
Policing Insurgencies: Cops as Counterinsurgents. By Christine S. Fair and Sumit Ganguly (eds.). New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2014. 362 pp. ₹ 995.00, \$39.95, cloth.

Reviewed by Klaus Schlichte, University of Bremen

Policing is a concept that has only recently attracted the attention in the debate on counter-insurgency (COIN). For a long time, COIN was seen as a purely military affair, clearly with a political dimension, but conceived and discussed as a strategy that would concern military personnel and civil administration. This volume is one of the few that addresses the role of police forces in cases of counter-insurgencies, mostly in South and Southeast Asia but includes case studies on Kenya, Colombia, Iraq, and Northern Ireland. It addresses two predominant assertions on the role of police forces in counter-insurgency campaigns. The first sees police as part of the problem as its repressive practices fuel rebellion instead of offering security. The second sees police forces as a core component of a successful COIN. As David P. Fidler in his succinct summarizing contribution points out, this volume really goes beyond this dichotomy and adds to our knowledge on the actual dynamics of situations in which police forces are part of rebellions or outright civil wars.

The balance sheet of the 10 case studies in this book shows a very mixed result. Contributions of police forces for the success of COIN operations were at times really important as Kumar Ramakrishna shows for the case of what is perhaps a bit euphemistically called “the Malayan emergency,” a rebellion of leftist peasants between 1948 and 1960. The “emergency” was an outright guerilla war and cost around 10,000 lives, mostly of rebels who had fought against British colonial rule. Walter C. Ladwig III’s article on a rebellion in the Philippines (1946–1954) also only marginally addresses the political agenda of the Hukbalahap rebels who fought against foreign rule and feudal domination. Such a depoliticized account might look justified when the analysis of police work is the real topic of investigation. However, one might wonder whether police work is actually as apolitical as some contributions present it. According to the authors, both cases show that committed leadership, a professionalization of the force, and an institutionalized responsibility toward the civilian population as well as an end of indiscriminate violence at least enhances the acceptance of the police and renders it seemingly more efficient in fighting a rebellion instead of just fuelling violent escalation. Other cases, like the attempt of the British to quell the Mao-Mao rebellion in colonial Kenya (1952–1960) or

the violence in Northern Ireland are examples, however, that there is no magic formula that works under any circumstances.

Jugdep S. Chima shows in his contribution on the Sikh rebellion in India's Punjab that even if all the conditions mentioned above like committed leadership, sufficient support, and institutionalized responsibility within police forces are met, success still depends on another variable that is beyond the police forces' control: the political constellation under which police reform is done. The rebellion in Punjab dried out in the 1990s as the participation of grass-root organizations and the inclusion of local power holders eased the situation.

A similar mechanism, although with a different result, seems to be at work in Afghanistan after 2001, as Austin Long argues in his contribution. Here, no real police tradition had existed, and the police forces were created by the interventionists. It only worked in cases where police forces were in practice subordinated to the power of local strongmen. This, however, not only stood in contradiction with the aim of creating a strong central state but also meant that actors with dubious records were actually supported.

Another case, which might also interest readers working on military interventions, is Iraq (2003–2010), the case that might be seen as the biggest disaster. Even though the police force inherited from Saddam Hussein's regime was not dissolved in 2003, it soon became fragmented or was dysfunctional at best. At worst, as Matt Sherman and Josh Paul, both former practitioners of security sector reform in Iraq, write, the police forces became repressive, criminal, or joined forces with insurgents. To some extent this can be explained by the lack of coordination between institutions that were involved in the process, but the ultimate reason is certainly to be seen in the late learning process on the part of the United States. According to the authors, it was only in 2003 that the United States-led foreign forces understood how politics worked in Iraq. Up until then, it had just contributed to the escalation by drawing more armed men into the conflict, leaving the police force in a difficult situation.

A core observation that can be drawn from this volume concerns the centrality of the connection between exerted physical violence and the legitimacy of a political order. That this insight has become common wisdom is of some comfort. It has even found its way into COIN manuals of Western armies. Armed forces seem to be more and more aware of the fact that the effects of exerted violence are hardly calculable, even if their practice is often not in line with that insight. More and more military thinkers seem to have understood the close relation between the exertion of violence and the dynamics of legitimacy. As the

contributions of this volume show once again, it is extremely difficult to overcome this contradiction. Exerted violence always creates damage to legitimacy at some point or the other. To rebuild trust is then extremely expensive and takes a lot of time.

This volume is thus a very valuable contribution to the growing debate about the variety of police work on the globe, its connections, its history, and its politics. A critical remark could be made about the rather technical “police perspective”—the authors are either very reflective practitioners who are critical of the police or scholars who do not hide their sympathy for the political projects that in each case was pursued by police forces. The reader might miss a bit of a discussion on political alternatives, especially in the form of social policy that usually accompanies successful police work in a historical perspective. There is probably no society in which there is total harmony with the police. However, those cases where the police is fully accepted seem to be those where crude social injustice is mediated by social policies. Nonetheless, this is a remark aiming at further discussion, and it does not diminish the value of this extremely informative volume.

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Governing through Crime in South Africa: The Politics of Race and Class in Neoliberalizing Regimes. By Gail Super. Dorchester: Ashgate, 2013. 182 pp. \$98.96, cloth.

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In ways more similar than different, crime policies in South Africa after the end of formal apartheid play out in a field where the poor are not well represented and indeed where punitive penal policies absurdly reinforce the inequality of the society. So argues Gail Super in *Governing through Crime in South Africa*. Super’s raw material in this well-researched book comes from her focus on “official criminology”—state discourses about crime and criminality (pp. 6–7). These discourses are a form of communication and are themselves performative. Using this material, Super shows how the politics of race and class in post-apartheid South Africa under the conditions of neo-liberalism have led to a place where criminal justice and prisons policy appear to exhibit more

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