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Mutiny-Rebellion, 1857**

COLLINS, Bruce <<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4521-6302>>

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# Counter-Insurgency in the Bombay Presidency during the Mutiny-Rebellion, 1857

BRUCE COLLINS

Sheffield Hallam University

Email: [b.collins@shu.ac.uk](mailto:b.collins@shu.ac.uk)

## ABSTRACT

*This article outlines the British efforts to tackle the Indian Mutiny-Rebellion in the Bombay Presidency in 1857. This example offers a number of important points relating to modern counter-insurgency debates and highlights the balanced approach the British took to dealing with the threats they faced.*

Arguments about counter-insurgency doctrine naturally concentrate on current events or those in the recent past. Indeed, it could be reasonably held that distinctive ideas about counter-insurgency are largely the product of wars of decolonisation since the 1950s, the war in Vietnam and other ideologically-driven Cold War encounters. Historians, however, have explored nineteenth-century precursors. Such historical interest has been given a further boost by Douglas Porch in *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War*. His targets are myths about 'successful' counter-insurgency operations in the past, the sloppy or inaccurate deployment of them to support current doctrine, and the entire thrust of population-centric counter-insurgency as described by the American military's *Counterinsurgency Field Manual of 2006*, with its memorable proposition that counter-insurgency campaigning was 'armed social work'. Porch criticises the claim, developed from the 1840s by French officers in Algeria, that counter-insurgency operations were especially challenging and required distinctive and hard-won skills. In making that case, however, he argues that much French and British colonial campaigning involved a mix of crude or fairly blunt measures, notably the sharp application of typically brutal force accompanied by often opportunistic deal-making with local power-brokers who were frequently of dubious legitimacy or probity. Considering the British record in the twentieth century, he endorses David French's description of the British army as a 'forgetting organization' and Hew Strachan's conclusion that such successful outcomes as were achieved in colonial counter-insurgency campaigns flowed from political concessions rather than military tactics.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency. Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013), p.250, p.266, p.289, p.330; US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2007), p.299.

Historical discussions of counter-insurgency campaigning raise difficulties over terminology and timing. May we write of counter-insurgency if no political strategies were articulated by the sovereign power? Is resistance to colonial conquest or consolidation an insurgency?<sup>2</sup> Allowing that such problems exist, this paper considers whether Porch's delineation of colonial counter-insurgency campaigning squares with what happened during 1857 in a region of India, the Bombay presidency, where both mutiny and rebellion were limited in scope and intensity.

The British suppression of the Indian Mutiny-Rebellion of 1857-59 has tended to be described in terms of military operations rather than in ways which might fit models of counter-insurgency doctrine. Political initiatives have been seen as the consequence of, not as the accompaniment to, the most important stages of the suppression of the risings, from September 1857 to April 1858. This may in part be attributed to the various forms the mutiny and rebellion took. As early as 1858, for example, Captain Julius Medley provided detailed reasons for mutiny among the Bengal army's sepoys, but concluded that the 'antagonism of race, colour, and religion' transcended all those specific military grievances.<sup>3</sup> Among modern British historians, the belief that the mutiny and rebellion were fuelled by fears that British rule would undermine Indian religious practices has become commonplace, although how influential Christianisation had become is more debatable.<sup>4</sup> The more radical Subaltern Studies school of historians emphasised not simply religious resentment against what was perceived as increasing Christianisation but, more importantly, the sepoys' rejection of the trappings of service to the British and their 'quest' to find 'an alternative identity which was perhaps entrenched in the shared common world of the peasant.... it was that sense of collectivity [sic] that provided the uprising with its ultimate source of strength'.<sup>5</sup>

Another source of grievance was the claim to rulership advanced by heirs marginalised by British inheritance laws. Those claimants, apart from the Mughal

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<sup>2</sup> Ian F.W. Beckett, 'British counter-insurgency: a historiographical reflection', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, 23 (2012), pp.781-798; the decisive influence of political factors is a key theme in a pioneering collection of operational case-studies, Ian F.W. Beckett and John Pimlott (eds), *Armed Forces & Modern Counter-Insurgency* (London, Croom Helm, 1985), p.72, p.159, pp.186-187.

<sup>3</sup> Julius George Medley, *A Year's Campaigning in India* (Uckfield, Naval and Military Press, n.d., reprint of 1858 edn), pp.195-204.

<sup>4</sup> C.A. Bayly, *Indian Society and the making of the British empire* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp.185-188; Saul David, 'Greased Cartridges and the Great Mutiny of 1857: A Pretext to Rebel or the Final Straw?' in Kausik Roy (ed) *War and Society in Colonial India 1807-1945* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 2010 edn), pp.104-106; Ian Copland, 'Christianity as an Arm of Empire: the Ambiguous Case of India under the Company, c1813-1858' *Historical Journal*, 49 (2006), pp.1025-1054; Penelope Carson, *The East India Company and Religion 1698-1858* (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2012), pp.223-232.

<sup>5</sup> Rudrangshu Mukherjee, 'The Sepoy Mutinies Revisited' in Roy (ed), *War and Society*, pp.122-123.

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

emperor in Delhi, commanded mainly local support and could be isolated and eliminated in turn, as they were in the province of Oudh or Awadh and its capital Lucknao. But, although important and wracked by revolt, this territory accounted for only five million people in a total Indian population estimated in 1857 at nearly 181 million.<sup>6</sup> A more widely applicable model, developed by Tapti Roy from his study of Bundelkund district, indicated that 'rebellion' gained momentum where British officials fled and British authority apparently collapsed. Wealthy and politically prominent rulers, local landowners, and occasionally ordinary people were more or less obliged by circumstances in Bundelkund to become 'involved in a fight for power, attempting to capture nothing less than the apparatus of the state' and in doing so, from divergent motives, worked towards 'a unity of political action'.<sup>7</sup> Roy concluded that 'Popular reaction to the situation after June 1857 was largely a product of the widespread conviction that British rule had ended. It was this notion of a state annihilated that underlay the entire movement at all levels and acted as a unifying force'.<sup>8</sup> The corollary, of course, was that if officials and other agents of the state remained in post, rebellion would be contained.

It is that perspective which lends significance to the Bombay presidency, since the administration remained intact virtually throughout its territories and local insurgencies were limited. In posing the dual question of how the presidency countered potential insurgency and what that response tells us about more general interpretations of counter-insurgency, an initial distinction must be made between modern doctrine, with its emphasis on promises or initiatives to promote good governance, and the crisis in 1857. British officials in India in 1857 believed, rightly or wrongly, that they were already providing effective government; removing the East India Company and continuing to drive economic development would offer sufficient improvement, but administrative reform did not form part of a proactive political agenda in 1857. Officials' political initiatives instead involved a wide range of agreements and negotiations with the sort of local leaders depicted by Porch as liable to be opportunistic, self-promoted and self-seeking. This paper will argue that those relationships formed the basis of effective, if often precariously balanced, governance.

## II

Considering the events of 1857 from a purely British perspective, the Mutiny-Rebellion stretched the Bombay government's resources, particularly by engaging it across its northern border. The presidency directly ruled 10,021,000 people and was responsible for 1,769,000 people in the non-regulation provinces of the Sind. It also

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<sup>6</sup> 'East India (Area, Population, etc ), House of Commons, *Parliamentary Papers* (215/2) 1857, p.84, p.89, p.94, p.98.

<sup>7</sup> Tapti Roy, *The Politics of a Popular Uprising. Bundelkund in 1857* (Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.17-19, p.29, p.33, p.49.

<sup>8</sup> Roy, *Politics of a Popular Uprising*, pp.230-231.

supervised subsidiary native states containing 4,460,000 people.<sup>9</sup> These territories covered 192,119 square miles. The presidency itself was divided into 13 districts and Satara, a highly populated non-regulation province.<sup>10</sup> Centralised decision-making was difficult. Communications were slow. There were under 130 miles of railways in operation<sup>11</sup>; much of the terrain was crossed by major rivers and divided by rough jungle and desolate hills; roads varied considerably in quality. Responsibility for political action and the maintenance of order therefore fell to each district's officials and own police and/or irregular forces. All districts experienced some unrest or threatened disorder in 1857. In addition, the public affairs of the widely scattered native states were supervised by seven political agents or political superintendents, of whom six in 1857 were army officers. The presidency government in Bombay City evaluated the steady flow of situation reports coming from 21 lead officials in the districts and political agencies, and prioritised their requests for extra troops or police.

The presidency was also involved with neighbouring native states not directly supervised by Bombay. Political relations with numerous princes to the north became more intense because those rulers' normal lines of communication with British India, through Agra to Kanpur and Allahabad, were cut off by the risings in Bengal. Indore was the major princely state lying just north of the presidency, some 374 miles from Bombay City, whose 8,300 square miles and 815,000 people were ruled by the Holkar dynasty, one of the five great princely houses of the defunct Maratha confederacy. Holkar's military contingent, including a battalion of the Bengal Native infantry, mutinied on 1 July. To contain this disaffection, the Bombay government assembled a force which reached Mhow, a British garrison town 14 miles from the city of Indore, on 2 August. Once the heat and the monsoons lifted, in October, this field force marched north to the line of communication bordering Rajasthan and leading to Agra. The Governor-General's Commissioner for Rajputana, George Lawrence, of the celebrated family of rising proconsuls, was cut off from the north and therefore looked south to Bombay for military aid. By entering commitments with Rajput and Maratha states, the presidency's reach extended to an additional nine million people, thus stretching Bombay's responsibilities in 1857-58 to areas inhabited by 25 millions.<sup>12</sup>

Yet Bombay's military resources were limited, in the spring of 1857, to 40,529 troops, of whom 30,940 were sepoy. In addition it directed 5,032 indigenous irregular forces and had operational charge of 4,956 troops from Bengal and Madras, assigned to the territories bordering Rajputana. Of the Bombay army's 10,100

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<sup>9</sup> 'East India (Area, Population, etc.)' House of Commons, *Parliamentary Papers* 215 sess 2 (1857), pp.97-98.

<sup>10</sup> 'East India (Area, Population, etc.)', pp.92-93.

<sup>11</sup> *Bombay Almanack and Book of Political Direction for 1858* (Bombay, n.d.), p.619.

<sup>12</sup> Population figures in this paragraph are from 'East India (Area, Population, etc.)', pp.95-97.

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

Europeans, 6,128 were outside the presidency proper in May 1857, mainly with the Persian field force and at Aden.<sup>13</sup> Those returning from Persia were sent, via Calcutta, to aid the beleaguered Bengal presidency.

The single greatest challenge facing the presidency, given the strategic decision to reinforce Bengal, was therefore not leadership but manpower. In April 1857, the army's regular forces were deployed to 20 relatively small garrisons and stations, stretching 600 miles from Ahmedabad to the far south, with only five garrisons containing over 1,000 troops. There were, in addition, irregular soldiers, but these consisted of 15 distinct local units; for example, in Guzerat the Guzerat Irregular Horse and the Guzerat Cooly Corps were based at Ahmedabad and the Guzerat Police Corps at Kaira.<sup>14</sup>

Although over-stretched, the Bombay army did not mutiny. By 21 July, the Bengal army had lost about 40 infantry and cavalry regiments, accounting for perhaps 32,000 men, through mutiny and disbandment.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, by late 1857, 21 of the 29 regiments of the Bombay Native Infantry were still functioning within Bombay and another four battalions were operational in the Sind.<sup>16</sup> Although British battalions typically formed the core units in campaigning, only eleven British infantry battalions were available by the end of 1857 and many of those needed time to acclimatise; the 33rd regiment arrived on 6 August, four further battalions reached Bombay between 10 September and 13 October, and the 72nd arrived on 10 December.<sup>17</sup> Stabilisation during the height of the crisis in 1857 therefore depended on semi-military levies of irregulars and police.<sup>18</sup> The speed and effectiveness of expanding those units' numbers depended upon effective contacts with local people.

Early in the troubles, the Bombay government pressed for the appointment of Major General Henry G. Roberts to command the northern division of its army. Roberts's experience, including extensive campaigning between 1820 and 1832<sup>19</sup> and service in Sind under the dynamic Sir Charles Napier, marked him out as one of those senior officers of 'known activity and zeal' and local expertise who were needed in the present emergency.<sup>20</sup> On 6 July, Roberts, still serving as the Political Commissioner

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<sup>13</sup> 'East India (Military Force)' House of Commons, *Parliamentary Papers*, 1857-58 (56), p.265.

<sup>14</sup> *East India Register and Army List for 1857*, pp.35-75.

<sup>15</sup> India Office Records, British Library, Canning and Council Military Department to Court of Directors 21 July 1857 L/MIL/3/74.

<sup>16</sup> *Bombay Almanack and Book of Direction for 1858* (Bombay, n.d.), pp.396-401.

<sup>17</sup> *Bombay Almanack... for 1858*, 396-401, pp.418-436.

<sup>18</sup> Colonel Malleon, *Kaye's and Malleon's History of the Indian Mutiny of 1857-59*, 6 vols (London, Longmans, 1897 edn), V, p.ix, p.41, p.44, pp.55-57.

<sup>19</sup> *Bombay Almanack... for 1858*, p.403, p.524.

<sup>20</sup> IOR Secretary of the Bombay Military Department to Secretary of the Government of India 5 June 1857 P/47/17.

for Guzerat in the Northern Division, reported to the Bombay government on information he had gathered from the districts in the division. Some districts remained tranquil.<sup>21</sup> For Baroda, he reported that the British Resident would liaise with the Gaekwar, another of the leading Maratha princes and ruler of 325,000 people, on measures to ensure stability. Roberts urged the employment of mercenaries from Baroda and Kaira district in order to concentrate regular troops 'to strike a hard blow when required, and not to be broken up into small detachments'. He saw no objection to providing mercenaries with arms, since they already had enough weaponry to attack the British if that had been their goal. Cost should not be an obstacle, because hiring mercenaries would minimise the risks of 'a general disturbance' and the subsequent destruction of property. Local rajputs, traditionally a warrior caste, and kolis, a caste originally associated with fishing, many of whom had taken to farming, were targeted for recruitment.<sup>22</sup>

The Bombay government gave Roberts 'almost discretionary power' to recruit additional police and irregular troops as he saw fit, without reference to the Commissioner of Police. More speculatively, he was asked to consult local officials on the feasibility of disarming the population of Guzerat.<sup>23</sup> While nothing immediately came of the latter, recruiting extra forces began as soon as it had been authorised.<sup>24</sup> In corresponding with magistrates, Roberts insisted that recruits should provide their own arms and accoutrements, including their horses for irregular cavalrymen, thereby signalling a preference for men of at least modest substance. Roberts noted that he had not provided for third class privates because, in present conditions, 'a good description of men' could not be recruited in Broach at the lowest rates of pay.<sup>25</sup> The emergency levy would be temporary and the police and irregulars were liable to dismissal at any time. But this indication of confidence was tempered by the consideration that recruits should bring their own arms because 'it is not desirable that they should be taught the regular use of our muskets or our discipline'.<sup>26</sup>

Irregulars and police were recruited into small units which could be managed locally and whose size posed no threat if they proved unreliable. This process may be illustrated from the Kaira district. By mid-August the Kaira Police Corps had recruited to their target of 150 men and training progressed quickly. The Kaira Mounted Police were to be increased by stages from 15 men to 100. The Auxiliary

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<sup>21</sup> IOR J.W Hadow to Roberts, 24 June, 1857; A. Gray to Roberts, 25 June 1857, L/P&S/5/512.

<sup>22</sup> IOR Roberts to H.L. Anderson, 6 July 1857, L/P&S/5/512; on castes, Rosalind O'Hanlon, *Caste, Conflict and Ideology. Mahatma Jotraj Phule and low caste protest in nineteenth-century western India* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.16-17.

<sup>23</sup> IOR Bombay Government, 'Resolution of the Honourable Board', 14 July 1857, L/P&S/5/512; memorandum by Governor on Minute by Malet 5 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>24</sup> IOR Minute by Commander-in-Chief Somerset 11 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>25</sup> IOR Roberts to Anderson 17 August 1757, L/P&S/5/516.

<sup>26</sup> IOR Roberts to A. Gray 13 August 1857, L/P&S/5/516.

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

Police Force had nearly completed its recruitment to 30 horsemen and had secured 132 of its target of 200 other rank and file. The Auxiliary Police were issued with 'old but still serviceable Flint muskets' passed down by the Kaira Police Corps, which had secured percussion rifles for itself. The auxiliaries were being trained 'to fire at a mark, march a little, and deploy into line'; officials regarded it as neither desirable nor practicable to drill them beyond that. Alexander Gray, the acting Magistrate at Kaira, saw no difficulty in securing men suitable for defensive operations, but noted a difficulty in enlisting through particular chiefs and landowners, either because they had supplied recruits to neighbouring princes' forces, or because of their indifference or 'positive disaffection'. Gray raised a further concern about the shortage of regular soldiers to keep the auxiliaries 'in check' lest they defect in a moment of crisis.<sup>27</sup>

Within this framework of counter-balancing self-confidence and distrust, British officials recruited soldiers and policemen on the basis of caste, ethnic and tribal characteristics and loyalties. Lionel Ashburner, the first assistant to the Collector and Magistrate of Kaira since 1854<sup>28</sup>, was singled out for praise by the Secretary of the Bombay Government for the way in which he used his thorough knowledge of local castes and ethnic groups to recruit and train volunteers.<sup>29</sup> He reported that the 152 men he had recruited by 2 August came from eight different ethnic/caste/religious sub-groups.<sup>30</sup> In the city of Broach, the Acting Magistrate sought to increase the Police to 1082 men. Some 450 men not disciplined for customary police duties were to be added to the existing force of 420; the rest were to act as an Irregular Corps for escort and guard duties. Indian NCOs would be transferred from the army into the new police, while retaining their pension allowances.<sup>31</sup> Lieutenant Alexander Bell sent recruiters beyond Broach to target traditionally low caste kolis and bhils together with higher caste rajputs.<sup>32</sup> By September, the local military commander, Major Honner, felt confident enough to advise against the despatch of any European troops to Broach, because it would signal to his men that they were not trusted.<sup>33</sup>

This recruitment drive addressed two concerns. First, soldiers were not deployed against civilians; senior officers in the 1840s and 1850s declared their reluctance to become embroiled except to combat insurrection.<sup>34</sup> As no risings had occurred in Bombay, it was appropriate that police and irregulars should provide security in the first instance. The second was the highly sensitive issue of caste. Officials faced the

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<sup>27</sup> IOR Gray to Anderson 15 August 1857, L/P&S/5/516.

<sup>28</sup> *Bombay Almanack... for 1858*, p.326.

<sup>29</sup> IOR Gray to Anderson 15 August 1857 L/P&S/5/516.

<sup>30</sup> IOR L. Ashburner to A. Gray 2 August 1857, L/P&S/5/516.

<sup>31</sup> IOR A. Rogers to Maj General Roberts 30 July 1857, L/P&S/5/515.

<sup>32</sup> IOR A. Bell to A. Rogers, 7 August 1857, L/P&S/5/516.

<sup>33</sup> IOR A. Honner to Roberts, 1 September 1857, L/P&S/5/516.

<sup>34</sup> D. George Boyce, 'From Assaye to Assaye: Reflections on British Government, Force, and Moral Authority in India', *Journal of Military History*, 63 (July 1999), pp.643-668, especially pp.653-654.



dilemma that military and, by extension, police service were claimed to transcend caste identities; the uniform, as it were, re-cast the man. The social and cultural reality, however, was that caste remained central to Indian life.<sup>35</sup>

An example of the recruitment difficulties created by caste occurred when one member of the presidency board proposed that naikras – who the British categorised as low caste, hill-dwellers, traditionally involved in cattle-raiding - be used to help secure lines of communication. Such a measure, it was argued, would also provide welcome employment, a contention implying that at least some naikras were entering the 'mainstream' economy. That this caste was not formally acknowledged as being settled and agricultural, opened up a discussion as to their suitability for a modernising police force. Lord Elphinstone, the Governor of Bombay, agreed to discuss the suggestion with the Commissioner of Police, but stressed that the effectiveness of enlisting men from social groups who in British eyes were given to predatory raiding would depend upon the calibre of the British officers appointed to command them. There was a precedent for the recruitment of 'marginal' low caste men in Kandesh district, where a second battalion of 1,000 Bhils, another group traditionally settled in less agriculturally developed hills and forests in the north of the presidency, had been approved.<sup>36</sup>

The tension between the immediate need for manpower and the longer term effort to reduce British dependence on irregular levies raised among the Bhils was in part resolved by consulting magistrates and local police about recruits' acceptability. It was thus hoped to prevent the revived influence of 'the hereditary descendants and representatives of Chiefs who were formerly powerful'.<sup>37</sup> The government instructed the Commissioner of Police to recruit naikras only if it was considered safe to do so, using such men to guard hill passes and capture mutineers and others in rebellion.<sup>38</sup>

This concern for traditional caste identities was reinforced by the use of traditional Indian methods of recruitment through village headmen and larger landowners. In doing this, British officials may have given credence to inflated claims to rights and leadership among occasionally self-promoting figures, but the process was rooted in custom unconnected with British colonialism.<sup>39</sup> Throughout the presidency, officials worked within existing political contexts to ensure stability, or at least to contain

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<sup>35</sup> Philip Constable, 'The Marginalization of a Dalit Martial Race in Late Nineteenth- and Early- Twentieth Century Western India', *Journal of Asian Studies*, 60 (May, 2001), pp.439-478.

<sup>36</sup> IOR Minute by Malet 5 August 1857; undated memorandum by Governor on Malet's minute 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>37</sup> IOR Minute by Lumsden 7 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>38</sup> IOR Minute by Commander-in-Chief Somerset 11 August 1857; 'Resolution of Honourable Board' 17 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>39</sup> Susan Bayly, *Caste, Society and Politics in India from the Eighteenth Century to the Modern Age* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp.103-104, p.190, p.192.

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

threats to stability. Thus, to the north-west, in Kattiwur, the Political Agent, Colonel Lang, recruited 50 extra Sindhi horsemen and 100 extra sebandees (lightly armed guards) for police duties on the frontier because he had insufficient men to detain and disarm roving parties of soldiers and mutineers. A key factor was to find men already mounted and skilled in horsemanship.<sup>40</sup> In Okhamundel, one tribal group was thought to be considering 'some serious disturbance'; Lang intended to gather together 'the most influential and best disposed of them' in order to persuade them to remain loyal.<sup>41</sup> Officials in the southern districts similarly scrutinised local political developments and requested surprisingly small numbers of extra troops to discourage disaffection.

Thus countering insurgency began with the recruitment, organisation, deployment, and tactical use of police, irregular forces and soldiers. Officials at the local level provided police and semi-military manpower through a process, based on Indian practices, which demonstrated, in collaboration with local elites, the resilience of what the British felt to be their own system of good governance. Their approach supports Mark Moyar's argument that, because insurgencies are initiated, expanded and led by talented elites galvanising and attracting support, counter-insurgency operations become contests between elites in which those possessing the superior leadership attributes prevail.<sup>42</sup> Officials' practices in Bombay, however, were rooted in local custom and local 'political' relationships, which suggests more of a melding of leader-centric and population-centric approaches than Moyar's modelling perhaps allows.

### III

There was, of course, no formal doctrine to guide operations against insurgents. Mid-nineteenth-century Victorians would have agreed with Porch's endorsement of the view that good soldiers can tackle insurgencies. Apart from recruitment, the government spent much time deciding where to deploy the limited numbers of available troops. In the far south, for example, attention centred on possible raiding from neighbouring princely states and how far to distribute 100 men of the South Maratha Irregular Horse so as to provide a protective, mobile screen for the small detachments of infantry guarding the treasuries at Baugecote and Badawee. Officials claimed that very small deployments would have a 'great' psychological effect in keeping the frontier in 'awe'.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> IOR Colonel W. Lang to Anderson 26 September; Bombay Government 'Resolution of the Honourable Board' 13 October 1857, L/P&S/5/517.

<sup>41</sup> IOR Lang to Anderson 26 September 1857, L/P&S/5/517.

<sup>42</sup> Mark Moyar, *A Question of Command. Counterinsurgency from the Civil War to Iraq* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 2009), pp.2-3, p.286.

<sup>43</sup> IOR Lt W.A. Kerr to Lt Colonel Malcolm 12 September 1857 L/P&S/5/517.

An unusual case where discussions about tactics were formally recorded arose from the governing council's review of counter-insurgency tactics to be adopted, if required, in Bombay city. For the pre-eminent Victorian historians of the mutiny-rebellion, John Kaye and George Malleeson, the state's collapse was reversed in Bengal and prevented in Bombay by strong, decisive and sometimes charismatic leadership, of the type which would fit some prerequisites of Mark Moyer's approach to leader-centric counter-insurgency operations. Lord Elphinstone, believed that no serious threat existed within his presidency.<sup>44</sup> British officers treated the rising as opportunistic and conditional, not ideological and existential. Their attitude was captured when *The Times* of London in September 1857 assured its readers that the arrival at Bombay of one battalion, of the 33rd Regiment, would transform the situation.<sup>45</sup> Malleeson also enthused about key Bombay officials' understanding of the 'native' psychology in ways which unintentionally validate Douglas Porch's robust strictures against the Romanticisation of local knowledge into cult status.<sup>46</sup> One scene attained parodic theatricality when Bombay's superintendent of police, C.J.Forgett, an India hand born and bred, allegedly faced down potential insurgents during the Muharram festival, a Shia celebration of the coming of the Islamic New Year held in late August.<sup>47</sup>

In reality, given the centrality of insurrections in Delhi, Lucknao and Kanpur, and recognising local Europeans' anxieties, the Bombay government carefully reviewed the policing arrangements for controlling its capital in the build-up to the annual Maharram festival in August.<sup>48</sup> One member of the presidency's governing council of four, Arthur Malet, doubted the existence of any threats, but conceded that all Europeans, including those in the navy and merchant marine, might be made ready to defend the city and the island. Elphinstone disagreed, arguing that there were enough police to deal with civil disorder. A sepoy mutiny, he claimed, could be suppressed with guns manned by Europeans and by small numbers of European troops and seamen from the Indian navy, who were trained to use muskets. Captains of merchant vessels at Bombay would place their men at the disposal of the naval commander. Another board member, James Grant Lumsden, who, like Malet, had served in the Bombay presidency since the mid-1820s<sup>49</sup>, pointed out that the recent arrival of the 33rd should reassure the European public, but suggested increasing European police numbers to add further reassurance.<sup>50</sup> The governor cautioned that

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<sup>44</sup> Malleeson, *Kaye's and Malleeson's History*, V, pp.6-13, pp.40-45.

<sup>45</sup> *The Times* 22 September 1857, p.8.

<sup>46</sup> Malleeson, *Kaye's and Malleeson's History*, V, pp.14-24, pp.90-92.

<sup>47</sup> Malleeson, *Kaye's and Malleeson's History*, V, pp.29-36.

<sup>48</sup> IOR 'Resolution of Honourable Board' 17 August 1857; Minute by Governor 17 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>49</sup> *East India Register and Army List for 1857* (London, Wm. H. Allen, 1857), pp.4-5.

<sup>50</sup> IOR Minute by Malet 5 August 1857; Minute by Lumsden 7 August 1857; undated Minute by Governor on Malet's minute L/P&S/5/514.

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

extra police would need careful training and that very few Europeans in Bombay seemed suitable for ordinary police duties, unless the government recruited 'upon the principle of set a thief to catch a thief'. He recommended a small increase of 60 mounted men capable of using their swords, and claimed that 'no native mob would stand against them for a moment'.<sup>51</sup>

Lumsden suggested that European soldiers should be distributed widely in government houses, buildings and depots, which could also be designated as places where civilians could take refuge in an emergency. The governor rejected any troop dispersal, but accepted the desirability of designating places of refuge for Europeans and for storing arms.<sup>52</sup> The Commander-in-Chief, Bombay, Sir Henry Somerset, agreed to designate rendezvous points in each district and suggested that all Europeans should be embodied in defence of their local centres. Announcing this measure would allay such panic as might exist. Since hastily and 'loosely' gathered police would be useless in a general rising, the police would rendezvous with troops at these strategic points in the city and island.<sup>53</sup> The government decided that the Commissioner of Police would, in consultation with the brigadier commanding the city garrison, select rendezvous points in the island's different districts. A European volunteer corps, though regarded by officials as unnecessary, would be organised if the European community pressed for it.<sup>54</sup>

Brigadier John Macourtie Shortt, commanding the city garrison, commented on these suggestions on 20 August. He proposed to concentrate most of his 540 European and 853 Indian troops at two bases in the city. He proposed to deploy sailors from the Royal Navy squadron under Captain George Wellesley, R.N., C.B., a 43-year old nephew of the 1st Duke of Wellington who had recently arrived in India, having seen service in Syria and the Pacific.<sup>55</sup> Sailors with small field guns would reinforce the police at two key points. Shortt, who had joined the Bombay army in 1820<sup>56</sup>, wanted the police positioned at three points, from which they would maintain communications with the two designated military posts. The police should operate quite separately from the army, because armed and unarmed men could not be deployed in action together. The troops would step in if the police failed and a mob was 'likely to get the upper hand'. He also insisted that distributing troops into the

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<sup>51</sup> IOR Minute by Governor of Bombay 11 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>52</sup> IOR Minute by Lumsden 7 August 1857; Minute by Governor of Bombay 11 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>53</sup> IOR Minute by Commander-in-Chief Somerset 11 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>54</sup> IOR Resolution of the Honourable Board 17 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>55</sup> *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* entry; he ended his career as the navy's senior administrative admiral.

<sup>56</sup> *Bombay Almanack... for 1858* (Bombay, n.d.), p.404.

'native town' would be 'exceedingly wrong. Small isolated posts invite attack, and the handful of soldiers are [sic] at a disadvantage'.<sup>57</sup>

The government refined Shortt's proposals. The maintenance of order in the 'native' town would be left to the police. It wanted 25-30 European troops assigned to the Powder Works, rather than leaving the defence of that vital installation in the hands of sepoys with modest assistance from the police.<sup>58</sup> Sailors would be deployed in an emergency: 'they can be valuable for a few minutes, but they are difficult to manage, and to keep away from liquor'.<sup>59</sup> The presence of warships and artillery underscored the British authorities' self-confidence in maintaining order with 1,400 regular soldiers, both British and Indian, in a city with an estimated 520,860 people in 1851.<sup>60</sup>

This self-confidence probably reflected the economic prosperity Bombay enjoyed in 1857-58. The port bustled with troop transfers, the shipment of the materiel of war, and the import and export of consumer goods. Customs revenues rose sharply from £316,000-329,000 in the three fiscal years ending in April 1855 to April 1857 to £444,000 in the year ending April 1858. Government revenues generated by opium production grew by nearly 50% during 1857-58 to £1,648,000 or over one-quarter of the presidency's total revenue that year. Bombay as an administrative hub benefitted from an increase of 37% in Government expenditure during the fiscal year to April 1858.<sup>61</sup> These flows succoured economic activity and jobs; both positive bases for government resilience. But there is a further point about Bombay City. An Indian nationalist perspective would stress the widespread discontent at alien rule and the use of modern communications to disseminate news of the progress of insurgency. Yet, much religious teaching in mid-century India emphasised ritual devotion, piety, moderation and hard work. These were attributes encouraged by 'modern' urban life.<sup>62</sup>

#### **IV**

The most active challenges to British rule came from risings and raiding on the borders of Rajputana, and from more widespread but lower key plundering and raiding, sometimes acquiesced in by local rulers and typically associated with poorer tribal/ethnic groups whose livelihoods traditionally depended upon occasional but

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<sup>57</sup> IOR Memorandum by Brig J.M. Shortt 20 August 1857 in Crawford to Secretary to Government 20 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514; Malleeson stated that the decision to concentrate, rather than disperse, European police was entirely Forgett's. Malleeson, *Kaye's and Malleeson's History*, V, pp.32-34.

<sup>58</sup> IOR Anderson to Crawford 22 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>59</sup> IOR Crawford to Secretary of Government 20 August 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>60</sup> Government of Bombay, *The Gazetteer of Bombay City and Island*, 3 vols (Bombay, 1909), I, pp.162-163.

<sup>61</sup> *Bombay Almanack and Directory for 1859*, pp.176-177; *Bombay... for 1860*, p.138; *Bombay... for 1861*, p.164; *Bombay... for 1862*, p.269; *Bombay... for 1863*, p.152.

<sup>62</sup> C.A.Bayly, *Empire and Information* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp.322-323, p.337; Bayly, *Indian Society*, pp.158-168.

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

systematic plundering raids upon neighbouring districts. Once the monsoons had receded by October, troops from Bombay, sent to Mhow during July, joined others in Rajputana to suppress or contain disturbances in a line of towns stretching from Mhow to the major Muslim pilgrimage centre of Ajmir, with Mandasaur, Nimach and Nasirabad being particular flash points.

Disaffection in this region (beyond the Bombay presidency's normal sphere of responsibility) arose among widely dispersed and small garrisons. On 10 August members of the 12th Bombay Native Infantry mutinied at Nasirabad; five ringleaders were hanged. A minor disturbance among men of the same regiment occurred on 12 August at Nimach. In both towns, company-level deployments from the 83rd HM regiment staunchly disapproved. <sup>63</sup> On 22 October, 400-500 insurgents, using Mandasaur as their base, seized the town and fort of Jiran, about 12 miles from Nimach. Although the insurgents left the fort within days, the British launched two unsuccessful assaults in which seven of the 11 British officers were killed or wounded. <sup>64</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Henry Durand, acting as the officiating agent in Central India, predicted that rebels at and around Mandasaur would be emboldened by events at Jiran and requested that reinforcements be sent to Mhow. <sup>65</sup> Given such a range of threats, Brigadier General George Lawrence pressed in early November for significant reinforcements. He held eight posts between Nasirabad and Nimach with 2,150 infantry, of whom only 500 men of the 83rd were British regulars and only 350 were Bombay sepoy. One third of his infantry consisted of 550 unarmed local levies and members of the Jodhpur Legion, while another 173 were recent recruits to a local battalion. Lawrence wanted 1,000 European troops at Nasirabad. With cavalry at Nimach and the small siege train at Ajmir, he could form a movable column deployable in any direction. <sup>66</sup> Captain Lloyd, superintendent of Mhow, reminded Lawrence that the roving column on campaign from Mhow already provided assistance, or at least gave cavalry cover for any local withdrawal which Lawrence might need to stage. <sup>67</sup> After Lloyd again reminded him of the pressures on Mhow's military resources, Lawrence asked Bombay for reinforcements to suppress the 'many discordant elements' increasingly active in Rajputana. <sup>68</sup> The Bombay government replied that reinforcements had been sent north, but refused to commit large additional European forces even when extra regiments arrived from Britain. <sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Malleon, *Kaye's and Malleon's History*, IV, pp.387-389, pp.394-397.

<sup>64</sup> IOR Capt C.L. Showers to Brig Gen G. Lawrence 24 October 1857; Capt B P Lloyd to Lawrence 25 October 1857, L/P&S/5/520.

<sup>65</sup> IOR Durand to Anderson 30 October 1857, L/P&S/5/520.

<sup>66</sup> IOR G. Lawrence to Adjutant General 5 November 1857, L/P&S/5/520.

<sup>67</sup> IOR Captain Lloyd to G. Lawrence 9 November 1857, LP&S/5/520.

<sup>68</sup> IOR Lloyd to G.Lawrence 13 November; G.Lawrence to Edmonstone 16 November 1857, L/P&S/5/520.

<sup>69</sup> IOR Anderson to G. Lawrence 23 November 1857, L/P&S/5/520.

Pressures in Rajputana had led the magistrate at Rutnagherry to suggest abandoning Mhow in favour of concentrating the Deccan Field Force at its base at Asirghur, south of the Narbudda River.<sup>70</sup> This was rejected.<sup>71</sup> But the strategic determination to hold Mhow was not immediately backed by the despatch of additional troops. In late November, Sir Robert Hamilton, the Governor-General's Agent for Central India, argued that Mhow and nearby towns were dangerously exposed to attack by raiding parties, especially when 'An armed population not forgetful of old Pindaree habits, abounding with desperate characters, has already tasted the sweets of Plunder'. This reference to the large Pindari raiding parties launched in the 1810s from the Maratha lands underscored one British view that some kinds of disaffection were endemic and recurrent and that a successful attack on nearby Indore would spread rebellion in the region and endanger government revenue-raising and the export of opium, both of which had proved resilient to date.<sup>72</sup> The Bombay government insisted that it had 'always considered' Mhow to be the most important point in the presidency and that it should be reinforced immediately.<sup>73</sup>

## V

The range of actual and potential threats - from sepoy mutiny to 'customary', periodic raiding to wider resistance and revolt - naturally raises the question of how far the British used terror or excessive violence to punish or deter insurgency. The stress on British violence, as, for example, in William Dalrymple's account of the retaking of Delhi in September 1857, forms part of a wider depiction of the savage face of colonial counter-insurgency warfare.<sup>74</sup> The Victorians themselves noted the brutality involved in suppressing the Mutiny-Rebellion, but chose not to elaborate upon it.

The most violent reactions in Bombay seem to have been directed against mutineers mainly by field forces deployed on campaign with little time to linger in any one place. Retribution, in their eyes, had to be swift, public, and fearsome. Punishments inflicted through procedural means, however summary and severe, could also be calibrated, and accompanied, in part at least, by rewards for loyalty. At Ahmedabad on 8 July, for example, a few men of the Guzerat Irregular Horse rode through the lines of their unit armed with loaded carbines and flying a green flag to represent Mughal sovereignty. Having vainly urged others to rise, they fired on their two senior British

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<sup>70</sup> IOR Turquand to Anderson 22 September 1857, L/P&S/5/517.

<sup>71</sup> IOR Anderson to Maj General C. Waddington 28 September 1857, L/P&S/5/517.

<sup>72</sup> IOR Memorandum of Sir R. Hamilton 27 November 1857, L/P&S/5/520; Durand to Governor 2 October 1857, L/PS/5/517.

<sup>73</sup> IOR Elphinstone and Government Board of Bombay 27 November 1857, L/P&S/5/520.

<sup>74</sup> William Dalrymple, *The Last Mughal. The Fall of a Dynasty, Delhi, 1857* (London, Bloomsbury, 2007 edn), pp.360-364, pp.401-403. An excellent case-study indicative of a wider trend is Huw Bennett, *Fighting the Mau Mau. The British Army and Counter-Insurgency in the Kenya Emergency* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013).

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

officers and were chased into the countryside by British officers and a small number of troops. Two of them were killed and five were tried on 22 July and hanged the following day, in front of the Guzerat Irregular Horse and the troops of the brigade stationed at Ahmedabad.<sup>75</sup> But when the Guzerat Irregular Horse acquitted themselves well, Major General Roberts recommended one-off rewards to long-serving individuals and full reinstatement for seven men acquitted a month or so earlier by a court martial.<sup>76</sup>

Again, from 6 to 11 July insurgents took control of Dohud, in Rewa Kanta. The town's fort, the seat and symbol of government, was defended by a mixed force of 60 men, including drilled policemen in Sindhia's service, sewars or lightly armed horsemen, and Pathans, under Hussein Shah Khan, an officer in the district Sibundis, or lightly armed police. Hussein was rewarded with a fine double-barrelled gun and a pay rise, while the police involved got an additional month's pay.<sup>77</sup> Within a month, 15 prisoners were taken and tried. Two days later, four of the 14 prisoners convicted were blown from the guns, on the grounds that they had not only rebelled but had also pressured others into taking an oath to the emperor. Nine others were transported for life and one was sentenced to 14 years hard labour.<sup>78</sup>

In August, ten men were convicted of attacking the treasury at Pundapur, in the south of the presidency, and killing an official and three peons. Six of those convicted were blown from the guns on the morning after the trial, that unusual method being preferred to hanging in order to provide 'an impressive example' in the 'present state of the country'. The confiscated property of those convicted was awarded to the victims' families, along with pensions to the families of those killed, in an effort to compensate the loyal, as well as deter opportunistic insurgents.<sup>79</sup>

Raiding probably posed a more widespread challenge than mutiny and the army assumed additional powers in response to that challenge. For example, in late December, an effort was made to open up the section of the main Bombay-Agra road from the Kandesh border. Posts were to be established to support the Transport Train bullocks and to safeguard traffic 'which is now from want of security unable to pass up or down'. Lieutenant Colonel Stockley, commanding the Malwa Bhil Corps, was ordered to escort the Transport Train bullocks to those posts by the beginning of January, while another officer would position mail carts and horses along the route. Stockley was instructed:

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<sup>75</sup> IOR Roberts to Anderson 23 July 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>76</sup> IOR Roberts to Anderson 19 September, 23 September 1857, L/P&S/5/517.

<sup>77</sup> IOR Buckle to Roberts 18 July in Roberts to Secretary of Government 23 July 1857; 'Resolution of Honourable Board' 31 July 1857 L/P&S/5/514.

<sup>78</sup> IOR C. Buckle to Roberts, 24 August 1857 L/P&S/5/516.

<sup>79</sup> IOR J.N Rose to Anderson 19 August 1857, L/P&S/5/515.



Any person obstructing you or offering opposition must be brought to trial immediately. The whole line of road between Mhow and Sindwah Ghat on the Khandeish frontier being [sic] now under military law.<sup>80</sup>

Casual, opportunistic raiding was a recurrent challenge along the route from the south to Mhow. On 12 January 1858, the Quarter Master General, Robert Phayre, who had just returned from Persia, laid out plans to suppress raiding parties organised by Bhils of the Satpura area. The strategic road from Bombay to Mhow went through the Satpuras. A force of 2,730 sepoys was assigned to the task, together with four light mortars and four light howitzers. Phayre requested mounted and foot police from the civil authorities and wanted close co-operation with the Acting Magistrate for the district of Khandesh to 'secure that unity of purpose, without which operations of the naturally difficult character in question cannot be properly carried on'. Writing formally to the Secretary of the Government of Bombay, he outlined the key issues:

Hill warfare against banditti partakes of much the same character all over the world. The enemy's main strength lies in his superior knowledge of the country, activity of movement and ready means of obtaining food and water without encumbrances or extra fatigue. His women and larger children act alike as scouts and baggage cattle, and are able with comparative facility to elude the strictest vigilance of skirmishers, patrols, etc etc so that their capture is important in proportion to their utility.

The British needed to deploy light forces divided into 'attacking, auxiliary and reserve detachments', distributed so as to support each other, guard key positions and combine rapidly when necessary. One psychological advantage for the British, according to Phayre, was that the Bhils had no desire to leave their home territory – indeed they would be demoralised if forced to do so. The British objective was therefore to drive them out of their immediate home districts. They had to be prevented from withdrawing to the south or west where the British had no troops with which to confront them. Local auxiliaries and police would guard potential escape routes. The main force would drive the Bhils eastwards and north upon the Narbudda River. But the jungle in Satpura was 'very dense and high'. The British would therefore need to set fire to as much of the jungle as would burn, beginning from the windward side but only if that meant pushing the Bhils to the east. Details as to where detachments of police might be sent were provided and the views of the Bombay Commissioner of Police and the Acting Magistrate of Khandesh were

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<sup>80</sup> IOR Hamilton to Stockley 21 December 1857 L/P&S/5/522.

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

invited.<sup>81</sup> Phayre added the warning that magistrates' ad hoc responses to raiding would be disastrous. Success would depend upon fully organised forces securing all the approaches and outlets to the Bhils' territories.<sup>82</sup> This operation offered the clearest example of the Bombay authorities' integration of civil and military forces.

### VI

The use of summary trials and exemplary severity in punishment was related to the scale of disaffection and the need to move British forces on. The need for speed and the restoration of order were demonstrated when the British re-entered Indore, a rich commercial city and capital of the Holkar dynasty, on 15 December. On 1 July, soldiers of Holkar's Contingent mutinied and killed 38 Britons of all ages and both sexes<sup>83</sup>; some mutineers then marched off to Agra with the bulk of the treasure and valuables seized in the mutiny.<sup>84</sup> But Holkar kept in place the troops who remained, on the grounds that he had no means of punishing them until British forces arrived.<sup>85</sup> When in early October presidency troops advanced from Mhow, the governor of Bombay wanted Holkar's previously mutinous troops at Indore punished, partly to deter other allies' defecting troops from disrupting lines of communication around Mhow.<sup>86</sup> After dealing with local risings in this region beyond the presidency, British troops entered Indore on 15 December. They proceeded to disarm 1,382 soldiers.<sup>87</sup> By 28 December, they had inquired into 900 cases, finding 122 men guilty. Of those, 30 were sentenced to death for their involvement in the attack, 61 received other punishments for plundering, and 31 were dismissed from the service, having been unarmed spectators. The first batch of 15 executions occurred on 28 December.<sup>88</sup>

British officials highlighted two problems. They were reluctant for Holkar to dismiss soldiers not found guilty of serious misbehaviour in July since 'it will not be politic to allow such men to wander about the country, they must be kept under strict surveillance'.<sup>89</sup> Unable to detain their field force under Major General Sir Hugh Rose, the British recruited 3,082 levies from three local ethnic groups or tribes, adding 591 artillerymen of their own to watch over Holkar's Contingent and defend Indore.<sup>90</sup> The second problem was the widespread ownership of weapons among the town's inhabitants. Rose pressed for the disarming of Indore's population: 'I could do it'. The

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<sup>81</sup> IOR Phayre to Secretary of Government, Bombay, 12 January 1858 L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>82</sup> IOR Quarter Master General to Secretary of Government, Secret Dept, 20 January 1858, L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>83</sup> IOR Rose to Elphinstone 29 December 1857 L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>84</sup> IOR Hamilton to Anderson 26 December 1857 L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>85</sup> IOR Hamilton to Anderson 5 January 1858 L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>86</sup> IOR Minute by Governor 12 October 1857, L/P&S/5/518.

<sup>87</sup> IOR Hamilton to Rose 29 December L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>88</sup> IOR 'A Statement of the guilty sepoys out of the two disarmed Regiments in the service of the Durbar, Indore 28 December 1857' L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>89</sup> IOR Hamilton to Rose 29 December 1857 L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>90</sup> IOR Hamilton to Edmonstone 9 January 1857 L/P&S/5/522.

Governor General warned that provision had to be made to protect the town once it was disarmed and that the field force should not be delayed at Indore for this task. Holkar agreed to prohibit the carrying of arms without a license – the first such measure in central India – and to keep his government artillery securely locked in the arsenal, out of the immediate reach of potential mutineers. Only artillery guns used for ceremonial salutes were not removed from accessible public places. British officials agreed that it would be inappropriate to attempt any wider disarming in existing circumstances.<sup>91</sup>

A similar speedy trial and mass execution - of soldiers of the Bhopal Contingent - occurred in January 1858 at Sehore. Rose used a drum head court martial, which did not require evidence to be recorded. Some years later, Sir Robert Hamilton asserted that 'the unfortunate massacre of the Bhopal Contingent, tried, sentenced, and executed, some 90 men in ten hours was a disgrace to our Name and narrowly escaped Parliamentary notice'.<sup>92</sup> Mutiny and dereliction of duty cut to the heart of the military code, but mass trials, though formally justified by the pressure of campaigning, unsettled at least some officials. How far the Bombay forces engaged in informal acts of violence or terror is not clear, but systematic brutality against civilians was not a central instrument of British policy. The main focus was on punishing mutineers in British forces or in subsidiary allies' contingents, to secure lines of communication, and to deter opportunistic raiding. These were extensions of 'normal' military practice, made more intense by the wider mutiny-rebellion.

## **VII**

The maintenance of British control in Bombay owed more to officials' ability to work with local elites and peoples than Porch's general model of the practice of colonial counter-insurgency would suggest. Violence played a part. The Bombay authorities used summary executions to deal with mutinies where they occurred. Even so, there were hints that public opinion at home created potential boundaries to the use of exemplary force, which had to be justified as being a response to immediate and impending threats. More generally, a distinction was drawn in 1857 between the use of police against civilians and the deployment of soldiers against both mutineers and raiding parties indulging in the long-standing practice of plundering expeditions. Savage excesses occurred but systematic brutality, of the kind emphasised by Porch, was not central to the Bombay government's policy or prescribed military practice.

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<sup>91</sup> IOR Rose to Elphinstone 29 December 1857; Governor-General to Elphinstone 4 January 1858; Hamilton to Elphinstone 5 January 1858; Hamilton to Anderson 5 January 1858; Hamilton to Rose 7 January 1858; Hamilton to Elphinstone 8 January 1858 L/P&S/5/522.

<sup>92</sup> Brian Robson (ed), *Sir Hugh Rose and the Central India Campaign 1858* (Stroud, Sutton, 2000), pp.280-281, p.284, p.289,

## COUNTER-INSURGENCY IN THE BOMBAY PRESIDENCY

The colonial state in Bombay did not fail or come anywhere near to collapsing. Localities where British influence weakened were largely to the north of the presidency beyond British direct rule. Although Victorian writers might have subscribed to the leader-centric approach which Moyer emphasises, officials put into place specific measures which had little to do with the heroics occasionally depicted by Malleon. Bayly emphasised 'Indian disunity' as a key factor in the region. The British had won over the Bhils by creating the Bhil Corps, deploying it against others, and had worked hard to conciliate and influence the courts in Baroda and Indore.<sup>93</sup> The events of 1857 showed that this was a more widespread and dynamic process than Bayly suggested. District officials recruited irregular and police forces tailored to local circumstances and finely balanced in caste and ethnic composition. Using mobile forces across a large region, they discussed the appropriate deployment of forces hurriedly raised, and assessed the tactics to be deployed in Bombay City, in sweeps against hill tribes, in punishing mutineers, in keeping the main lines of communication open, and in dealing with princely allies. The colonial state in Bombay was not, as happened in Bundelkund, separated from the political and administrative experience of Indian rulers, landowners and local worthies. British officials negotiated constantly with a wide range of local stakeholders, including clients, claimants, and challengers for power, and took into account the reactions of castes and tribal groups beyond the customary boundaries of formal political discourse. These relationships did not readily fit the pattern of anthropological stereotyping which Porch detects in many British assessments of later nineteenth-century Indian, particularly frontier, society.<sup>94</sup> Above all, officials ensured that the composition of the counter-insurgency force itself reflected social realities in much of the presidency's territory and they applied that force in a tough-minded manner which was neither socially ignorant nor politically insensitive.

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<sup>93</sup> Bayly, *Indian Society*, p.183; K.S.Singh, 'The Tribals and the 1857 Uprising', *Social Scientist*, p.26 (1998), pp.76-85, especially pp.82-83; N.Benjamin and B.B. Mohanty, 'Imperial Solutions to a Colonial Problem: Bhils of Khandesh to c1850', *Modern Asian Studies*, 41 (2007), pp.343-367.

<sup>94</sup> Porch, *Counterinsurgency*, pp.31-39.