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‘Old Wine in New Bottles’: Elements of Modern Counterinsurgency Modalities in Early Colonial ‘Pacification’ of Rajmahal

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Abstract

Far from being a new type of conflict, modern counterinsurgency seems to be a continuation of older colonial pacification campaigns. The timeless permanence of a dominating perception regarding the non-western societies seems to dictate modern western policy making and this long term continuity could be analyzed through the rubric of ‘military orientalism’, a postcolonial model of critique extricating the western bias regarding the exotic difference of the ‘Oriental’ warfare. This article tries to delve into this theoretical paradigm by taking in account the earliest pacification campaign in colonial India; the pacification of the Paharias. This article argues that the earliest officials like Brook, Browne, Cleveland formulated policies which had superficial dissimilarities but intrinsically similar to the modern counterinsurgency issues and models and this singularity derives from the permanence of otherization, according to which the conqueror conceptualize the conquered while keeping in mind a pre-conceived conviction that the conquered is eternally different by culture. The Paharia tribes were seen from the same ‘orientalist’ lenses. In case of unconventional warfare (small scale conflict to maintain law and order) where the colonial conquerors engaged in a protracted battle soon get influenced by those preconceived notions like the Paharias were wild, pre-political, looting-based society and developed them into permanent stereotypes. So, this article argues that the Paharias became the ‘other’ against whom the colonial ‘self’ could have legitimized itself as civil and even justified anything un-civil as collateral damage. This article further argues that the east-west cultural stereotyping during conflict originally continues from the first stage of colonial unconventional warfare.

Introduction

Are wars to stop insurgencies of conquerors in foreign lands bound to fail? This very question or we should say enigma kept on pounding the key strategists as well as academics since the 9/11. And from this burning issue historians of irregular military conflict¹ started to glimpse into

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¹ Warfare is classified in two divisions based on its nature. The ‘conventional’ or ‘regular’ warfare where two sovereign authorities with more or less equal tools and methods of warfare clashed to have a decisive end have dominated the domain of military history. On the other hand, the ‘unconventional’ or ‘irregular’ warfare points out to those conflicts where culturally and strength-wise different powers conflicted in a protracted battle.

the past for answers. While most of the states involved in modern day counterinsurgencies started to pound on the idea of ‘new ways of war’ against the culturally different enemies like the Taliban, a few scholars like Douglas Porch tried to expose this myth by arguing that this so called ‘new war’ is nothing but the ‘old wine’ of colonial pacificatory campaigns in ‘new bottles’ like terminologies: ‘low intensity conflict’, ‘irregular war’ etc (Porch, 2013).² Following Porch’s historical contextualization we can delve into that problem with a far more durable concept of ‘military orientalism’. This concept points out the centuries of conceptual continuity in the construction of the West’s military perception of the ‘Oriental’ other which continued to persist as the main element behind the structuring of models from early colonial era to modern times. Clausewitz said that war involves reason, chance and hostility and the last one generates passion, fogging the reason of any man at war (Fleming, 2013). Orientalist preconceptions based on passion-based racial differentiation might have been confusing the reality since colonialism which continuously failing the counterinsurgency outcomes. Based on this conceptual episteme this article tries to argue that the first British pacification at Rajmahal holds multiple modular elements of success and failure which remained intact just due to the deeper continuity of otherization.

Military Orientalism and Pacification: Persistence of ‘Primordial’ Other?

To interpret the colonizer’s preconception of unbridgeable difference in their conceptual construction of non-western enemies and their ways of war, scholars like Taraq Barkawi, Patrick Porter introduced a novel theoretical model called ‘military orientalism’ (Barkawi, 2006; Porter, 2009). According to this concept, the prime tendency of Western martial representation has been ‘to make the East a foil to its self-perceived superiority even in the scrum of war, irrespective of History’s ebbs and flows’ (Kbiri, 2017a: 1). In this search for superiority the colonizers conceptualized an unbridgeable distinction and somehow homogenized all forms of military traditions of East as savage. Every dispute always starts with a very intrinsic otherization process where the insurgent enemy became the culturally strange ‘other’ and in case of war vehemently used to ‘foment the discursive build-up needed for the legitimation’ for the use of force (Kbiri, 2017b: 606). The legitimation of unprecedented brute force was unlikely to the western liberal ethos so, by constructing the enemy as culturally and habitually different enemies the colonial forceful subjugation was rationalized. ‘Savageization’ as a part of this otherization became the main episteme of colonial cultural rubric. This cultural rhetoric of ‘savage’ became well celebrated chiefly in case of irregular warfare. While for the West, irrespective of nations, the decisiveness of conflict between two sovereign authorities dominated the mainstream, the rest ways of war were different. All colonial powers, old (Spanish, Portuguese) or new (Dutch, English, French) continued the same epistemic violence where the western conquerors’ violence was legitimized on the basis of cultural difference. Charles E. Callwell’s ‘Small Wars: Their

² After the Iraq War (2007) Counterinsurgency theorists and practitioners like General Petraus and his favored ‘COIN-dinistas’ as well as ‘New War’ theorists like Mary Kaldor started to champion the idea of post-war difference in battlefield. Porch and others counter this new found zeal.

Principles and Practice’ differentiated eastern and western ways of war in Victorian binary adjectives, respectively as ‘savage’ and ‘civilized’.³ Callwell’s ideas of savage war produce itself out of the contemporary lived reality where western arms were persistently winning against non-western enemies whose rituals as well as worldview regarding violent conflicts didn’t met the scale of civilized world. This mixture of preconceptions as well as stereotypes emerged out of experiences made ways for drastic actions fuelled by such zeal against savages. Practitioners of irregular warfare under such imperial hubris continuously supported the use of brute force because alternate world of ‘savages’ only acknowledge the language of the mighty. Callwell remarked that ‘savage’ natives viewed leniency as timidity and to subdue them through military operations which he designated as ‘small war’ ‘sometimes limited to committing havoc which the laws of regular warfare do not sanction’ (Callwell, 1896: 42). Heinrich von Treitschke⁴, a German ideologue for colonialism, echoed the similar concern while differentiating war among ‘noble nations’ and war against ‘savage’ nations. He opined that though it was necessary to regulate wartime atrocities among civilized nations, a ‘savage’ should be ‘punished by burning of their villages, for it is the only kind of example which will avail’ (Treitschke, 1963: 306). Later on, Major George Younghusband in his book *Indian Frontier Warfare* followed the same imperial preconceptions regarding tribal insurgents and used the term ‘uncivilised’ to describe the very nature of this kind of warfare (Younghusband, 1898: 28). His use of savage/civilised binary shows that the British imperial military perception more or less followed the same path. This imperial consensus in the west justifying ‘savage’ methods to pacify ‘savage’ population would dominate the 19th century, but prior to that racial self-righteousness was not prevalent. Empires as well as their racial hubris was still late to come. The general perception emerged out of Callwell’s narration that the British campaigns of pacification were basically an approach of pure and utmost brutality before the era of ‘minimum force’⁵ starting from the late 19th century (Wittingham, 2012: 592-593). But this article argues that this over simplistic model of an era of ‘butcher and bolt’⁶ followed by an era of ‘minimum force’ is erroneous. Long before the compilation of Callwell’s Victorian manual of small war, British colonists had experienced diverse categories of culturally different enemies and to deal with them invented varieties of methods from brute force to conciliatory interactions. The only difference was that the early practitioners had no manuals. The early colonists rarely followed any over scrupulous manuals while meeting their ‘savage’ enemies. The very ‘British’ bureaucratic tendency of archiving as well as following predeceasing records served as a practical alternative. One thing remained

³ Charles Callwell, a 19th century British theorist as well as practitioner of irregular warfare, who first invented to term ‘small war’ to designate colonial era asymmetric battle between colonial masters and native, militarily less armed subjects. He was the first to compile any British manual on colonial irregular warfare.

⁴ Heinrich von Treitschke, a German nationalist supporting early German colonisation of late 19th century, who wrote in favour of militarist concept of state and vehemently opposed against French and British liberals.

⁵ In the Victorian era, British imperial policy makers formulated the necessity of lesser use of force based on the ‘moral parameters set by a religious sentiment’ and the ‘pragmatic necessities of imperial policing’ which later on coined as the minimum force policy.

⁶ ‘Butcher and Bolt’ is a term coined by 19th century military theorists like Callwell to describe punitive campaigns against insurgents which involves plunder, burning of settlements and food reserves, killing and arrest.

more or less unchanged; the preconception of unbridgeable dissimilarity with the oriental other. Either the oriental insurgents were met with brute force or co-opted through conciliation but even during the second method the orientalist perception persisted; ‘savages’ were to be eliminated or civilized.

The very difference between French and British ways of counterinsurgency revolves round the idea of manual. While the French were very much under the seduction of theories which they were ready to apply, early British methods attributed more emphasis on the particularities of any situation. But the tendency of learning from predeceasing experiences spawned mirror effects, causing transmission of ideas. Despite the fact that the French and the British have their differences in constituting control over their colonized natives, there were deep-seated similarities. While the conceptual category of ‘military orientalism’ could provide an interpretation to show the inner-core similarity of all colonial powers while they legitimize their domination, it seems that we need to reinterpret the whole idea under the conceptual rubric of ‘pacification’. ‘Pacification’ as an idiom is completely vague because the rudiments which comprise its operational aspects, incessantly get renovated by its actors. Generally used to demarcate state’s suppressive as well as political methods to restrain resistance and restore law and order, it was more of a word loaded with meanings expressing institutional aggression; a kind of legitimized violence by the state’s intent to have a desired social order. Thus self-unconscious echoes of orientalist preconceptions amalgamated into policymaking models even before Callwell’s first British manual of counterinsurgency. This is where the Paharia rebellion becomes important case, mostly because it was one of the earliest pacificatory campaigns in India.

The campaigns in the Paharia territories throughout the 1770s had its procedural similarities with the French manner of rapid and atrocious pacification called *Razzia* (A nomadic mode of warfare based on plundering raids); another essential forerunner of modern counterinsurgency had been used in French Algeria. Various colonial powers had adopted tactics of the colonized which they perceived as suitable to the terrain as well as the population. While raid was thought to be uncivilized mode of warfare in Europe, colonizers found them an effective show of force in the colonies. In case of the Paharia pacification, officials like Browne and Brooke followed similar raiding tactics against Paharia villages. *Razzia* as a *modus operandi* shows the severe mode of pacifying insurgent forces mirroring a strong state wielding the methods of oppressive state apparatus at its fullest. *Razzia*, a pre Islamic Bedouin system of tribal raids, were adopted and institutionalized by the French colonial forces in the 1830s (Rid, 2009: 618). The major character of *Razzia* was to assault with overpowering force against ill-equipped herdsmen or settlements. Throughout the Algerian campaigns, Thomas Robert Bugeaud foresaw religiously motivated raid of the Arabs. To stop it he prearranged his subordinates to destroy crops by fire as well as to hack down fruit trees so the rebels should be ruined for seasons (Rid, 2009: 619). The violent methods like killing, incarceration and pillaging were profusely used in the Bugeaud’s system of pacification. The village raids consisting encirclement of territories, slaughter of the

male population, burning of cottages and granaries, large scale captivity irrespective of age and gender became a mode itself savage for a civilized government but according to the contemporaries could be utilized against colonial ‘savages’. The elderly people, women, and children often died due to the hardships of the desert under detention. This paradox of martial behavior disturbed the colonial policy makers throughout various empires, because while subduing the savage enemy the ‘civilized’ governments themselves used methods corresponding to their enemies which contradicted their very liberal foundation. At the same time men on the spot as well as a few metropolitans supported such brutalities based on the concept of difference. But these Razzias far from being anything like ‘organized thefts’, due to Bugeaud’s improvisations turned into hybrid mode of colonial warfare; a meme of invented nativity with the precession of Western state capacity. The French position on Algeria was along the coastal enclaves from which they had pushed into further interior for greater colonial penetration. As Algerian population was semi-nomadic that’s why Bugeaud, a man skilled under the late Napoleonic martial glow, found western military tactics and ethics as outmoded in the non-western battlegrounds. This is where Bugeaud’s concept of Razzia explains the difference in between eastern and western modes of warfare; a theoretical scale of analyzing colonial pacification. He had seen the European battlefields through the lenses of a Napoleonic general, where the war had been a clash of great armies, but in Africa, ‘the force is diffuse, it’s everywhere’ (Rid, 2009: 622). So war’s main Clausewitzian centre of gravity (*Schwerpunkt*)⁷ in the West according to Bugeaud was ‘interest’, political, economic and all, which were complicated to grab in the African theatres. The French army at African ground seemed like ‘in a position of a bull attacked by a multitude of wasps’ (Rid, 2009: 622). That’s why in the non-western battlefield, it’s not the capture of cities but the livestock and grains were the only sizable interest, a non-western objective of war.

This type of ‘inhuman’ strategy was even cherished in the western world, not only by the generals of armed forces but also by the intellectuals of liberal ethos like Alexis de Tocqueville. According to Tocqueville, burning of granaries which is not applicable in Europe is necessary in case of Africa because; ‘We wage war on governments and not on population.’ (Tocqueville, 2007: 70). If Tocqueville was representing the western ethos then his acceptance of the brutality of Bugeaud’s methods as a necessary evil of colonial war showed the general approval that there is an unbridgeable difference. Tocqueville even called Razzia a benevolent form of warfare sanctioned by the social context of the terrain and a better option compared to the artillery bombardment on besieged cities which were sanctioned by international laws (Richter, 1963: 380). Tocqueville’s stand was indefinite like many other intellectuals disturbingly scrambled for a piece of moral ground in their support towards wars of pacification. He ‘dreaded a war of pacification that would unleash uncontrolled human destructiveness’ but also ‘unambiguously supported Bugeaud’s methods of warfare’ (Welch, 2003: 246). London’s liberal world was not

⁷ *Schwerpunkt* or centre of gravity is a term used by Clausewitz to describe the central point of military effort or the fundamental of military objective.

far away from Paris. Just like Paris, the voices of dissents against such ‘un-British’ brutality practiced in form of colonial pacification persisted as conjuncture within the greater narrative of military orientalism.

This kind of differentiation of the enemy population led to the dehumanization of the non-western tribes which was not only a matter of French counterinsurgency strategy, but followed by the Britishers also. But like Tocqueville British officials were confused and always believed in the thin line in between efficient and excessive brutality in pacifying population. British officials of Rajmahal in the initial period had followed the same approach towards the unruly Paharia tribes. Like the French, British officials had seen the Paharia tribes as savages and non-political entities and due to that dehumanization; brutal pacification became an obvious method. British power had been trying to exercise an effective control over these areas since 1769 due to the fear of Maratha invasion, which still loomed on the other side of Awadh. European observers like Bishop Heber mentioned that the Muslim zamindars prior to the British officials had killed these Paharia people ‘like mad dogs or tigers, whenever they got them, within gunshots’ (Choudhary, 2016: 6). British expansion in the post-Plassey regime caused the dislodging of pre-colonial officials employed as the frontier guards like the ghatwals.⁸ The consecutive raids by the Paharias increased and ‘added their quota to the general confusion’ (Birt, 1905: 57). The situational development was perceived as perpetual anarchy to end which necessary steps became obvious. Embroiled by the perception of unbridgeable difference, western preconceptions in one hand and invented ideas regarding pre-colonial past on the other, initial pacifications in India became a hybrid outcome. Just like the French conceptualization of Algerian nomads as well as their ways of war called ‘Razzia’, the British officials tried to adapt to what they thought the rule of the land. As the general perception was that the pre-colonial rulers had used excessive brute force against tribes, the early plan was to step into the same shoes. In that sense, the French and the British ways followed the same tropes of military orientalism where the ‘superior’ west tried to adapt to the ‘inferior’ orient in the field of irregular warfare.

The famine of 1770 was on the verge while the British possession of Rajmahal was ongoing. The hill people survived through the famine due to their tactics of survival. The famine had made the zamindari check posts deserted and when the hill men saw the check posts unmanned poured into the lands. British officials driven by the idea of monopolisation of violence strictly disarmed zamindari levies leading to a vacuum in local policing. The famine struck population had seen the most brutal depredations in the hands of these people. This time the hill men were charged with the spirit of revenge for the previous treacherous murder of their kinsmen, committed by local rulers just a few years before British occupation. They had ‘wantonly burned the whole village and slaughtered women and children like cattle in cold blood’ (Birt, 1905: 71). This

⁸ *Ghautwals* were a feudal officials in pre-modern times who provide quasi-military support as well as guard the ‘*ghauts*’ or passages which connected Bihar and Bengal in lieu of land tenures named *ghautwali* tenure. In this sense they could be defined as frontier police in pre-modern times.

situational tension was the water shade in the long cycle of protracted chaos in between the inner frontier of the plains and the hills along the western border.

Initial Encounters: From Mughal to Company Authority

Long before the Mughal occupation, the area between Orissa to Malwa was known as Jharkhnad, untamed even by the Turko-Afghan adventurers. Taligarhi situated in the Santal Parganas, since the early medieval times continued to be the bottleneck between central India and Bengal. In the initial days of Shershah’s rise to power, tribal leader Maharath Chero used to descend from hilly regions and raid the vicinities (Choudhary, 2010-2011: 315). Khawas Khan, general of Shershah’s expedition against the Chero tribes and ultimately Maratha Chero was apprehended and beheaded. Later on Akbar annexed these regions and made Akbarnagar (Rajmahal) its new capital. Mughal control was substantial if not decisive because the tribal power kept on marauding periodically. Before the rise of Dacca, Rajmahal’s geo-political importance was unparalleled but they had done very few things to pacify the locals (Choudhary, 2014: 422).

In case of early pacification, the British attempts of subduing the Rajmahal areas is particularly important due to its protracted struggle through which it experienced disparity of ambience compared to its earlier encounters. These new awareness of the field ultimately furnished the initial pacificatory approach. This portion was known as the Jungle Terry; districts surrounded by the plains of Bhagalpur, Colgong, Guidore, Bihar, Birbhum, Ramgur and Pachet. There are Kharrakpur Hills on the north-west and Rajmahal hills on the east and north-east (Browne, 1788: 1). Rajmahal was the doorway between the directly and indirectly ruled provinces of the Company, means Bengal proper and Awadh respectively. The major roadways linking the Bengal presidency with the Upper provinces were through this region (Choudhary, 2016: 3). So when the rebellion of the Paharia tribes occurred it became an issue of immense irritation for the frontier zamindars as well as British officials. Paharias or the hill people periodically had been raiding on the plains’ sedentary population in the harvest season. In the pre-colonial phase the frontier zamindars and their ghautwals used to prevent these raids by the setting up series of blockhouses. Early paiks, employed the local rajas like the Pathan raja of Birbhum, used to man these frontier forts (O’Malley, 1910: 34). But since 1760’s officials like Verelst and others started to reduce zamindary retainers in their attempt of grabbing the monopoly over legitimate violence. The gradual resumption of lands kept for the maintenance of such zamindary retainers as well as disbandment of zamindary troops destabilized the former structure of frontier security without replacing with an unyielding one. The result was drastic. Along with These sporadic raids which often led to frequent carnage continued till the coming of the Company rule. They planned to quell this peril decisively. Prior to the British administration, the Mughal and the Nawabi rule had minuscule connections with Paharias who favored simply

the isolation of their rocky dwellings (Birt, 1905: 58). The restricted aggression between the frontier zamindars and the Paharias had long been in a stalemate situation.

British interface with the Paharias broke down the pre modern impasse. The frontier policy and the manner it has been met were one of the initial pacification of the frontiers. In the beginning it was direct conflict ultimately followed by a mollifying path. Rajmahal's was the principal land route to reach Awadh which increased its politico-military significance for the British. Due to this significance for shake of grand strategic rationale, a pacified Rajmahal was essential. Its strategic significance had long been accepted from the time of the Mughals who had set up the Teliaghari fort to keep a watchful presence over the main routes as well as the Shikaragali pass.

The British encounter of the Paharia problem came as the attacks on the dak runners through the main connecting pathway of Rajmahal hills. The Paharias, who had ascended to carnage throughout the lowlands, were 'no respectors of persons' and those 'dak runners of the far off power which to them as yet was but a name were legitimate and often desirable prey' (Birt, 1905: 72). The result was the continued robbing of government's dispatches. The strict British action was the raising of the corps of light infantry under Captain Brook to subdue and pacify these marauding hill men in 1772 (O'Malley, 1910:35). Now it can be asked that why looting of *dak* runners⁹ became so much important for the British officials, who had sent a full contingent of pacificatory forces to quell the Paharias. The question of legitimacy is related with the whole matter. The British Empire from its nascent period was intoxicated with the very thing of administrative documentation and exchange of orders and official correspondence in written form. Mughal state system also had a system of *akhbarat* or governmental correspondence but it was totally different from the British one. Imperial dak was a sign of power, legitimacy and control, 'differentiating it from other regional and *zamindari daks*' (Joshi, 2012: 180). C.A. Bayly opined that the 'very penetration of British intelligence gathering systems and the effectiveness of the *harkara* establishment' had 'helped the British to gain the military upper hand in the first place' (Bayly, 1993: 32). The *dak harkara*'s penetration into the unknown was the earlier legitimising exploration of British imperialism, which ended by the second decades of the 19th century with the growth of surveys, opening contours of imperial knowledge which had 'a new territorial, truly three dimensional form' (Bayly, 1993: 34). So the postal systems or the *dak harkaras* worked in two ways; it had taken the colonial presence to the deeper heart of the subcontinent and alternatively it had secured utmost knowledge about the unknown interiors of the country which proved to be handy for future conquests (Gupta, 2010-11: 569). During the British times the dak became more institutionalized and on the other hand indigenous powers had seen these dak runners as the politico-military scouts sent for reconnaissance. During the period of contesting sovereignty in between the Maratha and East India Company, Company's growing control over information system was seen by the Maratha information official or the *akhbar*

⁹ Dak runners or *dak harkaras* were the letter bearing men who were used in pre-modern times but became part of a more regularized and standardized form of work under the English East India Company's supervision.

*nawis*¹⁰ as a mode of encroachment and surveillance into the Maratha state affairs and its legitimacy. Peshwa’s official had advised him to order his *makasardars* or village officials, ‘not to allow the dak of the English couriers to be posted anywhere’ and to ‘slay them whenever found’ (Fisher, 1993: 55). Dak was essentially the British assertion towards the more increased and intense informational control and due to that efficiency in the careful conveyance of the correspondence had become one of the chief concerns of the efficient rule. British rule from the early colonial times had exercised one elaborate policy of indirect rule through residents and due to that efficient channelizing of correspondence in between residents or the Court of Directors was important. This type of attacks on modern state’s communication network has been a persistent insurgent strategy like the expansion of communication was unchangeable means of state’s social control. Ravi Ahuja argued that ‘road was not just road’, but for the Company was ‘filled with the familiar rhetoric of “improvement”’¹¹ (Ahuja, 2009: 154). The Commissioner of Cuttack mentioned that ‘the opening of roads through uncivilized and jungly countries as the greatest auxiliary of civilization’ but more than a civilising mission its prioritised function was to secure movements and communications from insurgents (Ahuja, 2009: 155-156). Establishment of regular dak stations since the late 18th century became synonymous to state making and gradual construction of social order. In Orissa, Company officials experienced ‘passive resistance’ in various forms from ‘demi-civilised’ native rulers (Ahuja, 2009: 171) and it is obvious that the so called ‘savage’ hill men of Rajmahals would confront such approaches more vigorously.

So, attack on such an important networking system of the Empire on which its political and diplomatic strategies were depended had to be countered and defended. Brook had stormed the hill fort of the Paharia chiefs at Tiur and cannons were used to break the resistance (O’Malley, 1910: 36). Captain Brook’s Light Infantry corps seemed to fail in achieving any kind of persistent victory, due to the mobility and mastery of skirmishing warfare from the side of the Paharias. The rough terrains had made advance nearly impossible and ‘most modern firearms and weapons of warfare were of little use’ (Birt, 1905: 73). It’s also said that the arrows used by the Paharias were ‘often poisoned, and the men in the light infantry regarded them with a deadly fear’ (Birt, 1905: 73). Dean Mahomet, who has been a native sepoy, faced Paharia raid while passing through the Rajmahal area. He recounted in his memoir that during such raid the piquet guards pursued, killed and apprehended several of them. The captured ones were ‘severally punished for their crimes...having their ears and noses cut off, and others hung in gibbets’ (Fisher, 1965: 35). While travelling, Mahomet saw Captain Brook’s five companies of Sepoys stationed in different nooks and corners of the passes between Bhagalpur and Rajmahal to guard them from Paharias but the attack on Mahomet’s company while passing shows that these insurgents had very little fear for the Company troops (Fisher, 1965: 33). It’s during this time of

¹⁰ *Akhbar nawis* lexicographically meant news writer but originally part of Mughal secret service or intelligence branch.

¹¹ The idea of ‘Improvement’ is a British colonial concept to justify their domination of other nations which meant practical, gradual, holistic betterment of a less developed society into a progressive one.

Paharia-British confrontation followed the same tactics of *razzia*; comprised of brutal village burning, crop destroying etc. So difference and similarities were there but above all the very persistence of otherization continued to colour the pacificatory policies in such a timeless way that the very essence of irregular warfare remained the same.

Capt. James Brown: Targeted Operations and Initial Conciliations

In the year 1777-78, Captain James Brown became the head of the Paharia campaign. Brown was against disarming the Paharia chiefs who were once *ghautwals*. According to him the attempt of disarming the chiefs as well as their levies would be opposed 'almost at the price of their total extirpation', which would be a costly affair. For shake/ the sake of reasoning if the colonial authority would have succeeded in disarming these men, the western frontier would be left unguarded against the Marathas, 'the natural enemies of the state' (Browne, 1788: 25). Just like the south-western frontier under various *Bhum* chiefs, Paharia chiefs were the preliminary bulwark against the potential Maratha incursions. Though disarming the society was always perceived as the best objective for pacifying any society, initial situation of the frontiers never provided the colonial authorities favourable ambience to pursue such ends. Same dilemma occurred in case of Banaras where the authorities never pursued disarmament due to the fear of Gurkha raids. The only way was to replace old levies with regular drilled troops as attempted by officials like Verelst. But Brown opined that such plans would be 'ineffectual, since none but the natives of that country can exist in those dismal un-wholesome mountains and jungles' (Browne, 1788: 25). So the problem was if the tribal levies were disarmed then the frontier passes would be unguarded while if they were not, these people would possess the resources of hoisting the flag of turbulence at any time discontented with administration. Brown advised to 'correct the bad, and improve the good parts' of the earlier system of *ghautwals* 'rather than overturn the whole to erect a new one' (Browne, 1788: 26).

His letter to the Commander-in-Chief encloses some extracts from the journal of an ensign employed in the pacificatory raids. Ensign Ford's journal¹² provides some instances of day to day pacification campaigns of the light infantry corps. As per the journal entry, a detachment marched from the village Saunnr in the *zila* Colgong and after reaching in the proximity of the rebel village one company under the leadership of Ensign Funningham entered into the jungles 'with the setting of the moon'. Ensign Ford further states that the principle aim of this campaign was to attack the Paresh Budda Hill or the Pareshnath Hill, where the rebel Paharia leader Mangu was supposed to be. The whole detachment started 'to ascend the remarkably steep hill of Poresh Budda' at 6'o clock morning. Approaching the village one native Sergeant along with thirty rank and files was sent to assault. After some scanty resistance most of the rebels were rounded up. It was reported 'in the attack six hill people, among who were Mangu, his son and father were

¹² Full name of Ensign Ford is not available. It seems he was a subaltern military officer who holding a post between a Sergeant and a Lieutenant. Full names of such subordinate officers are usually not available.

killed and fifteen taken prisoner’. Apart from this murder and imprisonment in that village the soldiers had found ‘a quantity of corn, which was brunt’.

Ford’s journal further states that after this initial attack on the main rebel village, the departed sergeant had returned on 3 o’ clock. After burning the final village in the vicinity according to his count further ‘seventeen people were killed and ten were taken prisoners’. Ensign Funningham’s exploits counted as three killed and twenty in custody. Apart from these attacks on the main rebel villages, Ensign Ford reports that a *habildar*’s party had been sent to ‘burn adjacent villages’ while a *jamadar*’s party was ordered ‘to proceed to the low country’. On the 15th Ensign Ford further reported that, two detachments; one led by a *subadar* with forty sepoy and the other led by a sergeant with thirty marched on different tracts and returned by 1 o’ clock afternoon. According to their reports ‘twelve large villages and sixty granaries of corn’ were destroyed. Ford’s journal mentioned that the whole duty was tedious and ‘the sepoy had undergone through violent fatigue’.¹³

Now, as compared to *razzia*, these pacification campaigns against the Paharia tribes had some limitations but also had methodological similarities. Night raids, use of flying light columns, looting and destroying of food and habitat etc all were the parts of these counterinsurgency approaches. But according to the scale of effectiveness these punitive campaigns against the Paharias had little success. French in Algeria were in a strong position and had sufficiently mobilized money and manpower in those campaigns, where as East India Company at that moment was not in a position to supply these resources, was akin to follow conciliatory methods. James Brown, the new head of the light infantry soon realized that ‘conciliation and not conquest must be looked to if peace was to be brought to this sorely tried district’ (Birt, 1905: 75). Brown’s policy of conciliation comprised of providing allowance to the Paharia *sardars* in order to keep tranquillity, resurrecting *ghatwal choukies* under direct British supervision to create a formidable ring fence, setting up of invalid *thanahs*¹⁴ along the foothills to use the invalided soldiers’ assistance in the maintenance of law and order (Birt, 1905: 76). But Ford’s journal shows that even after the start of conciliatory methods, targeted attacks on rebellious chiefs continued. Now, on practical ground full scale conciliation or coercion was never been an option so Brown’s targeted operations was the necessary handmaiden of his own conciliation policy. Even today’s counterinsurgency methods try to follow this same method. Just like in case of US’s Iraq operations, famous counterinsurgency theorist and practitioner, Lieutenant General David H. Petraeus said that the US counterinsurgency force ‘preferred targeted operations rather than sweeps’ because it leaves room for explaining to the citizens the necessity of such expeditions (Petraeus, 2006: 6). Though these targeted eliminations of insurgent leader is a modern debate, initial pacification of Rajmahal took a sharp turn when Brown’s administration

¹³ Extract from Ensign Ford’s Journal of an Expedition into the Rajmahal hills with three Companies of light infantry, Home, Public, 5th May 1777, no. 8. National Archives of India, New Delhi

¹⁴ Invalid Thanah establishment was a colonial system of relocation of invalided or retired sepoy to mainly frontier lands with relaxation in tax to substitute local armed militias as well as to stop military labors mercenary activities.

started conciliatory reconstruction along with selective violence. Long before the so called 'minimum force' policy partly due to the lack of resources and partly for keeping up the liberal stature, Company officials had invented a method of selective violence and Brown's evidence points out that.

A Benevolent Bureaucrat: Augustus Cleveland and Initial 'Hearts and Minds'

Within a few years British administration of Paharia region drastically transformed its policy towards insurgents. Augustus Cleveland's administration (29th November 1779-30th December 1783) 'marked and epoch' when he accomplished the task of 'the entire subjugation of the lawless and savage inhabitants of the Jungle terry' 'by means of conciliation, confidence and benevolence' (Basu, 1942: 75-76). This was a departure from the earlier ways. Though Brown's plans were further elaborated by his successor, Augustus Cleveland planned the approach known as 'hearts and minds' in modern connotation. The earlier bureaucrats used to utter the names of Browne and Cleveland at the same time to point out the 'imperishable connection' of these men to the policy of conciliation (Byrne, 1913: 29). Surveyors like Buchanan echoed the same conclusion regarding the continuity of the conciliatory policy from Browne to Cleveland (Buchanan, 1939: 66). McPherson wrote, 'When the later achievements of Mr. Cleveland are considered, it should not be forgotten that Captain Brooke was the pioneer of civilization in the jungle terry' (McPherson, 1909: 27). So Cleveland's policy was both continuation of earlier policy of defence as well as departure because of primacy over benevolent appeasement. Cleveland successfully extended defensive *chowkies* from Shikaragali to Shahbad as well as brought the administration under one authority. Despite the fact that Cleveland's policy was a withdrawal, it was not a divergence from the orientalist preconception.

Cleveland's approach was radically benevolent, was 'characterised by an unusual kindness, emanating as if from the father towards his children' (Nath, 2017: 33). After the disappearance of Browne from the scene Paharias became restive once again and in this time local rulers Raja Rup Narayan Deo of Chandawa, Rajput Rajas of Kharagpur, Rani Sarbeswari of Sultangunj etc was in consort of them (Birt, 1905: 83-85; Nath, 2017: 40). Cleveland in his attempt of breaking this problematic nexus followed a policy of fraternizing with the Paharia rank and files and to commence that productively he had extended Browne's policy of allowance. Cleveland made a tour through the hill areas having interviews with chiefs, giving feasts and presents. Gift giving had long been seen as a way of winning over tribes whose lived reality is beyond the logic of monetary economy. The early inroads in new world's territories were not only made with guns and steel but through gifts. The often cherished history of 'thanksgiving' was nothing but a way of pacifying infuriated Indians with gifts. In New England, the English settlers used to give gifts to solidify their arrangement which they repetitively referred to as a mark of alliance (Bradford, 1952: 87). This concept remained intact even in the 20th century reminding of the West's perception of rigid nature of non-west's features. Just echoing the same tendency Cleveland

spent Rs. 1610 a year (Basu, 1942: 79). This has an interesting ideological background. The ‘ideal-typical’ image of the Paharias as the dwellers of the ‘land of disorder’ due to the ‘fundamental lack’ of money economy ‘both as means and an idea’ was prevalent among the officials (Banerjee, 2000: 428). The previous technique of having communication with the Paharias through *Bundwarris* or winning them over through gifts and feasts was replaced with Cleveland’s idea of providing money. Inspired by Scottish Enlightenment’s ideals Cleveland thought money could channelize plains’ people and hill’s people in a peaceful economic coexistence where previous plundering economy of this tribal society would be obsolete (Banerjee, 2000: 429).

The Paharia *sardars*, *manzis* etc were made governmental pensioners and as reported by the end of year 1780 nearly forty seven chiefs were brought under the pension scheme (Birt, 1905: 87-88). But these successful conciliations were done in a radically different way. William Hodges in his diaries mentioned that Cleveland ventured into the hills ‘alone and unarmed, where he convened some of the principle Chiefs; and after the fullest assurance of his most peaceable intentions and good will towards them, he invited them to visit him in his residence’ (Hodges, 1793: 89-90). Cleveland conscripted young Paharias and brought them together in a unit of ‘Bhagalpur Hill Rangers’, paid archers in olive uniform, continued till the Great Mutiny of 1857 (Dalton, 1872; Risley, 1891: 161). The system remained very much the same. Even today in India the Special Police Officers (SPOs) were enlisted from native aboriginal communities to fight the Maoist insurgents in Junglemahal (Padel, 2019: 5). The very use of ‘Salwa Judum’¹⁵ to fight the Maoists could be the modern version of the same pacificatory plan started by Cleveland. Not only now, but Company officials created Bhil Regiment, Meena Regiment etc to counterfoil tribal insurgents from the same communities even before. So Cleveland’s model of attracting martial population to create a local peacekeeping force became one of the earliest selective incorporative models which show its similarity with today’s counterinsurgency policies.

His second important scheme was the establishment of the Hill Assembly¹⁶ for the administration of civil and criminal justice (Nath, 2017: 42). In the Hill assembly which was first met in the year of 1782, hill chiefs were incorporated as superintending officers and thus British rule of law was furthered with the incorporation of the local tribal consent. Cleveland had constructed the idea of Damin-i-Koh, as a rent free area where the Paharias can live without external encroachment (Birt, 1905: 109-110). He had tried for sedentarisation of the Paharias by supplying seeds and agricultural implements but this scheme remained unfulfilled. Cleveland had set up educational institutions too, which shows the all round developmental plan envisaged by him (Nath, 2017: 43-44). Now this whole conceptual rubric that focuses on sedentarisation as the

¹⁵ *Salwa Judum* or ‘Purification Hunt’ militia is a band of local tribal youth formed and trained by Chattisgarh government to fight the Maoist insurgents. Despite of its disbandment it continued in various other names. This is the post-independence version of the Bhagalpur Hill Rangers raised by Cleveland.

¹⁶ Hill Assembly was a colonial institution which later on continued into post-independence India. Group of tribal leaders used to preside over such assemblies to talk over local issues.

important means of pacifying so called habitual insurgents of pastoral society persisted among the early colonists as well as modern counterinsurgents. Not much times ago, in 1980's, when the Egyptian government tried to sedentarise a large portion of Bedouin population, the later resisted. So the counterinsurgency policy failed in Egypt but somehow the idea of sedentarisation as the best method of pacifying turbulent tribes more or less remained the essential part of any counterinsurgency policy (Gaub, 2015: 3). After the great pacification of the *pindaries*¹⁷ in central India, the Company officials like Malcolm tried the same tactics of sedentarisation and that became successful (Sinha, 1988: 200-210). Though beforehand it was thought that the Cleveland system became successful in appeasing the Paharia peril, later colonial officials opined this scheme of paying pension to the Paharia chiefs as a kind of 'black mail' (Ball, 1880: 239). Just like the British officials who found problem in Cleveland's pension programme, modern days counterinsurgents faced similar kind of dilemma called 'spoiler's effect' (Stedman, 1997: 5). In this system modes of persuasion and negotiations were spoiled by various actors to keep up the flow of resources intact. As there is possibility that with the completion peacemaking process these streams of resources like economic help would be stopped, insurgents try to continue disturbances in a controlled scale. Ball's comment on the 'black mail' system based on pensions to chiefs shows a typical similarity. Whatever the long term problems might have emerged, at that time Cleveland was championed for 'the most permanent...the most rational mode of domination' without any bloodshed (O'Malley, 1910: 41).

Conclusion

This instance of British pacification in the Rajmahal hills shows a slow transformation from the military centric approaches comparable to the brutal *razzias*, towards the more benevolent approach of conciliation long before the so called manual based policy making. In the 21st century modern counterinsurgency doctrines it has been emphasised that 'success would not be determined by military might alone but instead by winning the hearts and minds of the people' (Gurman, 2013: 1). Rajmahal's case shows that the Company officials learnt that very wisdom long before the rise of modern counterinsurgency doctrines and used their field experiences to strive for permutation-combination necessary for a viable solution. In the first phase Brook's sweeping expeditions as well as Browne's targeted action shows a slow transformation from hardcore '*razzia*' type actions to selected violence, very much relatable to modern days' counterinsurgency. In the case of the second phase, model resembles much with the modern 'hearts and mind' approach, which was most probably adopted due to cost effectiveness and long term success. Even there the officials experienced problems analogous to modern day 'spoiler's problem'. This case at initial observations could be linked with the broader paradigm of differences between British and French ways of pacification but originally the inner resemblance of otherization by both colonial powers where the insurgents were seen as 'savage' could provide us a deeper understanding about this *longue durée* continuity. It's not only the variables like

¹⁷ *Pindaries* were irregular soldiers working in pre-colonial central India as military auxiliary force of Maratha army who were pacified after the Third Anglo-Maratha War.

financial strength or condition of sovereignty but also other deeper cultural tropes like religion which has shaped the military ethos of pacification. It will not be too much to say that the British ideas of counterinsurgency had been influenced by deep Protestant ethics like ‘chivalry, individual sensibilities’, while Catholic France’s pacification was swayed by its violent cultural past (Roy, 2012: 254). But even after those differences not only the colonial powers of the past but modern counterinsurgents continued to keep up those preconceptions regarding the insurgent ‘other’. The general idea that the preconceived notions of ‘military orientalism’ were based on the imperial hubris after 1830’s seems to be a flawed idea. The instances of Brook, Browne and Cleveland show the three scales of official mentalities in the pacification campaigns that could be found not only throughout the late 18th century British Empire in India but even after in the modern times. The only answer to this very continuity could be the deeper singularity of preconceived perception where the west has been ascertaining the rest’s ways of war either as savagery or as illogical and underdeveloped. And with this very seed of hubris we can see that the counterinsurgencies have been bound to fail. Rather the balanced use of the ‘hearts and minds’ as well as the ‘show as well as selective, justified use of force’ could have lead to success. But beyond this success/failure paradigm one thing remains constant; the very perception of the asymmetry. This has been performing as the locomotive of a collective hubris of the west regarding martial or in general civilisational superiority which remained the same. In this sense ‘pacification’ along with its colonial elementary archetypes remained within the manuals of modern day counterinsurgency.

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