysis made by IPKF officers mentions intelligence failure as a major factor in the IPKFs failure.

almost entirely absent. The relatively uninhabited nature of the terrain also made IPKF intelligence efforts difficult in this sector. In the Jaffna sector, despite the high density of population, the IPKF had little success in recruiting informers, both because of genuine popular support for the LTTE as well as a deep fear of the Tigers. Though the IPKF had supremacy in signal intelligence, this was countered by the LTTE by reducing its radio-based command and communication links. The IPKF's failure to develop an adequate intelligence capability was a significant handicap.

Language: To some extent, the language barrier also created problems for the IPKF. Most of the troops in the IPKF did not speak Tamil. However, the IPKF did manage to deal with this problem by spreading around those Tamil speaking soldiers that it did have.¹³⁷ Most of these were concentrated in Madras Engineering Group (MEG) and the Madras Regiment units. All four divisions of the IPKF were given either a regiment of the MEG or a battalion of the Madras Regiment, and these troops were parcelled down to company levels. This had another advantage also: since many MEG troops were sappers, they could also help in detecting and and defusing IEDs, one of the most difficult problems that the IPKF faced in Sri Lanka.¹³⁸

¹³⁷Major K. K. Dangwal, "Interpretation Duties In Sri Lanka," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 24-25.

Neither problems in intelligence gathering nor the language barrier are indicative of anything other than the peculiarities of the theatre of operation. It is therefore difficult to draw any broader conclusions. However, these were not the only problems faced by the IPKF. The other problems faced by the IPKF can be traced to the Indian army emphasis on positional war.

Explaining the IPKF's Failure: The Positional-War Bias

Two other problems that the IPKF faced were with inadequate training and inappropriate equipment. Both of these problems can be traced to the positional-war orientation of the Indian army. The army emphasised the training and equipment needed for such wars and neglected small unit training and equipment. These choices haunted the IPKF in Sri Lanka.

Training: One of the most serious problems that the IPKF faced was in the weakness of its forces in individual and small unit training.¹³⁹ For example, basic firing standards of troops were found to be wanting.¹⁴⁰ Another

¹³⁸Ibid.

¹³⁹Colonel D. Mukherji, "Our Infantry in Sri Lanka: Some Introspection," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 58-62

¹⁴⁰Major U. K. Chembath, "Op Pawan: A Critical Analysis," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 20-23; Major M. M. Naravane, "Back to Basics," *Combat Journal* 18:1 (April 1991): 33-36; Captain A. K. Thakur, "Infantry Training for Counterinsurgency," *Pratividrohi* 5:3 (September 1993): 34-38

example of weak training was the poor fire-discipline that most units in Sri Lanka exhibited.¹⁴¹ Poor fire discipline led soldiers to open fire at the slightest indication of guerrilla activity, even if they had not spotted any guerrillas. Once one soldier fired, moreover, everybody else in the unit also tended to fire, almost always blindly. Yet another example of weak training was the inability of IPKF troops to break out of ambushes. This is a common and basic-level infantry skill and one that is absolutely necessary in an insurgency environment. Nevertheless, IPKF troops rarely exhibited any capacity to break out of ambushes.¹⁴² As many army officers have pointed out, this weakness is another indication of the extent to which individual and small-unit training was neglected in the army's emphasis on positional-war.¹⁴³ The army's training has focussed on brigade, divisional and corps level exercises and little attention is paid to training below this level.¹⁴⁴ The poor performance of

¹⁴¹ Singh, "Reducing Casualties: An Op Pawan Experience"; Chembath, "Fighting Insurgency in Sri Lanka"; Thakur, "Infantry Training for Counterinsurgency."

¹⁴² Brigadier K. K. Ganguly, "Operations Against Insurgents: Implementation of Minor Tactics and Drills," *Pratividrohi* 6:1 (March 1994):38-42; Captain U. K. Chembath, "Fighting Insurgency in Sri Lanka," *Pratividrohi* 1:1 (March 1989): 58-64;

¹⁴³ Mukherjee, "Our Infantry in Sri Lanka: Some Introspection"; Naravane, "Back to Basics."

¹⁴⁴ Colonel N. N. Bhatia, "An Appraisal of Our

Indian troops in the guerrilla war was the direct consequence of this positional-war bias.

Equipment: Paradoxically for an army that had superior material resources, the IPKF was also fighting with inferior equipment.¹⁴⁵ This is also partly the consequence of the positional-war orientation of the Indian Army. For example, the AK-47 assault rifles used by the LTTE were far superior to the Ishapore rifles carried by the Indian troops given the short, sharp, close-quarter nature of most combat engagements in Sri Lanka.¹⁴⁶ Such engagements are less likely in positional wars and there would have been fewer complaints about the rifle's performance. Not surprisingly, the Ishapore rifle would do well in such conditions; the weaknesses it exhibited in Sri Lanka would not have been as serious. The army did respond to this problem and hurriedly ordered AK-47s for its forces also,

Approach to Infantry Battalion Training," *Infantry* (April 1989): 54-60; Lieutenant Colonel Iqbal Singh, "Combatting LIC in Jammu And Kashmir," *Pratividrohi* 7:3 (September 1995): 33-38; Mukherjee, "Our Infantry in Sri Lanka: Some Introspection"; Naravane, "Back to Basics"; Thakur, "Infantry Training for Counterinsurgency."

¹⁴⁵Kadian, *India's Sri Lanka Fiasco*, 129-30.

¹⁴⁶The Ishapore rifle, carried by most Indian infantrymen, did not have a burst-fire capability, a dangerous weakness especially when pitted against the fully automatic AK-47s that the Tigers usually used. The Ishapore rifle was also too bulky for counterinsurgency operations. Brigadier D. K. Madan, "Operations in Sri Lanka: Combat Experiences at Junior Leadership Level," *The Infantry* 59 (December 1988): 19-22; Singh, "Reducing Casualties: An OP Pawan Experience." See also, "Valuable War Lessons," *India Today* 15 October 1989, 106-107.

though there were never enough to go around to all the units.

There were other equipment problems also: the web equipment, used to carry ammunition and other material on the body of the soldier, was found to be too cumbersome for the rigors of guerrilla war.¹⁴⁷ An even more serious weakness was in the radio communication equipment, which was excellent from the battalion upward but insufficient below that, to the company, platoon and section levels.¹⁴⁸ Radio equipment was either not available at the lowest levels or else were too heavy for routine operations like patrolling. In addition, because these were relatively unsophisticated, the LTTE was able to monitor the IPKF communications. The emphasis on large-unit operations ensured adequate communication equipment at the higher command levels, but neglected it at the small-unit level.

Positional-War Bias and the Counterinsurgency Doctrine

The problems with training and equipment are good indicators of the Indian army's emphasis on positional-war and its consequences in counterinsurgency operations. But the most serious consequence of the emphasis on positional

¹⁴⁷Major G. M. Nair, "IPKF Operations in Batticaloa," *Combat Journal* 17:3 (November 1990): 48-51.

¹⁴⁸Lt. Gen. Khajuria, interview by author. Also, Singh, "Reducing Casualties: An OP Pawan Experience."

war was the positional-war bias in the army's counterinsurgency doctrine. The IPKF's counterinsurgency operations illustrate this bias.

As the analysis of the second phase of the war shows, after they lost the battle for Jaffna, the LTTE never again fought to defend any fixed position. Though occasionally the guerrillas defended their bases in the Vanni jungles, these were mostly rear-guard actions, designed to allow them to withdraw from their bases successfully. In all sectors, the LTTE gave up its bases and moved deeper into the jungles rather than challenge the IPKF. On the other hand, in all sectors, the LTTE conducted hit and run attacks and ambushes. The LTTE's operations followed a pattern of careful preparation, quick execution and rapid retreat. Thus, the positional war of the Jaffna peninsula gave way to guerilla war after October 1987.

The IPKF recognized this change and quickly adapted to the needs of the guerrilla war by implementing existing counterinsurgency doctrines. The IPKF had clear objectives and a sensible game plan. Since the objective was to push the LTTE out of urban centers, the IPKF conducted constant cordon and search operations. Though such operations rarely netted many LTTE militants, it forced the LTTE to reduce the scale of its operations. It could no longer conduct operations with more than a couple of fighters and even these operations took a small but steady toll on its

cadres in IPKF counteractions and ambushes. The IPKF also successfully innovated, though these innovations had limitations. Quick Reaction Teams were formed, usually of platoon strength, to counter LTTE ambushes. In the better-led units at least, improved road-clearing tactics and drills were evolved to deal with the LTTE's propensity to ambush such units.

However, a fundamental limitation could not be overcome: the IPKF exhibited a persistent tendency to conduct large-unit operations which would have been more appropriate in a war for position than in a war against guerrillas who refused to defend any positions. Such large-unit operations were conducted in all four sectors. Though some units such as the 57th Mountain Division had prior counterinsurgency experience, they operated no differently than other units, which suggests the widespread acceptance of a common, and inappropriate, counterinsurgency doctrine. The IPKF conducted such operations though most IPKF commanders recognized that large-scale operations, derisively referred to as 'jungle bashing,' rarely produced any results commensurate with the effort expended. The IPKF seemed incapable of operating in small units, despite the fact that most commanders also clearly recognized the need for small unit operations and the successes of units like the paracommandos, which stressed such small unit operations.

The tendency to operate in large numbers is only the most obvious indicator of the IPKF's positional-war bias. The positional-war bias in the army also forced the IPKF into a fundamentally defensive strategy, one that sought to hold and defend the urban areas and the lines of communication between them. The IPKF's incompetence in conducting offensive operations against the LTTE's jungle bases -- the consequence of the IPKF's emphasis on large-unit operations -- allowed the LTTE to rebuild its strength. By the time the IPKF withdrew, the LTTE was stronger than before and quickly reasserted its control over the Tamil areas, especially Jaffna. Moreover, this defensive strategy gave the LTTE the initiative, and they repeatedly and successfully attacked IPKF posts, bases and patrols in urban areas and along the lines of communications. The consequence was a steady growth in IPKF casualties, increasing frustration, and eventual withdrawal.

Summary

Military doctrine is the key to explaining both the success of the IPKF in the first phase of the war and its failure in the second. In the first war, for Jaffna city, both sides fought with a positional-war doctrine and the stronger side won. The IPKF's victory in Jaffna shows that guerrilla forces can lose if they adopt inappropriate doctrines. The LTTE sought to fight a positional-war

against a stronger adversary and neither superior will power nor morale could rescue it from defeat. In the guerrilla phase of the war, it was the IPKF that suffered the consequences of an inappropriate doctrine. The positional-war bias in the IPKF's counterinsurgency doctrine made the IPKF's operations against the LTTE ineffective and wasteful and eventually ensured the defeat of the IPKF's mission.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE INDIAN ARMY'S COUNTERINSURGENCY DOCTRINE

In chapter 3, I argued that the Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) lost the guerrilla war against the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) because of the positional-war bias in the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine. The task now is to determine which of the two theoretical approaches -- the organizational culture approach or the neorealist approach -- better explains this positional-war bias. I will do this by testing the hypotheses derived from the two approaches. This will be done in two steps. First, in this chapter, I describe the development of the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine and outline the positional-war bias that has characterized the doctrine from the beginning. In the second step, in the next chapter, I test the opposing hypotheses.

When the Indian army went to Sri Lanka in 1987, it had three decades of experience in counterinsurgency. It had fought the Naga rebels since 1956 and the Mizos since 1966. In the late 1970s, other weaker insurgencies began in Manipur and Tripura.¹ All these rebellions took place

¹Though a rebellion had broken out in Punjab in the early 1980s, I do not include Punjab in this list because the army's involvement in counterinsurgency operations in

in the hills and jungles of northeastern India, a terrain ideally suited for insurgencies. In describing the development of the army's doctrine, I focus mainly on the army's handling of the Naga and Mizo rebellions because these were the earliest and most severe of the insurgencies, and had the greatest impact on the army's doctrine. Most of the elements of the doctrine were developed in the 1950s, during the course of the army's operations against the Naga rebels. There were some minor changes over the next two decades and another element was added to the doctrine in the 1980s.

The Indian Army's Doctrine: Methodological Problems

It is fashionable, even among Indian army officers, to claim that the army has no counterinsurgency doctrine.² It is true that the army has no explicit doctrine.³ However, the lack of a formal, explicitly stated doctrine does not mean that no doctrine exists. Military doctrine,

Punjab was sporadic. Most major army operations in Punjab, such as the 'Rakshak' series of operations, took place in the late 1980s, after the army had been sent to Sri Lanka and are therefore not relevant here. For the same reason, I do not include the Kashmir insurgency here.

²Lieutenant-General V. K. Nayar, "Management of Insurgency in the North-East," *Indian Defence Review* 7:4 (October 1992): 18.

³This is not too surprising, considering that the army did not even have training manuals on counterinsurgency until the late 1960s. Shyamol Kumar Sinha, *A Soldier Recalls* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1992), 209.

as I have defined it, is a military organization's view of future war and the principles of its conduct. Defined thus, all organized military forces operate with at least an implicit military doctrine. Understanding military doctrines in such cases requires detecting and bringing to the surface the elements that make up the doctrine. These elements can be detected in what military officers say and write about war, by examining army statements and documents, as well as other relevant contemporaneous accounts. Examining army operations is yet another method of getting at the elements of the doctrine. However, this is a rather risky method because military operations *might* differ from doctrine, which might lead to the 'detection' of non-existent elements of doctrine. Despite the risk, I use this method also, partly because other resources are scarce and partly because the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine evolved concurrently with its operations, which reduces the risk of detecting spurious elements of doctrine. Until the Indian army opens its archives to scholars, such methods will have to suffice.

The Nagas and the Mizos: A Brief History

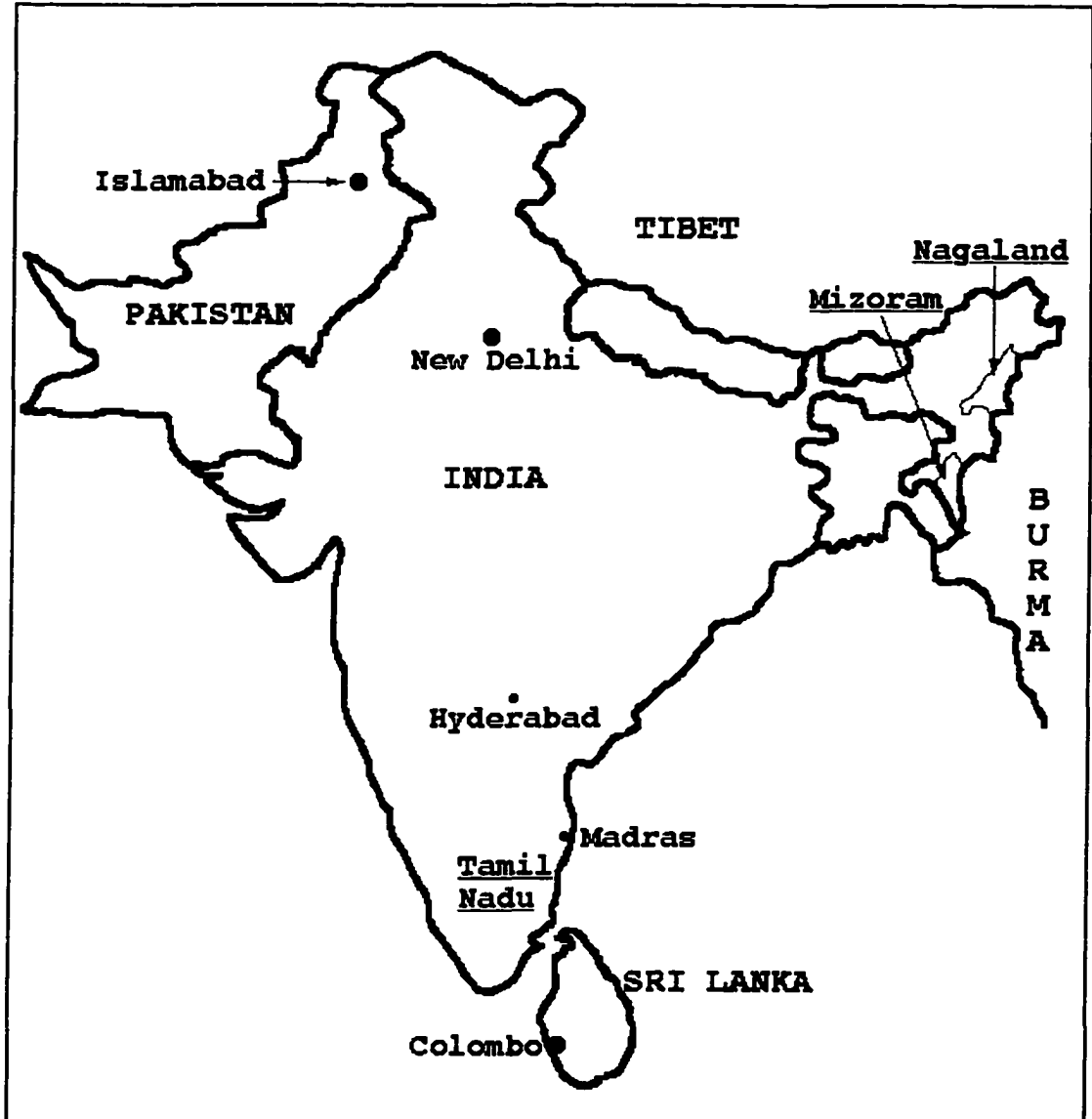
The Naga and the Mizo territories were among the last to be brought under Britain's colonial administration in India. The term "administration" is used loosely here, because the primary objective of the colonial government

was to ensure that the Nagas and the Mizos were sufficiently pacified to ensure tranquillity along the plains that bordered these regions, which had been subject to frequent raids by both the Nagas and the Mizos. Both areas were categorized as "Excluded Areas," which limited their contact with the rest of India and, as a consequence, isolated them from political developments in the rest of India including the Indian independence movement. When India achieved independence from Britain in 1947, these areas became part of independent India. Both the Nagas and the Mizos wanted and received special status within Indian administrative arrangements, allowing them a substantial degree of autonomy within India.

This did not satisfy all Nagas and Mizos: some, especially among the Nagas, wanted total independence from India.⁴ The Nagas, under the leadership of Angami Zapu Phizo, began an armed rebellion in 1955, which led to the induction of the Indian army into the Naga hills in 1956. Most Nagas lived in an autonomous Naga Hills District in the state of Assam, but some also lived in the Tuensang Frontier Division of the North-East Frontier Agency (NEFA),

⁴Though difficult to state with any degree of precision, more Nagas appeared dissatisfied with the arrangements than Mizos. For example, the Nagas, in response to the call of secessionist leaders, boycotted the local assembly elections in 1951 and national elections in 1952. The Mizos, on the other hand, consistently and overwhelmingly supported the Mizo Union, a political party which advocated staying in India, as opposed to the United Mizo Freedom Organization, which advocated secession.

MAP 3: INDIA: RELEVANT DETAILS



Map by author/Boundaries are approximate/Not to scale

which was directly administered by the central government in New Delhi. In response to demands from moderate Nagas, the Indian government formed a new administrative unit called the Naga Hills-Tuensang Area (NHTA) in December 1957, carving out the Naga Hills District from Assam and placing it directly under New Delhi's administration. In response to further demands from the moderate Nagas, a new state called 'Nagaland' with a local legislature was created to replace the NHTA. Despite these changes, the rebellion continued unabated until September 1964, when a ceasefire came into force to allow negotiations between the government of India and the Naga rebels. Citing violations of the ceasefire agreement by the Naga rebels, the Indian government ended the ceasefire in September 1972. Much of the fighting ceased with the signing of the Shillong Accord in November 1975, under which most Naga rebels accepted to be bound by the Indian constitution. However, a section of the Nagas continue to fight, despite periodic attempts to reach a final settlement.

The Mizo insurrection began in 1966 as a consequence of the poor response by the Assam government to a famine in the Mizo Hills in 1959-60 and the attempt to impose Assamese as the official language. Led by Laldenga, the leader of the Mizo National Front (MNF), an armed secessionist rebellion began. In 1972, responding once again to the moderates among the Mizos, the government of

India separated the Mizo Hills area from Assam, making it into a Union Territory, with a local legislature. In 1976, Laldenga signed an agreement with the government of India, accepting Mizoram as an integral part of India, but no final agreement could be reached to end the insurgency until 1986. Unlike the situation in Nagaland, this agreement was accepted by the entire rebel movement, ending the insurgency completely. Under the agreement, Mizoram also became a full-fledged state. The MNF competed and won the state elections in 1987, making Laldenga the Chief Minister of Mizoram.

The Indian Army and Counterinsurgency: The First Phase

Assisting the Assam Rifles

The Indian army did not have very much experience in counterinsurgency operations when it was deployed against the Naga insurgents in 1956. Its only previous experience in counterinsurgency was in the late 1940s, when it fought a communist insurrection in the Telengana region in South India. However, this was a relatively brief operation, and it had little impact on army doctrine.⁵ When the Naga insurgency began in 1954, it was the Assam Rifles rather

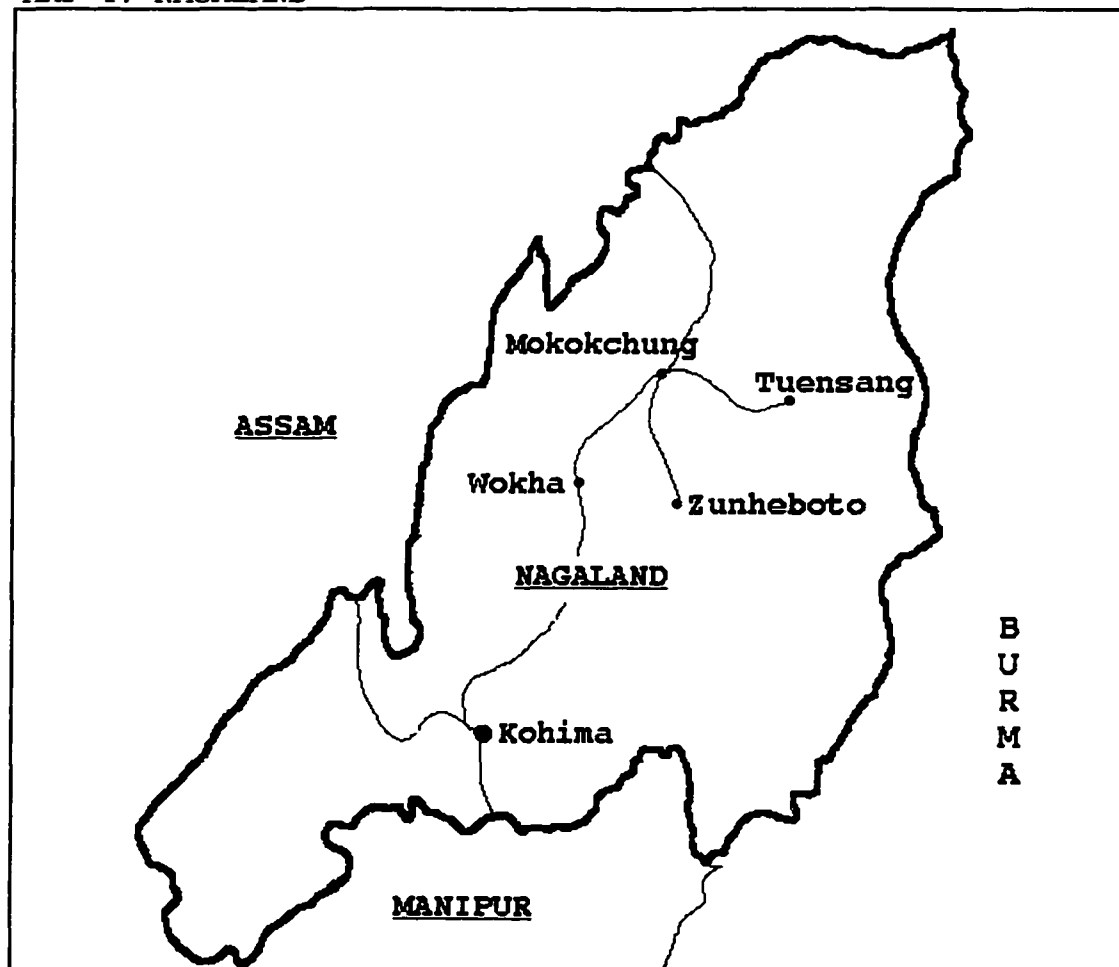
⁵In fact, most histories written on the Army barely even mention this episode. See a brief account in, K. C. Praval, *Indian Army After Independence* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1987), 548-49.

than the army which was responsible for subduing the insurgency. However, the Assam Rifles, a paramilitary force raised by the British colonial administration for policing northeastern India, was too weak to control the insurgency. Therefore, army was dispatched to bolster the Assam Rifles.

The army's involvement with the Naga insurgency began in the summer of 1955 when the 181st Independent Infantry Brigade, based at Shillong, was asked to dispatch a few platoons to the Naga hills. The commander of the 181st Brigade, after a tour of the area, decided that the situation warranted moving of the entire brigade to the Naga hills. In addition, he asked the Eastern Command to augment his force with two more brigades to make whole division.⁶ In July, two companies of the 17th Rajput battalion were moved into the Tuensang Frontier Division (TFD), with the reminder of the battalion following during the next few weeks. Since all thirty-six platoons of the Assam Rifles stationed in the TFD were fully committed, the 17th Rajputs were required to help the Assam Rifles break up rebel concentration in the area. As soon as these immediate tasks were completed, the 17th Rajputs withdrew into their new reserve station in Aghueto, leaving the

⁶Colonel R. D. Palsokar, *Forever in Operations, A Success Story: A Historical Record of the 8th Mountain Division in counter-insurgency in Nagaland and Manipur, and in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan conflict, 1963-1989* (n.p.: Headquarters, 8 Mountain Division, 1991)

MAP 4: NAGALAND



Map by author/Boundaries are approximate/Not to scale

Assam Rifles to chase the dispersed insurgents.⁷ Other units of the 181st Brigade also moved into the Naga hills, beginning with the 2nd Sikh battalion. In September 1955, the 1/3rd Gorkha moved in and in February 1956, the 3rd Bihar followed.⁸

The Army Takes Over Counterinsurgency

Though the army was now involved in the operations, it was still only assisting the Assam Rifles. Reflecting this arrangement, the Inspector-General of the Assam Rifles chaired the joint headquarters established in October 1955 by the Assam Rifles, the army and the civilian administration.⁹ However, by February 1956 the rebels had reorganized and were beginning to attack outside the TFD, in the Naga Hills proper. In response, a Unified Command was created, this time under army command. Major-General R. K. Kochar took over as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief (GOC-in-C) with responsibility for the Assam area, which included the Naga Hills and the TFD. The Assam Rifles was placed under the army and was given exclusive responsibility for the TFD. In 1960, this unified command

⁷Ibid. See also, Major-General D. K. Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East: The Assam Rifles* (New Delhi: Palit & Palit, 1984), 209-10.

⁸Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 26-27. C. L. Proudfoot, *Flash of the Khukri: History of the 3rd Gorkha Rifles, 1947 to 1980* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1984), 53-54.

⁹Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 210.

became the 23rd Mountain Division.¹⁰

Developing the Counterinsurgency Doctrine

The Indian army had not yet developed any specific doctrine for handling insurgencies. This did not matter during the early stages of the Naga rebellion since the army's role was limited to supporting the Assam Rifles. Even after the army took over the counterinsurgency task, it did not immediately need a counterinsurgency doctrine because the Nagas fought like a regular army. While they also conducted guerrilla operations, a large part of the Naga military force was engaged in defending fixed positions. The Nagas lacked many elements of a regular army, especially artillery, but they nevertheless attempted to hold their positions, fighting from well-prepared defensive positions.

Several of the army's early operations were of this nature. It was the detection of one strong Naga position in June 1955 that led to the initial induction of the army. This concentration, at Khekiye in the TFD, was so well entrenched that the Assam Rifles could not dislodge it. Instead, the rebels took the initiative, attacking the Assam Rifles in an attempt to force them out of their base at Vilho. It took the entire 17th Rajput battalion, along

¹⁰ Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 211-12; Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 29-34.

with seven Assam Rifles platoons to dislodge and disperse this concentration.¹¹ Despite this defeat, the rebels continued to prepare strong positional-defenses, probably a result of the influence of ex-servicemen among the rebel ranks. The Assam Rifles subsequently detected and attacked another such concentration at Kyutsukilong, along the Zhunghi river.¹² The largest such position was established by Kaito Sema, the Commander-in-Chief of the Naga army, along the main Kohima-Mokokchung highway, at Khuivi. This concentration included over 2500 troops. Two companies of the Indian army's 3rd Gorkhas, along with a company of the 3rd Bihar had to launch two separate assaults to recapture Khuivi and disperse the rebels.¹³

Thus during its early operations the Indian army found itself engaged in familiar positional war-type operations, which suited it well since it had emphasized and trained for such operations. Such positional war-type operations required no changes from existing Indian army training or doctrine.

Political Imperatives in Counterinsurgency Operations

If operational necessities did not require any

¹¹Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 209-10; Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 26-27.

¹²Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 210.

¹³Proudfoot, *Flash of the Khukri*, 53-58.

doctrinal reassessments, political factors did. The Nehru government was prepared to use force to control domestic rebellions, as it had demonstrated in Telengana, but it was not willing to use force indiscriminately, and it placed severe restrictions on the army in its operations against domestic rebels. Punitive actions were forbidden, and force was to be used as sparingly as possible. Nehru reminded the army that the Nagas were fellow-countrymen who had to be won over, not suppressed.¹⁴ This was a reiteration of an existing concern: the first expression of such concern was in the government's response to the Achingmori massacre, two years earlier.

The Achingmori massacre took place in October 1953 and resulted from a tragic misunderstanding.¹⁵ The victims were Assam Rifles troops who were on patrol traversing an area populated by the Tagin Nagas, investigating reports of Chinese and Tibetan intrusions in the area. Included as porters in the patrol were Galong Nagas, with whom the Tagins had a long-standing feud. Assuming that the Galongs had brought the Assam Rifles platoon to attack them, the Tagins ambushed the column, taking as hostages all who

¹⁴Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 2, 1947-1956 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 212.

¹⁵The following details are from Palit, *Sentinels of the Northeast*, 198-202. See also, Major K. Brahma Singh, "The Achingmori Episode-1953," *USI Journal* 63 (July-September 1983): 268-77.

survived.

The Indian government responded by sending a strong force from the Assam Rifles, along with units from the Indian army and air support from the Indian Air Force, to recover the hostages and punish the culprits. Such retaliatory action was frequent under the British colonial administration, and usually the entire tribe would be targeted for punishment and the offending villages would be burned. However, the Nehru government ordered that only those who had directly participated in the massacre should be apprehended and punished. There were to be no reprisals or burning of villages, and troops were prohibited from firing except in self-defense.¹⁶ The air force was used mainly for transportation, reconnaissance and demonstration purposes, rather than for fire-support. Further, to ensure that these instructions were strictly followed, the Governor of Assam personally supervised the operations.¹⁷

The Achingmori massacre and the Indian response to it represented the new political attitude toward the tribal peoples of northeastern India, which the army was required

¹⁶Not all rules were relaxed: the column was permitted to take hostages, though the previous practice of taking women and children as hostages was prohibited.

¹⁷The area was still under the administration of the state of Assam. Under the Indian constitutional system, the Governor is the representative of the federal government at the state level. The administration at the state level is usually left to a locally elected Chief Minister.

to absorb. Though the massacre was an isolated incident with local causes, rather than part of any larger rebellion against the government, the government response colored the Indian army's understanding of domestic insurgencies, especially in the northeast. Rebels henceforth would no longer be considered 'enemies' but rather as misguided citizens who had to be politically won over rather than militarily defeated. Thus, military force would only be used if necessary and as a last resort.

Nehru also appears to have influenced other elements of the army's perspective of the Naga rebellion. Nehru had strong reservations about the British policy of keeping the northeast isolated from the rest of India. On the other hand, he also realized that a sudden influx of outsiders intent on 'developing' the region might antagonize and alienate the indigenous population.¹⁸ Writing to T. Sakhrie, the secretary of the Naga National Council in August 1946, he stated that "...it is our policy that Tribal areas should have as much freedom and autonomy as possible so that they can live their own lives, according

¹⁸"I am alarmed when I see -- not only in this country, but in other countries too -- how anxious people are to shape others according to their own images or likeness, and to impose on them their particular way of living...I am not at all sure which is the better way of living, the tribal or our own. In some respects I am quiet certain their's is better." Nehru as quoted in Verrier Elwin, *A Philosophy for NEFA*, second edition (Shillong, India: Government of Assam, 1959), (iii), 55.

to their own customs and desires."¹⁹ To Verrier Elwin, an anthropologist and advisor, Nehru stated: "I am anxious that they should advance, but I am even more anxious that they should not lose their artistry and joy in life and the culture that distinguishes them in many ways."²⁰ Nehru's approach of helping the tribal population develop at their own pace was reflected by other senior government officials, both in New Delhi and in the Assam province, under which these tribal areas fell.²¹

Nehru also recognized that the British policy of isolating the region had prevented the development of an Indian national consciousness in this region. Thus the government also had the responsibility of developing such a national identity in this region. In a letter to Bishnuram Medhi, the Chief Minister of Assam, Nehru wrote about the Nagas:

We must not judge them as we would others who are undoubtedly part of India. The Nagas have no such background or sensation and we have to create that sensation among them by our goodwill and treatment. We shall have to think how we can produce this impression and what political steps might be necessary.²²

¹⁹As quoted in Asoso Yonuo *The Rising Nagas: A Historical and Political Study* (New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1974), 194.

²⁰Verrier, *Philosophy for NEFA*, 56.

²¹*Ibid.*, 56-59.

²²The letter is reproduced in full as appendix G in Sanjoy Hazarika, *Strangers in the Mist: Tales of War and Peace from India's Northeast* (New Delhi: Viking/Penguin

These views strongly influenced the development of the army's counterinsurgency doctrine. The army viewed counterinsurgency as fighting fellow-Indians, albeit misguided ones. Fighting "hostile" fellow-Indians was a far more delicate task than fighting "enemies" from across the border. The Naga insurgency arose because of a "feeling of being different," as one officer described it, echoing Nehru's own view about the underdevelopment of the Indian national identity among the Nagas. The army should try to overcome such feelings of distinctiveness through "fraternization" and propaganda.²³ The insurgency had to be defeated, but not in a manner that would exacerbate the conditions that led to it in the first place.

Operationally, such beliefs led to the renunciation of heavy weapons and firepower (such as artillery and air support for infantry) as well as some of the traditional (British) methods of dealing with the Nagas, such as 'promenades' by army columns and the burning of villages as collective punishment against offending tribes. An Order of the Day from the Chief of Army Staff to the troops going to the Naga regions explicitly stated many of these ideas:

You must remember that all the people of the area in which you are operating are fellow Indians. They

Books, 1994), 359-61. See also, Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 2, 211.

²³R. D. Palsokar, "Fighting the Guerrilla," *USI Journal* 81 (October-December 1961): 269.

may have different religions, may pursue a different way of life, but they are Indians and the very fact, that they are different and yet part of India is a reflection of India's greatness. Some of these people are misguided and have taken to arms against their own people, and are disrupting the peace of this area. You are to protect the mass of the people from these disruptive elements. You are not there to fight the people in the area, but to protect them. You are fighting only those who threaten the people and who are a danger to the lives and properties of the people. You must do therefore everything possible to win their confidence and respect and to help them feel that they belong to India.²⁴

Such attitudes were also reinforced among combat units at the operational level. Operational orders set out clear distinctions between "hostiles" and ordinary citizens, even those identified as "supporters" of hostiles.²⁵ Hostile camps, hide-outs, ammunition and other dumps were to be destroyed, and hostiles were to be apprehended or liquidated, while the people of the area were to be told, "properly and skillfully," the aims and ideals of the government.²⁶ Additionally, in recognition of the possibility of abuses, troops were threatened with severe disciplinary action for offenses against the

²⁴A *Historical Account of Nagaland* (Naga Institute of Culture), 185. See also, Profulla Roychoudhury, *The Northeast: Roots of Insurgency* (Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1978), 63.

²⁵"Extract From Top Secret Document, April 23, 1959," in International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, *The Naga Nation And Its Struggle Against Genocide* (Copenhagen: IWGIA Document 56, July 1986), 141-44.

²⁶*Ibid.*

civilian population.²⁷

An important caveat must be added here. It should not be assumed that the army accepted all this as smoothly or as easily as this narrative suggests. Indeed, it is clear that the army originally resisted, or at least did not understand the importance of these political imperatives, though army personnel eventually accepted such political imperatives as necessary elements of the army's counterinsurgency doctrine. For example, in the beginning the army proposed that air force fighters provide fire-support for its troops, a proposal Nehru rejected.²⁸ During the early years, army officers also frequently complained about the political restrictions on the use of force.²⁹ In addition, despite all the restrictions, army operations were far from gentle, worrying Nehru about the political fall-out, both internally and internationally.³⁰

²⁷Ibid. This warning was in capital letters, unlike the rest of the instructions.

²⁸Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 2, 211.

²⁹A civilian administrator in Nagaland recalled that these restrictions were always a lively topic of discussion whenever army officers met. " 'Give us a free hand and we will finish the job in six months' was the continual refrain of the young men uniform." P. D. Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmares* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1968), 114.

³⁰Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 3, 1956-1964 (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 28-29, 177. See also, Nari Rustomji, *Imperiled Frontiers: India's North-Eastern Borderlands* (New

Despite the above caveat, the primary component of the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine was the recognition that counterinsurgency involved fighting fellow-Indians, and that therefore the indiscriminate use of force was to be avoided. Other components of the doctrine developed in response to the army's operational experience as well as to its study of the theory and practice of insurgency and counterinsurgency in other parts of the world.

Operational Imperatives in Counterinsurgency Doctrine

After the early operations were over, the Nagas no longer attempted positional warfare, resorting entirely to hit-and-run attacks in the classic pattern of guerrilla forces all over the world. The army's counterinsurgency doctrine also developed as the war changed. In addition to the limitation in the use of force, the doctrine, as it eventually developed, also called for the isolation of guerrillas from the population, dominating the area of operations, and maintaining superiority of forces at all times.

Isolating the Guerrillas:

The army's understanding of insurgencies appears to have developed at least partly as a consequence of its study of Mao's theory of insurgency and the British theory

Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1983), 31.

of counterinsurgency. Almost every essay written by army officers in professional journals like the *USI Journal* examines Chinese thinking on guerrilla warfare.³¹ There was an equal emphasis on the lessons learned by the British in the Malayan insurgency.³² One fundamental lesson that the Indian army derived from these was the importance of isolating the guerrillas from the population and maintaining control over the population in insurgency affected areas. Insurgents require not only popular support, but more importantly, direct access to and control over the population. "The insurgents are dependent on the local population for food, information, recruits and above all freedom of movement," wrote one officer.³³ The task of

³¹See for example, Major-General Som Dutt, "Chinese Political and Military Thinking on Guerrilla Warfare," *USI Journal* 92 (July-September 1962): 225-29; Lieutenant-Colonel R. D. Palsokar, "Fighting the Guerrilla-2," *USI Journal* 94 (July-September 1964): 257-62; Brigadier S. K. Sinha, "Counterinsurgency Operations," *USI Journal* 100 (July-September 1970): 257-70; Major Bs. Sirohi, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *USI Journal* 104 (January-March 1974): 62-77.

³²Flight-Lieutenant D. R. Seth, "Malaya: A Geopolitical Study," *USI Journal* 84 (July 1954): 293-300; Major P. B. Deb, "Thoughts on Guerrillas," *USI Journal* 92 (July-September 1962): 254-61; Squadron-Leader D. R. Seth, "Role of Air Force in Anti-Guerrilla Operations," *USI Journal* 93 (January-March 1963): 43-47; Major R. V. Jatar, "Counterinsurgency Operations," *USI Journal* 97 (October-December 1968): 415-23; Lt. Col. S. P. Anand, "Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice in Mizo Hills," *USI Journal* 101 (April-June 1971): 150-56; Major Sirohi, "Insurgency and Counterinsurgency."

³³Major-General O. S. Kalkat, *The Far-Flung Frontiers* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1983), 78. Kalkat

counterinsurgent forces therefore is to isolate the insurgents from the population, while maintaining their own control over the population: "To fight the guerrilla effectively, the aim, therefore, should be to isolate him from the people The guerrilla may be isolated physically or morally from the people."³⁴

The model for 'isolating the guerrillas from the people' came primarily from the British experience in Malaya. Army writings approvingly cited the British model of resettling villagers in large, grouped villages, established under army control, where the movements of villagers were severely restricted to prevent them from providing assistance to the guerrillas.³⁵ The influence of this model led to a similar attempt in the northeast, with Naga villagers being resettled into 'grouped' villages under the control of the army.³⁶ The grouping scheme began

commanded a Gorkha battalion in the Nagaland area in the late 1950s. Most other essays also contain similar statements. See for example, Anand, "Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice in Mizo Hills,"; Sinha, "Counterinsurgency Operations."

³⁴Palsokar, "Fighting the Guerrilla-2."

³⁵Ibid. See also, Anand, "Counterinsurgency Theory and Practice in Mizo Hills," and Jatar, "Counterinsurgency Operations."

³⁶K. C. Praval, *The Indian Army After Independence* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1987), 561. See also, Dalle Namo, *The Prisoner From Nagaland* (Guwahati, India: Lebanya Press, 1987), 49-50, 54 and Neville Maxwell, *India, the Nagas and the North-east, Minority Rights Group Report No. 17* (New York: Minority Rights Group, 1980), 7. Brief references of the program can also be found in: K. C. Praval, *Valor Triumphs: A History of the Kumaon Regiment*

in early 1957, in the Sema Naga area. However, the groupings could not be extended to the entire Naga area; in addition, complaints from moderate Naga leaders, as well logistical difficulties with the grouping process all combined to put a stop to the program by the end of 1958.³⁷ The program was restarted in 1963, after the Nagaland state government put forward a proposal to group all the villages in the Kohima and Mokokchung districts into 90 large centers, at a cost of over Rs. 20 million.³⁸ This plan was not carried through, though some villages known to be sympathetic to the rebels were re-grouped as a punitive measure.³⁹ This was not the end of the grouping schemes: in the late 1960s, during counterinsurgency operations against the Mizo rebels, the army resorted to an even larger and more systematic village grouping scheme.

The second method of isolating the guerrillas from the general population was to conduct periodic 'cordon-and-search' operations in villages that were not directly under the army's control. Such operations were conducted both

(Faridabad, India: Thomson Press, 1976), 220; Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 32; Lieutenant-General S. P. P. Thorat, *From Reville to Retreat* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1986), 185.

³⁷Praval, *The Indian Army After Independence*, 561; D. R. Mankekar, *On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland* (Bombay: Manaktalas and Sons, 1967), 62.

³⁸Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmares*, 162-64.

³⁹Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmares*, 76, 133; Mankekar, *On the Slippery Slope in Nagaland*, 73.

randomly as well as when specific information was available about the presence of rebels in particular villages. These operations were designed to identify and arrest rebels who might be hiding in the villages, to gather intelligence about rebel activity, to search for weapons and to 'propagate' among the villagers "the aims and ideals of our Government."⁴⁰ The failure of the grouping scheme left the army with the cordon and search as the only method for 'isolating the guerrillas.'

Area Domination:

The doctrine also emphasized regaining control over the insurgency-affected area by establishing and holding military posts and dominating the areas around these posts.⁴¹ Large numbers of such posts were established, mostly at company strength or greater. The objective was to control the insurgency by establishing army posts at the most important places, blanketing these areas with troops.⁴² These posts were established along the roads and in the jungles and they were progressively extended into

⁴⁰"Extract From Top Secret Document, April 23, 1959," in International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, *The Naga Nation And Its Struggle Against Genocide*, 144.

⁴¹Nayar, "Management of Insurgency in the North-East," 20. K. V. Krishna Rao, *Prepare or Perish: A Study of National Security* (New Delhi: Lancer Publications, 1991), 258.

⁴²Kalkat, *The Far-Flung Frontiers*, 60.

areas known to harbor Naga rebels.⁴³ This program was expanded further when the 8th Mountain division was raised in August 1963 to take charge of counterinsurgency operations in Nagaland. Its nine army battalions were given charge of roughly equal area and villages.⁴⁴ By the late 1960s, this logic had led to the expansion of the 8th Mountain division to a strength of about three dozen battalions.⁴⁵

Once these posts were established, troops were expected to conduct frequent patrols in the areas around these posts to keep the area clear of the rebels. Most such patrols were fruitless; unit histories rarely mention successful army ambushes on the Nagas in these operations. Even when rebels camps were discovered, army raiding parties seldom caught any rebels because the rebels usually withdrew successfully well before the raiding party reached the camp. On the other hand, such patrols were frequently, and successfully, ambushed by the rebels. Thus, it is clear that the objective of 'dominating' the area was never actually accomplished by the army, despite blanketing these areas with troops. On the other hand, the rebels never managed successfully to attack and uproot any of the army

⁴³Ibid, 61, 66.

⁴⁴Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 44.

⁴⁵Praval, *Indian Army After Independence*, 565.

camps either.⁴⁶ In essence a stalemate developed, with neither side fully in control of the area.

Area domination also included holding all urban centers. This was not a major problem since the Nagas rarely attacked urban areas, which were heavily defended. However, holding urban areas also required controlling extended lines of communications, mainly roads. The deployment of forces in military posts deep in the jungle added to the problem, since these posts also had to be kept supplied. This is a classic problem that all counterinsurgency forces face, because the extended and vulnerable lines of communications are easy targets for the rebels. The Nagas were no exception and they made the highways, roads and jungle tracks in Nagaland their primary targets.

The army depended on the air force to help maintain its military posts in the jungle. Air supply of these posts became the main role for the air force in the operations. Two platoons of the 502nd Air Dispatch Company were deployed in Jorhat for this purpose.⁴⁷ Air

⁴⁶The most serious assault on a camp, albeit an Assam Rifles camp, was at Purr in August 1961. Despite being vastly outnumbered, the camp held. See accounts in Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 35-36, Palit, *Sentinels of the Northeast*, 224-25 and Nirmal Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1978), 90-91.

⁴⁷Directorate of Supplies and Transport, Army Headquarters, *History of the Army Service Corps*, vol. 5, 1947-1976, (New Delhi: Sterling Publishers, 1977), 188-89.

maintenance of posts had its own difficulties. Several planes were lost due to mechanical and weather-related problems, and one was shot down while trying to supply a beleaguered post at Purr.⁴⁸ The four-man 'ejection' crew, in addition to the dangers of the job, had to ensure that dropped supplies were accurate, because the combination of jungle, hills, and guerrillas made retrieval of lost supplies a dangerous task for the troops on the ground. In addition, all supplies had to be dropped before the monsoon, adding to the burden.⁴⁹

Still, air maintenance successfully kept the military posts supplied. It was, however, not an option for urban areas which depended on roads to connect them to each other and to the rest of the country. The army had little choice but to protect these roads, and a good number of its forces were employed in this task. It would have been impossible to maintain control over the roads at all times. Therefore the army sought to 'clear' the roads before running convoys by sending out 'road-protection parties' on 'road-clearing' operations.⁵⁰ Platoons were distributed along the length of major roads and highways for this task, patrolling between the posts to keep them clear of the guerrillas on

⁴⁸Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 35-36. Nirmal Nibedon, *Nagaland: The Night of the Guerrillas*, 90-91.

⁴⁹Kalkat, *The Far-Flung Frontiers*, 61.

⁵⁰*Ibid.*

days when convoys were scheduled.⁵¹ This was essentially a troop-intensive operation, though the army also tried to use armored cars to provide additional protection and fire support for its troops.⁵² These operations indicate the importance that the army paid, in operational terms, to the task of area dominance.

Superiority of Forces:

The army also emphasized superiority of forces at all times. The hit-and-run tactics of the Nagas did not permit the army to come to the assistance of units under assault. Therefore units subject to such assault had to be able to defeat the assault on their own, something they could do only if they were sufficiently strong. Since all units, whether deployed in posts in the jungle, or on patrol or on road-clearing operations, were subject to attack, the army

⁵¹Lieutenant-General P. S. Bhagat, *An Army Commander's Red Diary* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1986), 44; Kalkat, *The Far-Flung Frontiers*, 61; Stracey, *Nagaland Nightmares*, 115.

⁵²In 1960, the newly raised No.1 Independent Squadron of the 7th Light Cavalry, equipped with Daimler and Humber armored cars, was deployed in Nagaland for convoy protection duties, and the squadron remained there till 1971. This was apparently the only use of armor in these operations, though even these were only light vehicles rather than battle tanks. C. L. Proudfoot, *We Lead: The 7th Light Cavalry, 1784-1990* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991), 128-29. For other unit histories that provide details of these operations, see, Proudfoot, *Flash of the Khukri*, 69-70; Colonel R. D. Palsokar, *The Grenadiers: A Tradition of Valor* (Jabalpur, India: Grenadiers Regimental Center, 1980), 295, and C. L. Proudfoot, *Valor Enshrined: A History of the Maratha Light Infantry, vol. 2, 1947-1979* (Belgaum, India: The Maratha Light Infantry Regimental Center, 1980), 35.

emphasized deploying large, mainly company-sized units.

Most unit deployment reflected this emphasis on large units, with most camps being established at company strength. For example, when the 2nd Maratha Light Infantry went into operation against the Nagas, they were deployed at company strength and sometimes even at battalion strength.⁵³ Similarly, when the 3rd Grenadiers went to Nagaland in June 1959 for road and convoy protection duties, it was deployed in company strength, with A Company at Chuchuyimlang, B Company and battalion headquarters at Merangkong, C company at a post called Mile 53, and D company at Longchang.⁵⁴ The 2nd Kumaon, deployed in the same area in January 1962, also established company strength posts.⁵⁵ Unit histories of those battalions deployed against the Nagas reveal that almost every post established by the army in Nagaland appears to have been established at such strengths.⁵⁶

The pattern remained the same even when these units

⁵³See details of its operations in Proudfoot, *Valor Enshrined: A History of the Maratha Light Infantry*, 34-35.

⁵⁴Palsokar, *The Grenadiers: A Tradition of Valor*, 293-94.

⁵⁵Praval, *Valor Triumphs: A History of the Kumaon Regiment*, 229.

⁵⁶Proudfoot, *Flash of the Khukri*, 69-70; V. R. Raghavan, *By Land and Sea: The Post-Independence History of the Punjab Regiment, 1947-1986* (n.p.: Punjab Regimental Center, Ramgarh Cantonment, Bihar, 1986), 23; and Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*. See also, Kalkat, *The Far-Flung Frontiers*, 60-61.

left their camps to conduct operations. According to one officer, while conducting patrol or raids, "A strength of 70 to 80 men is found necessary . . . to have sufficient firepower to deal with any unexpected situations."⁵⁷ Unit histories are replete with accounts of such large unit operations. Most raids and patrols were conducted with multiple platoons or at company strength, and many times even at battalion strength, despite the clumsiness and ineffectiveness of such large unit operations. The first major operation launched by the 2nd Maratha Light Infantry was conducted by its D company; subsequent operations included the entire battalion.⁵⁸ In early 1959, C and D companies of the 3rd Grenadiers jointly raided a rebel camp in Dzuna Nala; in April, the 3rd Grenadiers joined with two other battalions, the 4th Sikh Light Infantry and the 4/8th Gorkha battalions to attack rebels near the Diyung river.⁵⁹ In February 1958, when the 15th Kumaon detected a rebel camp near their base at Merangkong, it sent out a company-strength patrol to deal with it.⁶⁰ The only exception appears to have been road-clearing units, which operated

⁵⁷Jatar, "Counterinsurgency Operations," 415.

⁵⁸Proudfoot, *Valor Enshrined: A History of the Maratha Light Infantry*, 34.

⁵⁹Palsokar, *The Grenadiers: A Tradition of Valor*, 293.

⁶⁰Praval, *Valor Triumphs: A History of the Kumaon Regiment*, 221.

mostly at platoon strength, though even here some accounts reveal multiple-platoon operations.⁶¹

The Positional-War Bias in Counterinsurgency Doctrine

To summarize, the Indian army's early counterinsurgency doctrine was made up of the following four elements:

- i. The Indian army believed that the counterinsurgency operations it was engaged in involved fighting fellow-Indians, and therefore it required fighting under different rules. In particular, fighting fellow-Indians imposed limitations on the amount of force that could be employed, especially the use of heavy firepower.
- ii. The second element of the doctrine was the belief that insurgents required the support of and access to the general population. Therefore, a successful counterinsurgency effort required isolating the insurgents from the general population. The chosen method for operationalizing this was through the grouping of villages, a method

⁶¹See for example, the account of an ambush on a two-platoon road-clearing patrol in Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 43. Moreover, even when they operated at platoon strength, they operated within easy reach of the other platoons of the company, along the same road.

borrowed from the British, and through 'cordon and search' operations.

iii. The army also believed that defeating the insurgents required the army to assert direct control over insurgency-affected areas, or 'dominate' it, in army parlance. This would be done by establishing large numbers of military posts in such areas, with each post given the responsibility of 'dominating' a fixed area around the post.

iv. Finally, the doctrine also emphasized maintaining superiority of forces, both in deployment as well as in operations.

The doctrine fit well within the overall positional-war orientation of the Indian army. Three of the four elements which constituted the army's counterinsurgency doctrine reflect the strong influence of the positional-war orientation of the army, the exception being the first element.

The second and third elements of the doctrine, isolating the guerrillas and dominating insurgency affected areas, required the army to establish and hold fixed defensive positions. Isolating the guerrillas was to be accomplished by grouping villages together into one large

center, akin to a small town, which the army would defend. This was a task that was well-suited to the positional-war orientation of the army and one which the army would expect to perform in a positional war, such as with Pakistan or China. The only major difference in Nagaland was that the task of defending the grouped villages was easier because of the relative weakness of the Naga rebels. The Nagas never attacked grouped villages because they lacked heavy weapons like mortars and artillery required for the task. Therefore, the primary chore of the Indian army was to prevent the infiltration of these villages. But preventing infiltration of villages is not a task normally associated with positional war; not surprisingly, this was a chore the army never mastered.⁶² The second method was the cordon and search operation, which also required units of at least company size, but more often of battalion size. Though this was a different type of operation from what the army might engage in positional war, it was consistent with the army's positional-war bias towards large-unit operations.

'Dominating' insurgency-affected areas also fit well within the existing positional-war orientation of the army. The army dominated areas by establishing strong bases from which it sought to control the neighboring areas. Establishing and defending military bases, as with defending grouped-villages, was a task that the army would

⁶²Praval, *Indian Army After Independence*, 561.

expect to perform in any positional war. Indeed, these bases were very similar to military bases that the army established in remote area of the border with China and Burma.⁶³ The only difference in Nagaland was that these bases had little or no artillery support and, in many cases, no transportation.

Finally, the doctrine also emphasized maintaining superiority of forces. By itself, this does not indicate any positional-war bias because guerrilla forces also emphasize this point. However, there is one crucial difference. Guerrilla forces emphasize superiority at the point of contact, during an engagement. The Indian army emphasized maintaining superior forces *at all times*. This could only be achieved by establishing large military posts and by sending out large columns on patrols and raids, even when such emphasis on size detracted from operational utility. The emphasis on large unit operations in conditions where such operations were clearly ineffective is another indication of the positional-war bias in the doctrine.

The one element of the doctrine that does not fit the positional-war orientation of the army is the first element, the limitation on the use of force in counterinsurgency operations. Positional war emphasizes

⁶³Giriraj Shah, *Elite Forces of India*, vol. 2 (New Delhi: Cosmo Publications, 1994), 410-412.

massive use of firepower, through artillery and air-support, to accompany military operations. The Indian army eschewed such fire-support in its counterinsurgency operations. On the surface, this might indicate a contradiction in the argument that the army's counterinsurgency doctrine had a strong positional-war bias. On closer examination, the contradiction is less serious. First, this element of the doctrine was not generated internally by the army. It was imposed from outside, by the political leadership. Thus the absence of the positional-war bias is not surprising. Second, this was the one element of the doctrine that the army had difficulty in following -- the army's request to use air power for fire-support, complaints about the limitations imposed on the use of force, and the lapses into heavy-handedness in counterinsurgency operations all indicate this difficulty.⁶⁴

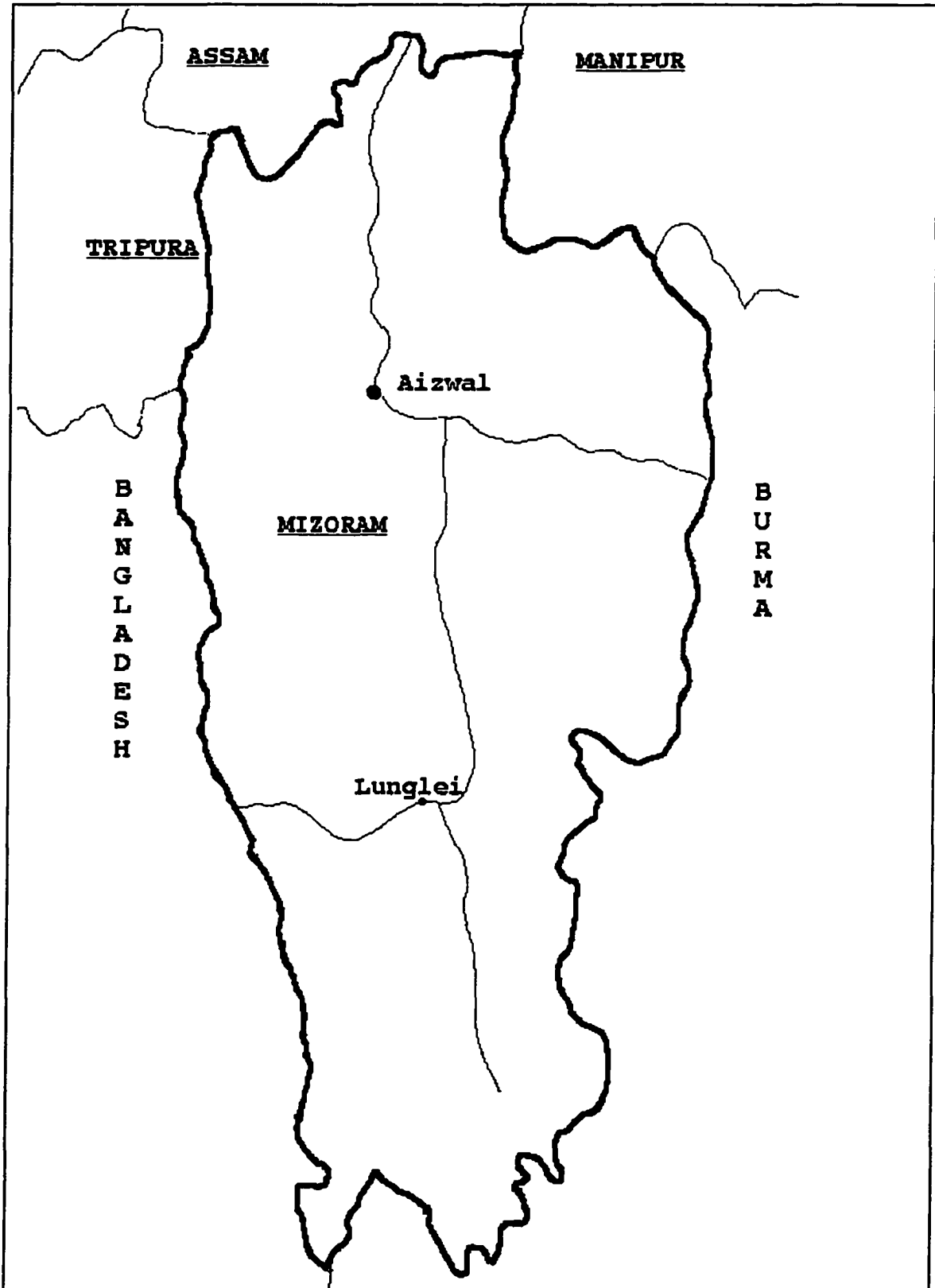
⁶⁴The human rights violations involved in army operations are recorded in Nandita Haksar and Luingham Luithi, *Nagaland File: A Question of Human Rights* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1984); Namo, *The Prisoner From Nagaland*; Neville Maxwell, *India, the Nagas and the North-east*; and International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, *The Naga Nation And Its Struggle Against Genocide*. Despite the army's protest that such reports are exaggerated, army accounts themselves reveal gross abuses. See, for example, Sinha, *A Soldier Recalls*, 214-16. The civil administration also engaged in such abuses. See, S. C. Dev, *Nagaland: The Untold Story* (Calcutta: Glory Printers, 1988), 46-49. For a rebuttal of these charges, see, V. K. Anand, *Conflict in Nagaland: A Study of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* (New Delhi: Chanakya Publications, 1980), 148-55, and Y. D. Gundevia, *War and Peace in Nagaland* (New Delhi: Palit and Palit, 1975), 86.

The impact of the positional-war orientation on counterinsurgency doctrine is also revealed by one element that the army *did not* adopt. Despite the explicit advocacy and acceptance of the British model of counterinsurgency, one aspect of the British model that is almost never referred to and was not adopted was the British pattern of small-unit operations. Facing almost exactly the same challenge as the Indian army did in Nagaland in detecting and assaulting guerrillas hiding in the jungles, the British formed four-or-five man teams called the 'ferret force' to carry out long-range jungle operations. Such small teams were difficult for the guerrillas to detect, unlike the seventy or eighty man units that the Indian army preferred. The ferret force was a successful innovation; by comparison, Indian army patrols and raiding columns had an almost complete record of failure in finding and ambushing guerrillas. Adopting the British practice of small-unit operations would have been incompatible with the positional-war orientation of the army, which stressed large-unit operations. Thus, both what the army adopted and what it did not adopt as elements of its counterinsurgency doctrine reveal a positional-war bias.

The Indian Army and Counterinsurgency: The Second Phase

A ceasefire between the Naga rebels and the Indian army came into effect on 5 September 1964, and lasted until

MAP 5: MIZORAM



Map by author/Boundaries approximate/Not to scale

August 1972. Though the ceasefire did not end the war in Nagaland, it did reduce the level of violence. However, the Mizo insurgency which began in February 1966 led to the further evolution of the army's counterinsurgency doctrine.

For the first time, the army began systematically preparing for counterinsurgency. The Eastern Command of the army had set up a Counterinsurgency Training School at Vairengte in September 1968. In May 1970, this became the Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS), which trained all units of the army going on routine tours into insurgency-affected areas in the northeast. Battalions trained at CIJWS for about two months as a unit, but the focus of the training was on jungle survival skills rather than on small unit operations. Until now, no systematic training in counterinsurgency had been given to troops. A Jungle Warfare Training School had been established in Dehra Dun in the 1950s, but not many units appear to have gone through training here.⁶⁵ For the first time, the army also compiled a manual for counterinsurgency training.⁶⁶

⁶⁵The unit history of the 3rd Gorkha Rifles mentions that its 2nd battalion trained at this school in April-May 1962, but this is the only reference in the various unit histories to this school. See, Proudfoot, *Flash of the Khukri*, 76. The only other reference to this school is in Major-General S. D. Sood, "Specialist Force for Counter Insurgency," *Combat Journal* 21:1 (April 1994): 58-59. Proudfoot mentions a jungle training camp at Mynkre, but it is unclear which school this belongs to, if any. See, Proudfoot, *Valour Enshrined*, 131. Until the CIJWS opened, most counterinsurgency training apparently took place in divisional battle schools.

There were no changes in the army's counterinsurgency doctrine during this period. However, this time the army expended far greater effort in implementing its counterinsurgency doctrine, apparently feeling that its performance in Nagaland had suffered because of the lackluster implementation of the doctrine. For example, there was a general perception that in Nagaland the effect of the village grouping program had been foiled because it had not been implemented everywhere, thus allowing the guerrillas to move to those areas where the program had not been implemented.⁶⁷ Intent on not repeating the mistake in Mizoram, an ambitious program of village grouping began, with the objective of grouping all villages in the state into what were called Protected and Progressive Villages. This scheme, called Operation Accomplishment, followed the failure of a program called Operation Blanket.⁶⁸ Under Operation Blanket, the army tried to isolate the guerrillas by deploying 20-man pickets outside every village in Mizoram, which were charged with preventing the entry of guerrillas into villages, in addition to providing civic

⁶⁶ Sinha, *A Soldier Recalls*, 209.

⁶⁷ Praval, *Indian Army After Independence*, 561; 'Joe', "Operation Remodeling," *USI Journal* 96 (October-December 1966): 300-306; Kalkat, *The Far-Flung Frontiers*, 93.

⁶⁸ Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 271. Other accounts refer to this program as Operation Security. See Nirmal Nibedon, *Mizoram: The Dagger Brigade* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1980), 105-07.

assistance to the population and generally showing the flag.⁶⁹ The program failed because there were far too many villages to cover, even with the army's seemingly inexhaustible manpower resource.⁷⁰

The village-grouping scheme, begun as a consequence of the failure of Operation Blanket, proceeded in three phases. The first phase began in early 1967 and covered the villages along the main highway that ran south from Assam to the bottom of Mizoram through Aizwal and Lunglei.⁷¹ However, the constitutionality of such village groupings were challenged in court by local political parties and human rights groups. Nevertheless, the second phase of the groupings covering northern Mizoram was completed by late 1968. This was the end of the grouping scheme in Mizoram: the third phase, to cover central and southern Mizoram was stopped by the Assam High Court in Guwahati.⁷² The army also continued to depend on cordon

⁶⁹Palit, *Sentinels of the North-East*, 269.

⁷⁰Ibid, 269-70.

⁷¹Details are from: Thenphunga Sailo, *Speeches and Writings of Brig. T. Sailo*, AVSM (retd.), Chief Minister of Mizoram, second edition, (Aizwal, Mizoram, India: Information, Public Relations & Tourism, Government of Mizoram, 1983), 13; V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army, 1600-1974* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1974), 455; Animesh Ray, *Mizoram* (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1993), 163-64.

⁷²Sailo, *Speeches and Writings of Brig. T. Sailo*, 14-15. See also, Roychoudhury, *The Northeast: Roots of Insurgency*, 162-63.

and search operations, especially in areas where villages could not be grouped. These continued to be large-unit operations, and no more successful than they were in the 1950s. One officer called it a "total waste of time."⁷³

Though there is no indication of change in the army's doctrine, this was a period of some experimentation. One of the experiments involved the formation of a new type of battalion, called the 'I' or insurgency battalion.⁷⁴ These were dedicated counterinsurgency battalions, which were 'lighter' than standard infantry battalions.⁷⁵ Several such battalions were formed in 1968.⁷⁶ The experiment did not last very long: in December 1970, these battalions were ordered to convert back to 'standard' infantry battalions.⁷⁷ Though the formation of such light

⁷³Brigadier Dal Singh, interview by author, 13 August 1996, New Delhi, written notes. Brigadier Dal Singh served extensively in the northeast, which included the command of a battalion in Nagaland in 1968-70.

⁷⁴Major-General Dipankar Banerjee, interview by author, 24 June 1996, New Delhi, written notes.

⁷⁵In an unusual break from tradition, these were also 'mixed' battalions, including troops from different regiments of the army in each battalion.

⁷⁶There is very little information available about these battalions. The account here is based on interviews with army officers and analysis of rather sparse references in unit histories. See, Praval, *Valour Triumphs*, 296; Longer, *Forefront For Ever*, 230-31; and A. M. Sethna and Valmiki Katju, *Traditions of A Regiment: The Story of the Rajputana Rifles* (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 1983), 87.

battalions specifically for counterinsurgency tasks might appear contradictory to the positional-war orientation of the army, this is not so. First, the actual employment of these battalions were in no way different from the employment of the army's other 'standard' battalions. For example, the 31st Mahar, one of the I-battalions, was deployed on routine border-sealing operations.⁷⁸

Similarly, the 31st Kumaon, another I-battalion, appears to have operated mostly in company strength, no different from the standard battalions.⁷⁹ Thus, the formation of these units was clearly not the consequence of any change in existing doctrine. Indeed, the reason appears to have been far more mundane: standard infantry battalions, with their long administrative and logistical 'tail' had difficulty in operating in the remote northeastern jungles and mountains. These battalions were 'lighter' because many of the logistical, administrative and artillery components of the standard battalions were left out. Second, even this brief experimentation was given up precisely because these battalions were considered unsuitable for positional-war tasks.⁸⁰

⁷⁷They were converted in April 1971, in the process also gaining new unit numbers. The 31st Mahar became the 14th Mahar, 31st Kumaon became the 17th Kumaon and the 17th Rajputana Rifles became the 12th Rajputana Rifles.

⁷⁸Longer, *Forefront For Ever*, 230-31.

⁷⁹Praval, *Valour Triumphs*, 296.

The army faced another task during this period, that of stopping large 'gangs' of rebels travelling to Pakistan and China for training and equipment. Naga rebels began to travel to Pakistan in 1962 and to China in 1966.⁸¹ Mizo rebels also followed suit. The Indian army responded with border-sealing operations, establishing large numbers of border posts and monitoring the villages close to the border in order to trap the rebels. Large numbers of army columns were also sent through the jungles in the hope of picking up the trail of the rebels. All of these operations were conducted with large units of at least company strength, and the rebels usually managed to elude the army. Nevertheless, the army had a few notable successes, one being the trapping of a large rebel group led by Mowu Angami, the commander of the rebel forces, at Zunheboto in March 1969.⁸² In addition, the army also began using helicopter-borne troops, mostly for quickly

⁸⁰The army itself has released little information on the formation and disbanding of the I-battalions. My conclusions are based on the following interviews with army officers. Interview with Major-General Banerjee. Also, Lieutenant-General V. K. Nayar, interview by author, 4 July 1996, New Delhi, written notes and Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar, interview by author, 2 July 1996, written notes.

⁸¹Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 136; Prakash Singh, *Nagaland, fourth edition*, (New Delhi: National Book Trust, 1995), 104-05, 113; Nibedon, *Nagaland: Night of the Guerrillas*, 97, 159.

⁸²The capture of this rebel force appears at least partly the consequence of the use of small-unit patrols of six-seven men, something the army rarely attempted before or subsequently. Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 66-72.

inserting troops into the jungles to follow up intelligence leads of a guerrilla presence.⁸³ Such operations allowed the army to overcome its earlier problems of mobility. However, here also, there is little indication of any change in the doctrine itself.

Thus, during the second phase of the army's involvement in counterinsurgency, there is no indication that the doctrine underwent any changes. In contrast, additional indicators of the positional-war bias can be seen in the army's approach. First, the army abandoned its only attempt to create a specialized counterinsurgency force. Though this attempt was itself a half-step because it was not accompanied by any change in the doctrine, it held the promise of a new counterinsurgency philosophy that would not be burdened by the positional-war bias. Second, though new challenges arose, such as the revolt in Mizoram and the rebel groups' going to China or Pakistan, and new methods were tried, such as the forming of I-battalions and helicopter-borne operations, there was no rethinking of the basic doctrine: new challenges were met and new methods employed within the framework of the existing doctrine.

The Indian Army and Counterinsurgency: The Third Phase

The third phase of the army's involvement in

⁸³Praval, *India's Paratroopers: A History of the Parachute Regiment of India*, 275.

counterinsurgency was in the 1980s. Though there was no change in the positional war grounding of the army's counterinsurgency doctrine, another element was added to the doctrine. Army writings increasingly referred to the impossibility of a military victory in counterinsurgency, arguing that problems of insurgency have to be solved by political agreement with the insurgents. The army's role in insurgencies was limited to 'restoring normalcy' so that a political solution can be reached.

No Military Solution to Insurgencies:

Until the 1980s, there was little indication in military writings of any doubt that insurgencies could be militarily defeated. Discussions in professional military journals did not even consider the issue of whether such wars could be won. Essays about counterinsurgency examined issues of tactics and strategy without considering this more fundamental issue, giving clue to the widespread acceptance of the belief in victory.⁸⁴ This is not to suggest that the army did not recognize the political roots of insurgencies. Most essays by army officers agreed that

⁸⁴See, for example, Major Paul Varma, "Jungle Operations Against Guerrillas," *The Infantry Journal* 11:1 (April 1960): 24-34; Lieutenant-Colonel D. B. White, "The Establishment of an Intelligence Organization at Battalion Level in Nagaland," *The Infantry Journal* 25:1 (April 1970): 37-42; Fanga La, "Popular Misconceptions on Guerrilla Warfare and Terrorism," *USI Journal* 101 (January-March, 1971): 1-6; Major-General O. S. Kalkat, "Problems of Infantry and Police Battalions in Nagaland and Mizo Hills," *The Infantry Journal* 30:2 (October 1973): 4-11. See also the references in footnotes 31 and 32.

insurgencies had political, social and economic roots. A typical article stated:

Popular motivation to rise in armed struggle has its roots in different types of aspirations of the people. They may be political-nationalism, borne out of the desire for independence; economic, due to poverty of the masses and concentration of wealth in the hands of a few; dissatisfaction in the ownership of land and its cultivation; and social and religious, for wanting to assert as an entity (sic).⁸⁵

In addition, army officers reiterated the need for close coordination of civil and military efforts to defeat insurgencies: "Close cooperation between local civil administration and the Army deployed in its area is the *sine qua non* for successful counter insurgency operations."⁸⁶ Despite both the recognition of the political roots of the problem of insurgency and the need for close involvement of the civil administration in counterinsurgency, the faith in a military victory remained.

By the mid-1980s this changed: there was no longer

⁸⁵Colonel R. D. Palsokar, "Essentials of Guerrilla War," *USI Journal* 103 (January-March 1973): 39. See also expressions of similar sentiments in Sirohi, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency," 65, and Sinha, "Counterinsurgency Operations," 258.

⁸⁶Sinha, "Counter Insurgency Operations," 263. Other expressions of similar sentiment can be found in, Anand, "Counter Insurgency Theory and Practice in the Mizo Hills,"; Palsokar, "Fighting the Guerrilla,"; Sirohi, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency,"; and Kalkat, "Problems of Infantry and Police Battalions in Nagaland and Mizo Hills."

any faith in a military solution. Army officers now appeared convinced that only political solutions could end insurgencies. One officer wrote that ". . . it should be explicitly clear that there is nothing called a military solution to the problem of insurgency and terrorism. The solution *per se* is political."⁸⁷ Another officer complained that the army ". . . has been there (northeastern India) for two decades without much to show by way of results except for reducing the level of the insurgency from the high of the sixties to the relative low of the eighties."⁸⁸ By the time the Indian Peace Keeping Force was sent to Sri Lanka, the belief that there were no military solutions to an insurgency had become an article of faith in the army.⁸⁹

This new element of the doctrine, the insistence on political resolution of insurgencies, can also be traced to positional-war bias of the army: faced with a choice between giving up its insistence on a military solution or

⁸⁷Major-General Yashwant Dewa, "Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism: Old Perceptions But New Challenges," *USI Journal* 116 (July-September 1986): 219-33.

⁸⁸Lieutenant-Colonel Y. S. Panwar, "Unity in Diversity or Diversity in Unity," *USI Journal* 116 (January-March 1987): 22-40. See also, Brigadier D. P. S. Rahguvanshi, "Terrorism and the Military Response," *USI Journal* 115 (October-December 1985): 317-324.

⁸⁹Thus, in Sri Lanka, Indian army officers described their efforts in strictly limited terms as "restoring normalcy" so that the political process could resume. See chapter 3.

fundamentally altering its doctrine to emphasize small-unit operations, the army chose the former. By the 1970s, army officers recognized that unless the army reorganized its counterinsurgency forces to be able to conduct small-scale operations, it would not be able to defeat insurgents, despite the success in reducing the level of insurgency. An internal assessment of counterinsurgency operations by the 8th Mountain Division "noticed that small scale operations were more likely to succeed than large scale ones."⁹⁰ Essays in professional journals showed an increasing awareness of the uselessness of the army's emphasis on large-scale operations and the need for small unit operations, opinions that appear to have been uniformly held among officers with counterinsurgency experience. One officer noted that "saturation of the affected area with security forces is not the answer. Past experience shows that this does not produce results."⁹¹ Another declared that "Counter Insurgency warfare calls for small-scale operations of section or platoon strength, where a handful of men are required to fight in complete

⁹⁰This assessment was apparently conducted sometime in 1970-71. Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, 80. That this came as a surprise is indicative of both contemporary army attitudes as well as the changes taking place in its perceptions.

⁹¹Dewa, "Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism: Old Perceptions But New Challenges."

isolation..."⁹² A final indicator of this changing awareness might be found in the motto adopted by the newly-founded Counter-Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School: "Fight A Guerrilla Like A Guerrilla."

Yet the recognition of the need for changing the doctrine clearly did not lead to any new doctrine. This reluctance to change the doctrine can be traced to the positional war orientation of the army. Changing the army's counterinsurgency doctrine to emphasize small-unit operations, or training the army to "fight like guerrillas," would have altered the basic structure and purpose of the army, which the army saw as fighting external threats. The army has repeatedly stressed that its primary purpose is not to fight domestic rebellions. Even the unit history of the 8th Mountain Division, the one formation that has had the longest experience in counterinsurgency, states that ". . . counterinsurgency is only a subsidiary role of the formation. Its main role is in a war situation, to defend the country against external aggression."⁹³ Army officers have noted that preparing for counterinsurgency can be detrimental to fighting positional

⁹²Kalkat, *The Far-Flung Frontiers*, 84. Other essays that make similar points but less clearly are, Anand, "Counter Insurgency Theory and Practice in Mizo Hills," 154; Sinha, "Counter Insurgency Operations"; Sirohi, "Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency."

⁹³See Foreword by General K. V. Krishna Rao in Palsokar, *Forever in Operations*, vi.

wars.⁹⁴ Therefore, resistance to change clearly appears to be the consequence of the positional-war orientation of the army. Since the army was unwilling to change its basic orientation, and since military victory was seen as unlikely without such changes, political resolution was the only logical alternative. In short, preserving the positional-war orientation was more important for the army than maintaining its conviction in a military solution to insurgencies. Thus, the emphasis on political resolution of insurgencies can be seen as the outcome of the positional-war bias.

Summary

Thus, by the time the Indian army went to Sri Lanka, it had developed counterinsurgency doctrine with a strong positional-war bias. Every element of the doctrine, excepting the limitation on the use of force, which was imposed by the political leadership, exhibited this bias. Though the doctrine had evolved somewhat since its development in the 1950s, the positional-war bias remained.

⁹⁴Colonel Mukesh Sabharwal, "Contribution of Security Forces in Counter Insurgency and Timings of Their Employment," *Combat Journal* 20:2 (August 1993): 16-22, and Brigadier G. B. Reddy, "Some Reflections on Approach to Counter Insurgency in the North-East," *Combat Journal* 16:1 (April 1989): 21-30.

CHAPTER FIVE

ASSESSING THE THEORIES

In the last chapter, I described the development of the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine, demonstrating the positional-war bias that has characterized the doctrine from the beginning. In this chapter, I will first assess how well the organizational culture and the neorealist approaches explain this bias, drawing on the hypotheses from the two approaches. Some assessments can be made from what we already know about the development of the doctrine. Others require additional analysis. Subsequently, I will draw some conclusions about the relative usefulness of the two approaches. Finally, I shall outline some of the implications of these conclusions for international politics theory.

Neorealism and the Conventional-War Bias: Hypothesis 1:

The positional-war bias in counterinsurgency doctrine is caused by external threats.

This hypothesis suggests both that the Indian army focused primarily on external threats and that meeting these threats led to the positional-war bias in the

counterinsurgency doctrine. There is sufficient evidence to support the first part of the hypothesis but not the second.

The Indian army has been, from 1947 onward, preparing to meet external threats to Indian security. Within two months of the independence of India and Pakistan in August 1947, they went to war over the state of Kashmir. This war ended in December 1948, though the dispute itself was not resolved. At the time of the cease-fire India controlled roughly two-thirds of the state. Indian defense planners in 1949 determined that the only likelihood of war that India faced was with Pakistan over Kashmir.¹ H. M. Patel, India's defense secretary during the early years of independence, later described the government's view of its defense problems.

The Government of India considered its northern border to be a safe frontier and did not consider that it needed apprehend any hostile activity from that direction. On its eastern frontier also, it did not consider that it need apprehend any trouble from Burma. It was only from the west and the east where it had common frontier with Pakistan that it apprehended possible trouble. And this too it did chiefly because of Kashmir In these circumstances it is understandable that the Government of India should have directed the Defense Ministry to organize itself so as to be able to resist a possible enemy of the size and caliber of Pakistan.²

¹Most of the following details of Indian defense plans are from Lorne J. Kavic, *India's Quest For Security: Defence Policies, 1947-1965* (Berkeley, CA.: University of California Press, 1967), 36-37.

India's security concerns during the early years were dominated by this need to defend Kashmir, where geography favored Pakistan rather than India. Pakistan had easier access to Kashmir because most of Kashmir's roads and other communications links connected it to Pakistan rather than India. Kashmir's only link to India was a narrow corridor that appropriately came to be called "the chicken's neck" because of its vulnerability to a Pakistani attack. If this corridor was cut, Pakistan could isolate the Indian forces inside Kashmir. Additionally, the mountainous terrain would make it easier for Pakistan to infiltrate tribal raiders from the adjoining North-West Frontier Province (NWFP) of Pakistan to attack Indian communications and supply lines. This would exacerbate the army's problems in Kashmir by forcing it to divert at least a part of its forces in Kashmir to checking such infiltration.³

²As quoted in V. Longer, *Red Coats to Olive Green: A History of the Indian Army, 1600-1974* (Bombay: Allied Publishers, 1974), 342. The defense secretary is the top bureaucrat in the defense ministry and is directly responsible to the defense minister.

³The war over Kashmir in 1947 had begun with just such a tribal invasion. The Indian army's assessment that Pakistan would follow the same plan in any future attack was accurate. Pakistan's attack on Kashmir in 1965 was also preceded by the infiltration of irregular forces, though these were mostly from the Pakistan army rather than the NWFP tribals.

Faced with these difficulties, Indian defense planners decided that they would not allow any war over Kashmir to be confined to Kashmir: India would respond to any Pakistani attack on Kashmir by carrying the war over to the international border between the two countries, attacking across the Rajasthan desert and the Punjab plains, threatening major Pakistani cities such as Lahore, thus forcing Pakistan to divert its forces from Kashmir.⁴ These war plans emphasized the army's role over the other two services, and stressed conventional infantry and armored operations in strengths of at least a division or more.⁵ Thus, from the very beginning, external threats dominated the Indian army's concerns.

Continuing tensions with Pakistan ensured that Indian attention would remain fixed on external threats. In 1951, responding to indications of a possible Pakistani plan to attack Kashmir, the Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru ordered the army's only armored division to move toward the Punjab border, and made public the Indian plan to retaliate

⁴The feasibility of these war plans are doubtful because the Indian army was weak in the Punjab also during the early years. Local army commanders had to raise irregular forces from the civilian population to make up for the lack of troops. See, Shankarrao Pandurang Patil Thorat, *From Reville to Retreat* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 1986), 108.

⁵Details of the Indian war plans can be found in Thorat, *From Reville to Retreat*, 110-11, and in Shyamol Kumar Sinha, *A Soldier Recalls* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1992), 137-38.

across the international border if Kashmir was attacked.⁶ Other developments also indicated the perception of a strong external threat. For example, early army plans had envisaged a small, highly mobile force. In accordance with these plans -- and as a economizing measure -- the Indian government decided to reduce the strength of the army.⁷ But continuing tensions with Pakistan prevented these plans from being carried out, though some limited reduction did actually take place in 1951. In fact, by the mid-1950s, the army's strength began increasing. There were also fairly frequent border incidents, which included artillery duels as well as cross-border raids by both sides.⁸

Additionally, the Indian army's deployment pattern also reflected the predominance of the Pakistani threat. Almost the entire Indian army was deployed against West Pakistan.⁹ The Indian army in the mid-1950s included five

⁶Sarvepalli Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru: A Biography*, vol. 2, 1947-1956 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979), 115. Details of the army's response can be found in Sinha, *A Soldier Recalls*, 138. Some army officers have claimed that the move to the border was their idea, and one that both the bureaucracy and the civilian leadership initially resisted. See Thorat, *From Reville to Retreat*, 116-18.

⁷Ibid, 84.

⁸Thorat, *From Reville to Retreat*, 168.

⁹Almost all of Pakistan's military force was concentrated in the western wing of the country, or West Pakistan. The eastern wing of Pakistan, or East Pakistan seceded in 1971 to become Bangladesh.

infantry divisions, one armored division and a number of independent brigades, including one independent armored brigade. Four of the five infantry divisions as well as the army's only armored division were deployed against West Pakistan.¹⁰ Three of the infantry divisions were deployed in Kashmir, facing West Pakistan. A strike force called the Punjab force was stationed in the Punjab plains, consisting of two infantry divisions and the armored division. In accordance with the plans to retaliate against West Pakistan for an attack on Kashmir, this force was tasked to strike across the Punjab plains and capture Lahore. In addition to the strike force, another independent armored brigade was also deployed in the Punjab.¹¹ Two more independent infantry brigades were deployed further south, in Rajasthan and the Kutch region, all facing West Pakistan. Another independent infantry brigade was deployed against East Pakistan. A solitary battalion was stationed in the Leh region of Ladakh against China. The remainder of the army, one independent infantry

¹⁰The following details are from Kavic, *India's Quest for Security*, 85-86.

¹¹These deployments sound impressive, but at least till the mid-1950s, Indian forces and in particular the armored forces appear to have been extremely weak due to the lack of spares and outdated equipment. See Gurcharan Singh Sandhu, *The Indian Armour: History of the Indian Armored Corps, 1941-1971 volume 2* (New Delhi: Vision Books, 1982), 302-303.

brigade and three battalions, was in peace stations in south India.

Indian military exercises also emphasized preparations for a war with Pakistan. The largest army exercise conducted since 1947, a corps-level exercise called Exercise Vijay, simulated a Pakistani assault and an Indian counterattack.¹² Indian army training also focused on overcoming specific problems in a war with Pakistan such as crossing the Ichhogil canal that Pakistan had built as an irrigation canal cum anti-tank ditch.¹³

By the 1960s, India was also forced to pay attention to its northern border with China. This northern commitment did not lead to any dilution of the forces facing the Pakistan border. Rather, new forces -- ten new mountain divisions -- were raised. These mountain divisions were optimized for defense against China and had different organizational structure and equipment to allow them to operate along the Himalayan border.¹⁴ The raising of the mountain divisions, in addition to improving the operational capability of the army on the northern borders, also allowed the army to continue maintaining an adequate defense against Pakistan. In essence, India created two

¹²Ibid.

¹³Thorat, *From Reville to Retreat*, 166.

¹⁴Kavic, *India's Quest for Security*, 194.

different armies, one each against Pakistan and China.¹⁵ Still, the majority of the army continued to face Pakistan. By the mid-1980s, seventeen of the army's thirty-one divisions were deployed against Pakistan, including both of the armored divisions.¹⁶ Pakistan, on its side of the border, deployed fifteen of its eighteen divisions against India, thus roughly matching the Indian strength. The balance was a lot less favorable to India along the northern border. There, the ten mountain divisions faced twenty-six Chinese infantry divisions.¹⁷

The evidence so far supports the neorealist expectation that the Indian army's preparations for war had focused on external threats. However, the neorealist hypothesis also expects some link between the focus on external threats and the positional-war bias in the counterinsurgency doctrine. This link is difficult to establish. It can be surmised that the dominance of the

¹⁵This, of course, refers only to the formations. The infantry components of these formations were the same in both the plains and the mountains.

¹⁶Raju G. C. Thomas, *Indian Security Policy*, (Princeton, NJ.: Princeton University Press, 1986), 142, table 5.1.

¹⁷*Ibid.* The Chinese divisions are smaller than their Indian counterparts. Chinese infantry divisions had only 12,700 men as against 17,500 in an Indian infantry division but it still left the Chinese with nearly twice the number of troops as the Indians.

positional war threats also leads to a positional-war paradigm which saw all war in terms of combat between large units in which victory was a function of superior size and fire-power. This paradigm, in turn, could have led to the positional-war bias in the counterinsurgency doctrine. Chapter 4 showed that during the 1950s, the Indian army operated with just such a paradigm, which also affected the army's counterinsurgency doctrine. Even after the army developed specific counterinsurgency operational tactics such as cordon-and-search, its implementation reflected the dominance of the positional-war paradigm. Thus there is strong correlation in favor of this hypothesis: there was both a strong perception of external positional-war threats and evidence of the positional-war paradigm. Nevertheless, there is insufficient evidence to conclusively establish the causal link between the two; we can surmise that external threats led to the positional-war paradigm, but not conclusively establish it. It is difficult to state with confidence that in the absence of the external threat, the Indian army would not have developed a similar positional-war paradigm or that it would have developed an appropriate counterinsurgency doctrine. This does not necessarily refute the hypothesis, but it prevents any firm conclusions about the validity of the second part of the hypothesis.

Neorealism and the Positional-War Bias: Hypothesis 2:

External positional-war threats prevented the army from making innovations to its counterinsurgency doctrine that threatened the positional-war requirements of the army.

This hypothesis has two parts and requires two different sets of evidence. First, there must be evidence that doctrinal innovations in counterinsurgency failed because of the need to meet positional-war threats. Second, there must be evidence that the army was not generally resistant to doctrinal innovations, since it is always possible that the resistance to innovations in counterinsurgency might simply be an indication of a general resistance to any change.

The development of the counterinsurgency doctrine as outlined in chapter 4 provides evidence for the first part. By the late 1960s, the Indian army had realized the need to adopt a more appropriate counterinsurgency doctrine, one which would not be tied down by the positional-war bias. Internal assessments of army counterinsurgency operations had noticed that small unit operations had greater success than large-unit operations and army officers increasingly emphasized the futility of large unit operations. The Counter Insurgency and Jungle Warfare School (CIJWS) had explicitly adopted a small unit paradigm, indicated by its motto: "Fight A Guerrilla Like A Guerrilla." Finally, the

I-battalions were formed, apparently designed to 'fight like guerrillas.'

Yet, all these attempts to create a new approach to counterinsurgency were abandoned. The army continued to conduct inefficient large-unit operations, the CIJWS was unable to make Indian soldiers into 'guerrilla' fighters, and the I-battalions were converted back to 'standard' battalions. These innovations were abandoned because adopting them would have reduced the army's capacity to meet its primary mission, which was dealing with external threats. Of these cases, the abandonment of the I-battalions provide the best evidence for the hypothesis: the I-battalions were abandoned because they were too weak to fight in a conventional, high-intensity positional-war such as was expected with Pakistan and China.¹⁸ This provides strong evidence for the first part of the hypothesis, that innovations in counterinsurgency failed because of positional-war requirements.

Examples of other doctrinal innovation in the Indian army provide the evidence for the second part of the hypothesis. The army did adopt doctrinal innovations where

¹⁸I restate here the caveat that I made in the last chapter. The army has released no information on these battalions and the unit histories provide no leads. My argument here is based on interviews with a number of senior army officers, all of whom agreed that the army disbanded the I-battalions because of their uselessness for positional-war duties.

such innovations increased its capacity to meet its positional-war requirements. There were at least two such major innovations. The formation of mountain divisions in the 1960s specifically designed to defend the northern border with China was one such major innovation. The second major innovation was the formation of the Re-organized Army Plains Infantry Divisions (RAPID) in the 1980s.¹⁹ Meant for both offensive and defensive operations, these divisions are far more mobile than the regular infantry division.²⁰ With a different organizational structure than the regular infantry division, the RAPIDs were designed for aggressive offensive and defensive operations in fluid battle conditions, a doctrinal concept that was tested during the controversial 'Brass Tacks' exercises in late 1986 and early 1987.²¹

The army has also built two other specialized infantry formations, the air assault division and the desert division. Of the two, the air assault division

¹⁹There was also mountains counterpart to the RAPID called the Re-organized Army Mountain Infantry Division (RAMID), but this appears to be still in the planning stages.

²⁰IDR Research Team, "Some Thoughts on the Evolution of Infantry Organization and Tactics," *Indian Defense Review* (July 1991): 47-56. See also, Mathew Thomas, "The RAPID: An appraisal of India's new look infantry division for warfare in the plains," *Indian Defense Review* (January 1989): 92-102.

²¹For details of some of the new tactical concepts that were tried, see, "Comment", *Indian Defense Review* (July 1987): 5-18.

represents a greater doctrinal innovation, though the expense of building such divisions appears to have limited it to just one division.²² The desert division does not represent such a major doctrinal innovation, but it was also designed to meet special positional-war needs, that of fighting in the desert regions along the southern stretches of the India-Pakistan border.

The contrast between the creation of these specialized formations and doctrines for positional-war and the lack of any such specialization for counterinsurgency is clear evidence that the army had no general resistance to change and innovation, but only to innovation and specialization in counterinsurgency. It also indicates that the army's concern was primarily with meeting external threats. There is thus sufficient evidence to support both parts of this hypothesis. In contrast to hypothesis 1, it is possible to state with confidence that in the absence of external threats, the Indian army would have developed more appropriate counterinsurgency doctrines.

²²International Institute of Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 1996/97* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 159-60.

Organizational Culture and the Positional-War Bias:

Hypothesis 1:

The army's culture, which specifies conventional, high-intensity war as the mode of future war, leads to the positional-war bias in the army's counterinsurgency doctrine.

There is some support for this hypothesis. However, the evidence from chapter 4 suggests that this hypothesis was valid only during the first decade of the development of the army's counterinsurgency doctrine. From the late 1960s onward, the evidence contradicts this hypothesis.

As I illustrated in chapter 4, from the very beginning the Indian army's culture included a positional-war paradigm. This paradigm was deeply entrenched in the army's culture and influenced the army's approach to war, including counterinsurgency. Thus, when the army began counterinsurgency operations in the mid-1950s, it did so without any apparent realization that the positional-war paradigm was unsuitable for counterinsurgency operations, taking for granted the applicability of the positional-war paradigm for all wars. This 'blindness' indicates the influence of organizational culture in the making of the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine. So embedded was the positional-war paradigm that the army was unable to think of fighting war any other way. Though the army developed new operational tactics, such as the cordon-and-search operation, these new tactics were developed within

the existing paradigm. Thus, army operations were undertaken with large units that sought to engage and 'fix' enemy units, before overwhelming them with superior strength.

However, chapter 4 also showed that there was one major change in the application of the positional-war paradigm to counterinsurgency: the army abandoned artillery and air support for its operations. This change, or more precisely the army's resistance to this change, also indicates the strength of the positional-war paradigm. The change itself was imposed from outside, by the army's civilian masters, against army objections. The army resisted the change because the positional-war paradigm stressed the use of artillery support for military operations; used to believing that artillery support was essential for combat, the army found it difficult to consider fighting without it. The abandonment of fire support in counterinsurgency operations thus does not contradict the expectations of the organizational cultural hypothesis; the army's resistance to this change actually suggests that culture strongly influenced the army counterinsurgency doctrine. Both these elements support the organizational culture hypothesis: the army's organizational culture, which included the positional-war paradigm, led to the positional-war bias in the counterinsurgency doctrine.

The organizational culture hypothesis, however, cannot account for the period of doctrinal experimentation of the late 1960s, or for the army's approach to counterinsurgency subsequent to this period. If organizational culture was critical to the doctrine and doctrinal change, then the army should have been unable to consider the possibility of radically changing its counterinsurgency doctrine in the absence of a change in the army's culture. Nevertheless, the army did consider such doctrinal innovations and even experimented with such changes in the late 1960s as indicated by the establishment of the CIJWS and the experiments with the I-battalions. These attempts at innovations eventually failed and the army continued its adherence to the positional-war paradigm. However, paradoxically enough, the army continued to also recognize that its counterinsurgency doctrine was inappropriate and needed change. The widespread conviction within the army since the late 1960s that the positional-war paradigm was inappropriate for counterinsurgency clearly suggests that culture did not determine the army's doctrine.

Despite the CIJWS' motto, the army's counterinsurgency doctrine remained true to the positional-war paradigm, and the I-battalions were quickly disbanded. Could the failure of these innovations be explained by the army's culture? The available evidence suggests a

different conclusion. Unlike the 1950s, the army did not any longer accept the efficacy of the positional-war paradigm in counterinsurgency doctrine. If anything, even though the army continued to operate within the paradigm, the army now believed the opposite: that the positional-war paradigm was hurting its counterinsurgency efforts. In short, the army was operating within a paradigm that it had already rejected. This contradicts the organizational cultural hypothesis. The army's persistence with the positional-war paradigm can only be explained by factors outside of the army culture: the army abandoned its attempts at innovations because these innovations threatened the army's capacity to meet external threats. The distinction with the 1950s should be clear: in the 1950s the counterinsurgency doctrine developed a positional-war bias because the army could not conceive of war outside the positional-war paradigm while from the late 1960s onward, the positional-war bias remained in place because of the need to meet external threats. The evidence from chapter 4 thus supports this hypothesis till the late 1960s, but not for the subsequent period.

Organizational Culture and the Positional-War Bias:

Hypothesis 2:

Elements of the organizational culture of the army must resist development of appropriate counterinsurgency doctrines.

There is only weak evidence to support this hypothesis. The evidence does suggest a general reluctance in the army towards counterinsurgency tasks. It is possible to deduce that this reluctance towards counterinsurgency also prevented the army from developing appropriate doctrines for such operations. However, there is insufficient evidence to support such a deduction.

The army has always believed that its primary mission was to meet external threats to Indian security. Perhaps the best indicator of this can be found in the Forward written by General K. V. Krishna Rao to the official history of the 8th Mountain division, probably the Indian army's most experienced "counterinsurgency" division.²³ After extensively addressing the achievements of the division in its counterinsurgency missions, General Krishna Rao states:

The role of the 8th Mountain division has not been confined to counterinsurgency operations. In fact counterinsurgency is only a subsidiary role of the formation. Its main role is in a war situation, to defend the country against external aggression.²⁴

²³Of course, the Indian army officially does not consider the 8th Mountain Division as a "counterinsurgency" division. Nevertheless, because of their long experience with counterinsurgency in the northeast, the 8th as well as the 57th Mountain Division, are generally viewed as the army's counterinsurgency divisions. The 57th was deployed in Sri Lanka. In the early 1990s, the 8th was sent to Kashmir.

²⁴General K. V. Krishna Rao, foreword to *Forever in Operations, A Success Story: A Historical Record of the*

This view of counterinsurgency as a secondary task is widely shared within the army. "The primary role of the army is to defend the country against external aggression," wrote one senior officer, "Its secondary role is to assist the civil administration when called upon to do so."²⁵ Even an article that called for better counterinsurgency training -- and published by the official journal of the CIJWS -- acknowledged that training for positional-war should take precedence over counterinsurgency.²⁶ Additionally, their employment in internal duties is also seen as hurting the army's training for positional war: "It must be realized that the diversion of the Armed Forces on such tasks adversely affect their training for war, which is their primary purpose."²⁷ The adverse impact of

8th Mountain Division in counter-insurgency in Nagaland and Manipur, and in the 1971 Indo-Pakistan conflict, 1963-1989 by Colonel R. D. Palsokar (n.p.: Headquarters, 8 Mountain Division, 1991), vi.

²⁵Lieutenant-General S. K. Sinha, "Civil Power and the Army," *Indian Defense Review* 2:1 (January 1987): 30. See also, Major-General S. D. Sood, "Specialist Force for Counterinsurgency," *Combat Journal* 21:1 (April 1994):53-60.

²⁶Captain A. K. Thakur, "Infantry Training for Counter Insurgency," *Pratividrohi* (September 1993): 34-38.

²⁷Krishna Rao, *Prepare or Perish: A Study of National Security* (New Delhi: Lancer International, 1991), 309. Other examples of such views can be found in Brigadier V. K. Nayar, "The Perils From Within," *Indian Defense Review*, (July 1991): 11-22; Lt. Ajit Kumar, "Growing Deployment of the Armed Forces in Aid to Civil Authorities," *USI Journal* 123 (July-September 1993): 316-32; Lieutenant-General M. S. Bhullar, "Training for War,"

counterinsurgency operations on training is the most important reason usually cited against the army being used in domestic conflicts.²⁸

Another widely held belief -- that insurgencies are political rather than military problems -- can be seen as yet another reason for the army's reluctance to engage in domestic counterinsurgency. Both the cause and the resolution of insurgencies are seen by the army as the responsibility of the political system, with the army playing only a limited and temporary role. The army views domestic insurgents as disgruntled citizens whose unhappiness has legitimate roots. One of the most striking elements of army officers' writings on insurgency is their open disgust at irresponsible and corrupt administration in insurgency affected areas. If these writings do not go so far as justifying insurgencies, they at least clearly imply that the insurgents had good reasons for rebellion. The root cause of insurgency in the Northeast, one officer wrote, "is an ignorant and unresponsive administration" which has not displayed any genuine concern for the people

Combat Journal 22:3 (December 1995): 3-12; Captain S. Khatri, "Marksmanship Training: Recollecting Forgotten Aspects," *The Infantry Journal* (December 1994): 32-33.

²⁸Other reasons that have been mentioned, though less consistently, include the fear that the indiscipline of the civilian polity affecting the army and the loss of the deterrent effect of calling in the army if it is called in too often.

and the problems of the area.²⁹ He blames "ugly politicization, vested interests, rampant corruption and total dilution of the institutional infrastructure" as hindrances to resolving insurgencies.³⁰ Other army officers make similar arguments: General K. V. Krishna Rao, who has had extensive experience in counterinsurgency, argues that corruption prevents the funds allotted to the region from reaching the people. He also blames a highly politicized administration.³¹

Army writings also emphasize political resolution of insurgencies: since the root cause of insurgencies lies in real political and economic problems, the argument goes, these have to be addressed to resolve insurgencies.³² Army officers have repeatedly pointed out that there are no military solutions to an insurgency.³³ The army's role is

²⁹Lieutenant-General V. K. Nayar, "Management of Insurgency in the North East," *Indian Defense Review* (October 1992): 12, 15.

³⁰*Ibid.*, 15.

³¹Rao, *Prepare or Perish*, 281. See also, Major-General V. P. Malik, "Proliferation and Changed Character of Insurgency in North East India," *Combat Journal* 18:1 (April 1991): 10-17; Major-General Yeshwant Dewa, "Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism: Old Perceptions But New Challenges," *USI Journal* 116 (July-September 1986): 219-33.

³²All of the essays mentioned in the previous two footnotes make these arguments. See, for example, Malik, "Proliferation and Changed Character of Insurgency in North East India," and Dewa, "Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism: Old Perceptions But New Challenges."

limited to providing the ground conditions necessary for political negotiation and resolution, defined as reducing violence. Thus, the army's perception of insurgencies as political problems can be seen as bolstering its view of counterinsurgency as a secondary task.

This view of insurgencies as political rather than military problems and as secondary tasks that divert the army from preparing for its primary mission of meeting external threats provides evidence of the army's reluctance to engage in counterinsurgency operation. But it does not provide any evidence about the army's difficulty in developing an appropriate counterinsurgency doctrine. It is possible to argue that the reluctance to engage in counterinsurgency tasks also led to a disinterest in developing an appropriate doctrine. However, chapter 4 shows that it was anything but disinterest that prevented the development of an appropriate counterinsurgency doctrine: the army did experiment and attempt innovations in counterinsurgency doctrines. Thus the army's inability to develop appropriate counterinsurgency doctrines was not related to the army's reluctance to fight insurgencies. It is difficult not to conclude that the reason for the army's

³³This was constantly reiterated in interviews with army officers. See also, Dewa, "Counter-Insurgency and Counter-Terrorism."

inability to develop an appropriate counterinsurgency doctrine lay outside the army's culture.

Conclusions

It is difficult to make a conclusive judgment about the two approaches. On the surface, neorealism seems to provide a better explanation. There was greater support for the neorealist hypotheses than for the organizational culture hypotheses, especially during the period of doctrinal experimentation in the late 1960s and subsequently. External threats appear to have strongly influenced the possibilities of doctrinal change and innovation.

It is more difficult to decide which of these approaches provides a better explanation for the positional-war bias in the 1950s. The Indian army in the 1950s clearly operated with a positional-war paradigm, which also led to the positional-war bias in its counterinsurgency doctrine. The positional-war paradigm was an important element of the army's culture. This strongly supports the expectations of the organizational culture approach. However, the Indian army also faced severe external threats, and the positional-war paradigm itself could be seen as the consequence of the focus on these external threats. Such an interpretation would tend to support the neorealist approach. Yet another

alternative is that the Indian army inherited the positional-war paradigm from the British Indian army -- which would be understandable considering its recent experience in the Second World War -- and that the threat from Pakistan after independence simply augmented the existing positional-war paradigm. This interpretation would support both the neorealist as well as the organizational cultural approach. In short, the development of the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine in the 1950s is compatible with both the approaches. Overall, the neorealist approach is more useful because neorealism also explains the developments in the doctrine in the late 1960s, which organizational culture fails to do.

There are however some problems that need examination. The difficulty in trying to decide which of these approaches provides a better explanation for the 1950s appears to indicate a deeper problem of separating cultural effects from international structural effects. I have argued that international structural effects could have resulted in the formation or at least the reinforcement of existing army culture and the positional-war paradigm. This suggests a greater interplay between the international structural and organizational cultural factors than previous studies indicate. International structural factors could lead to the formation of specific

cultural effects that influence subsequent behavior. If so, we should expect to find cultural roots to state behavior, but we should also examine the sources of such cultural effects to make sure that such cultural effects are not simply the product of prior international structural effect.

This study also shows other ways in which organizational culture and international structural effects work in tandem. The positional-war bias in counterinsurgency doctrines is not peculiar to the Indian army: the Soviet army in Afghanistan, the U. S. army in Vietnam, the Pakistan army in East Pakistan, and the Sri Lankan army all exhibit a similar bias. However, outside of the positional-war bias, there appears to be nothing in common between the Indian army's counterinsurgency doctrine and the counterinsurgency doctrines of these other armies. The Indian army's view that insurgents are citizens who have legitimate grievances, that insurgencies are political problems, and that there are no military solutions to insurgencies all appear to be peculiar to the Indian army. Thus, though other armies have also exhibited positional-war biases in dealing with insurgencies, their counterinsurgency efforts have been relatively more violent than the Indian army's efforts. The differences between the Indian army and the other armies can only be explained by reference to the organizational culture of the Indian

army. Hence, a full accounting of the counterinsurgency doctrine, which goes beyond just explaining the positional-war bias, would require also acknowledging the effects of the organizational culture of the Indian army. Future studies of military doctrines as well as other aspects of state behavior, rather than viewing these two approaches as contradictory, would benefit from considering how these approaches complement each other.

Implications for International Politics Theory

Culture is currently in fashion among students of international politics theory. Proponents of the cultural approach have repeatedly pitted the approach against neorealism and proclaimed culture the winner.³⁴ This 'contending theories' approach has previously also been used by neorealists.³⁵ The conclusions of this study challenge both the cultural approach and the more traditional contending-theories approach.

The cultural approach is based on the assumption that state behavior has its roots in the deeply embedded values

³⁴Elizabeth Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines: The Cultural Roots of Doctrinal Change" (Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1992); Jeffrey W. Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire: Anglo-German Restraint During World War II* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

³⁵Barry Posen, *The Sources of Military Doctrines: France, Britain and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984)

and worldviews of either the society or of the bureaucratic organizations that make and implement state policy. Culture sets the possibilities and limits of state behavior. Originating as they do within societies, cultures are particularistic. State behavior, as the outcome of culture, are also then particularistic. In turn, this suggests that we cannot make a priori judgments about state behavior: theoretical generalizations have to give way to particularistic explanations. Many recent studies provide examples of this turn away from general theoretical conclusions toward particular explanations. Stephen Rosen traces that the weakness of India's armies to withstand European assault to the characteristics of Indian society.³⁶ Elizabeth Kier and Jeffrey Legro examine the organizational culture of the various militaries during the interwar period to explain the doctrines they adopted.³⁷ Alastair Johnston argues that the elites of Ming China had a *realpolitik* strategic culture that conditioned their grand strategy.³⁸ All these studies suggest that these

³⁶Stephen Peter Rosen, *Societies and Military Power: India and Its Armies* (Ithaca, NY.: Cornell University Press, 1996).

³⁷Kier, "Changes in Conventional Military Doctrines: The Cultural Roots of Doctrinal Change"; Legro, *Cooperation Under Fire*.

³⁸Alastair Iain Johnston, *Cultural Realism: Strategic Culture and Grand Strategy in Chinese History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).

explanations are specific to the societies and organizations that they studied; similar explanations might be applicable elsewhere, but not necessarily so.

The contending theories approach is based on the assumption that cultural and neorealist explanations are mutually exclusive. Thus Legro, Kier and Johnston all contrast the theoretical predictions of neorealist and cultural approaches. Their works follow an earlier generation of studies that also pitted the influence of international structural factors against domestic factors. All of the above studies concluded in favor of one or the other approaches.

My conclusions challenge both these approaches. This dissertation followed these earlier models in attempting to test the competing approaches against each other. I hoped to conclude, as others had, that one of these approaches was more useful. I found that overall the neorealist approach explained more, but I also concluded that there was greater interplay between the two approaches than previous studies had indicated and that the two approaches were not necessarily contradictory. Thus neither the assumption of the supremacy of cultural effects nor its exclusivity from neorealism was found.

The fundamental difference between the two approaches is obvious: the neorealist approach suggests broad generalizations about state behavior while the cultural

approach discounts any generalizations. On the other hand, unlike the assumptions of previous studies, this difference does not necessarily have to lead to mutually exclusive explanations, since it is possible and, indeed probable, that the cultural values that shape state behavior are themselves learned from prior state experience.³⁹ This suggests, as Kenneth Waltz has argued, that states are socialized into the international system and that their behavior reflects this socialization.⁴⁰ Socialization implies an acculturation of the lessons learned. Such acculturation might explain Johnston's puzzling conclusion that the Ming elite had a *realpolitik* strategic culture.⁴¹ However, neorealists have not paid sufficient attention to the socialization process of states. When socialization and acculturation are taken into account, the debate

³⁹This is similar to Alexander Wendt's impression of a predator state that forces others to adopt self-help methods. See Alexander E. Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 45:2 (Spring 1992): 391-425.

⁴⁰Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw Hill, Inc., 1979) 74-75, 127-28.

⁴¹The conclusion is puzzling because the implicit assumption behind the strategic culture literature is that the strategic culture approach would lead to different conclusions than those predicted by the *realpolitik* approach. Johnston recognizes the problem of separating the international structural and domestic cultural influences, but maintains that the existence of a distinct and policy-relevant strategic culture in China suggests that other states might also have distinct strategic cultures, which, he hopes, would not have *realpolitik* values. Johnston, *Cultural Realism*., 260-66.

between the neorealist and cultural approaches might appear spurious: culture might simply reflect the institutionalization of the socialization process.

On the other hand, if *realpolitik* culture is simply learned behavior, does this then imply that such behavior can be unlearned? This is what is suggested by the constructivist approach in international politics, best exemplified by Alexander Wendt.⁴² Applying Anthony Giddens' structurationist theory to international politics, constructivists dismiss what they see as the neorealist demarcation between international structures and domestic agents, seeing their effects and properties as "mutually constituted."⁴³ But if socialization is taken into account, this demarcation becomes less important. There are still fundamental differences between the neorealist approach and those of constructivists. Constructivists see structures, such as anarchy, as itself constructed and preserved by state actions. Thus, though structures and agents are mutually constituted, agency has primacy. My

⁴²Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of It" and "The Agent-Structure Problem in International Relations Theory," *International Organization*, 41:3 (summer 1987): 335-70. See also David Dessler, "What's At Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate?" *International Organization* 43:3 (Summer 1989): 441-73, and Johnston, *Cultural Realism*., 266.

⁴³A good introduction to structuration theory is Anthony Giddens *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984).

conclusions follow Waltz in suggesting that international structures have primacy because agency is itself conditioned by the socialization process. On the other hand, this socialization might itself be affected by culture. This has implications for both constructivists and neorealists. Constructivists might have to consider the possibility that the roots of agency might itself lie in the international structure. Neorealists will need to pay greater attention to both culture and its interaction with the socialization process.

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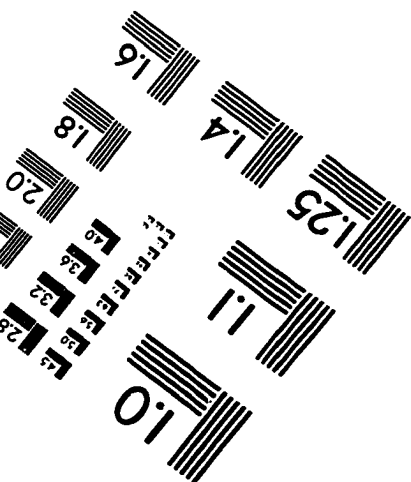
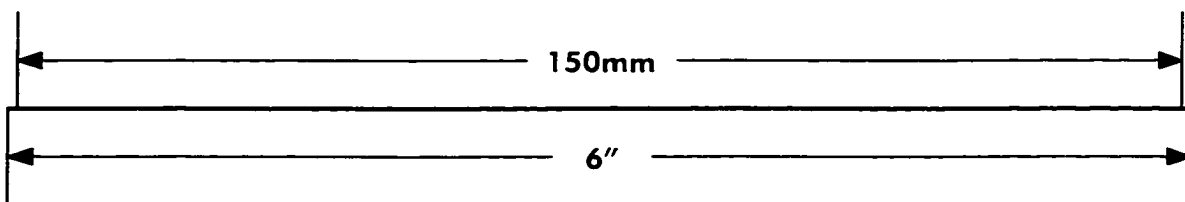
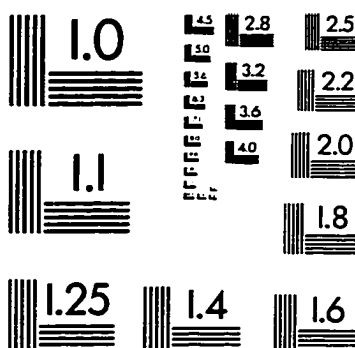
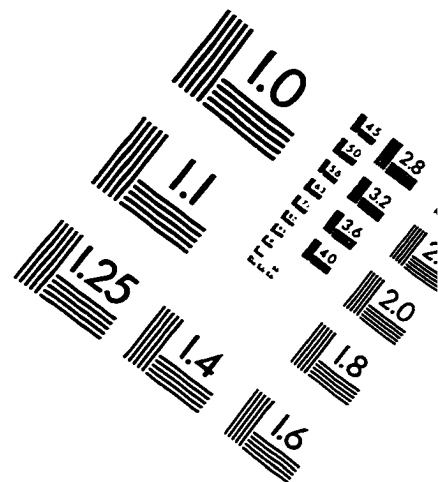
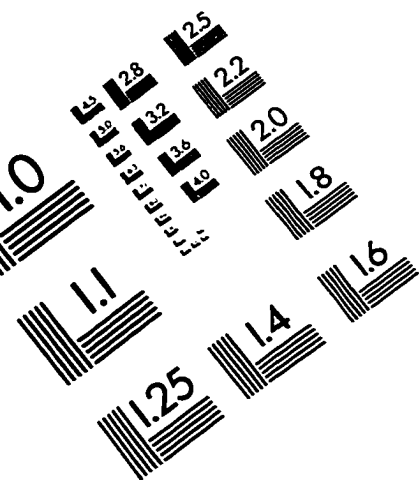
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IMAGE EVALUATION TEST TARGET (QA-3)



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