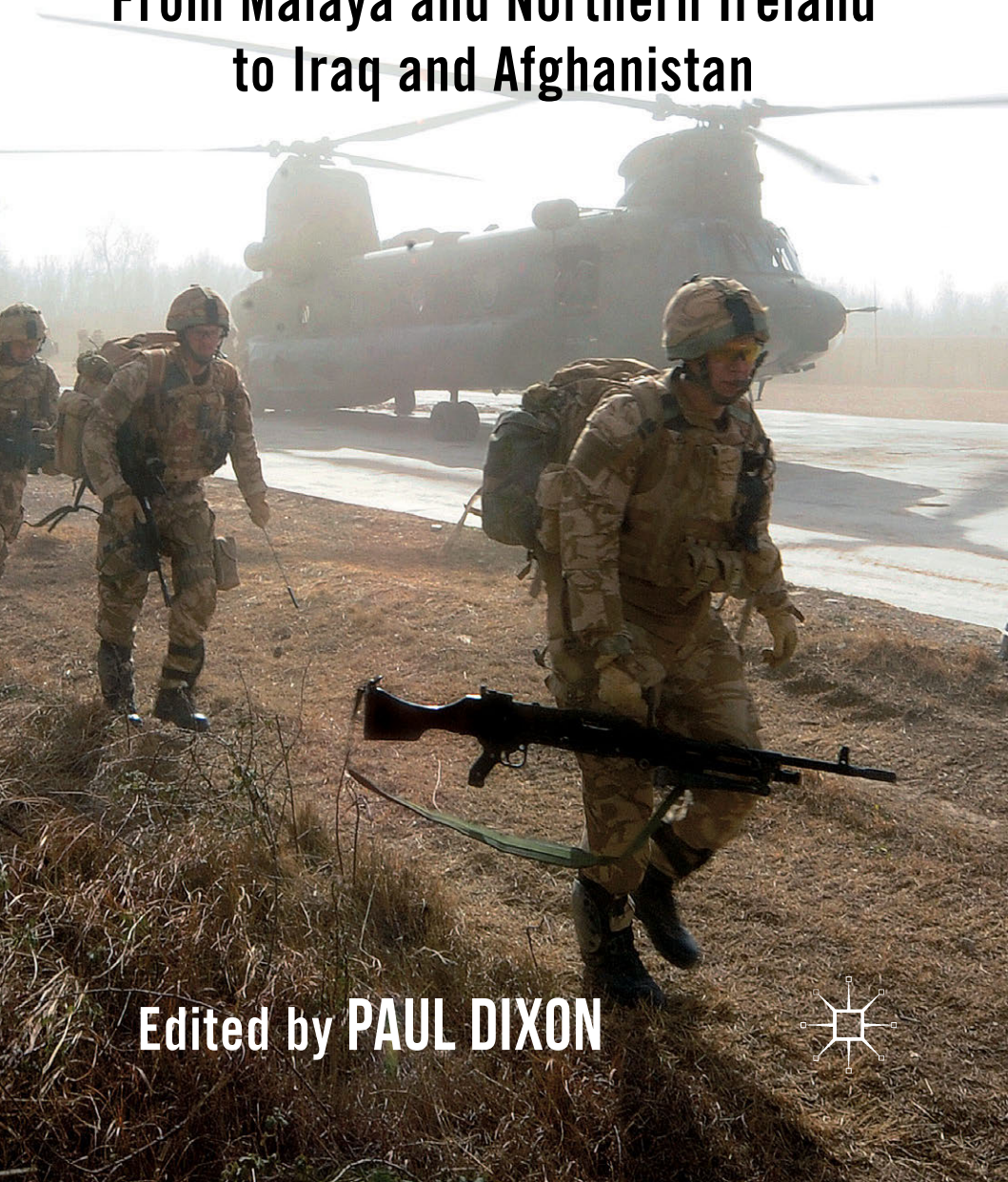


# THE BRITISH APPROACH TO COUNTERINSURGENCY

From Malaya and Northern Ireland  
to Iraq and Afghanistan



Edited by **PAUL DIXON**



# The British Approach to Counterinsurgency

*Also by Paul Dixon*

NORTHERN IRELAND: The Politics of War and Peace

NORTHERN IRELAND SINCE 1969 (*with Eamonn O'Kane*)

# The British Approach to Counterinsurgency

From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan

Edited by

Paul Dixon

*Reader in Politics and International Studies, Kingston University, UK*

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# Abbreviations and Acronyms

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANP	Afghan National Police
ARVN	Army of the Republic of Vietnam
AWPs	Armed work parties
ATOM	Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya
BRIAM	British International Advisory Mission to Vietnam
BDD	British Defence Doctrine
BGIROs	Battle Group Internment Review Officer
BMI	Baha Mousa Inquiry
CAC	Conduct After Capture
CAD	Collection, Analysis and Dissemination
CAJ	Committee on the Administration of Justice
CentCom	Central Command (US)
CERP	Commanders Emergency Response Programme
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIS	Combined Intelligence Staff
COIN	Counterinsurgency
COMISAF	Commander of the International Security Assistance Force
CORDS	Civilian Operations Revolutionary Development Support
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
CS	'Tear' gas, a riot control agent
CT	Communist Terrorist
DCSU	Defence Cultural Specialist Unit
DISC	Defence Intelligence and Security Centre
DOO	Director of Operations
DWEC	District War Executive Committees
DYH	Derry Young Hooligans
FOB	Forward Operating Base
GOC	General Officer Commanding
GVN	Government of Vietnam (in Saigon)
H4H	Help for Heroes
HMG	Her Majesty's Government (UK)

HN	Host Nation
ICM	Independent Communications and Marketing
IPS	Iraqi Police Service
IR	International Relations
IRA	Irish Republican Army
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISCI	Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq
JFIT	Joint Field Intelligence Team
JSIO	Joint Services intelligence Organisation
KFOR	NATO Kosovo Force
MCA	Malayan Chinese Association
MCP	Malayan Communist Party
MHAT	Military Health Advisory Team (US)
MIO	Military Intelligence Officer
MND	Multi-National Division
MNLA	Malayan National Liberation Army
MOD	Ministry of Defence (UK)
MRLA	Malayan Races Liberation Army
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCC	National Contingent Command
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NI	Northern Ireland
NLF	National Liberation Front
OPTAG	Operational Training and Advisory Group
PJHQ	Permanent Joint Headquarters
PROVN	Program for the Pacification and Long Term Development of South Vietnam
QLR	Queen's Lancashire Regiment
RAF	Royal Air Force
RMP	Royal Military Police
RSM	Regimental Sergeant Major
RUC	Royal Ulster Constabulary
RVN	Republic of South Vietnam
SACEUR	Supreme Allied Commander Europe
SAS	Special Air Service
SB	Special Branch
SCIRI	Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution in Iraq
SCR	Security Council Resolution

SF	Sinn Féin
SFO	Serious Fraud Office
SOFA	Status of Forces Agreement
SOP	Standard Operating Procedure
TA	Territorial Army
TDF	Temporary Detention Facility
TIF	Theatre Internment Facility
TNA	The National Archives (Kew, UK)
UDA	Ulster Defence Association
UDR	Ulster Defence Regiment
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNMIK	United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo
UMNO	United Malays National Organisation
UNITA	National Union for the Total Independence of Angola
US	United States
VC	Viet Cong
VCI	Viet Cong Infrastructure
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction



# 1

## The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: 'Hearts and Minds' from Malaya to Afghanistan?

*Paul Dixon*

Grab 'em by the balls and their hearts and minds will follow.  
(Anonymous US Officer in Vietnam)

### **Introduction**

The British approach to counterinsurgency was widely credited with rare successes against insurgencies in Malaya (1948–60) and Northern Ireland (1969–2007) (Van Creveld 2007). British counterinsurgency theory has also informed the British army's widely admired approach to peacekeeping. The classic model of British counterinsurgency suggested that it was above all a political activity designed to win the 'hearts and minds' of the local population to the government side. This involved the use of 'minimum force', the primacy of the police and a coordinated effort across all fronts. On the basis of Britain's apparently successful experience in Malaya, the British military attempted to persuade the Americans to adopt their 'hearts and minds' approach in Vietnam (1961–65). The peace process in Northern Ireland bolstered Britain's claims to be able to successfully fight counterinsurgencies. In the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq in 2003, the British again offered their approach to counterinsurgency as a successful model to the Americans. The US General David Petraeus and his COINdinitas were receptive to the British 'hearts and minds' approach. They championed the British approach to counterinsurgency against the advocates of a more violent, 'Conventional Warfare' approach which deploys overwhelming force against the enemy and is more willing to accept civilian casualties. Petraeus and the COINdinitas were successful in

winning over the US military to counterinsurgency and the British approach was reflected in the US army and Marine Corp's influential, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (2007). The apparent success of 'the surge' of US forces into Iraq – coinciding fortuitously with the 'Anbar Awakening' – enhanced the reputation of counterinsurgency as an effective instrument of state-building.

The British army used its experience of Northern Ireland in an attempt to win the 'hearts and minds' of the people of southern Iraq. The insurgency escalated and the British withdrawal from Basra in 2009 was perceived by US champions of the British approach as a 'defeat'. The British military's enthusiasm for the deployment to Helmand Province in Afghanistan in 2006 was, in part, motivated by a desire to restore the army's damaged reputation after Iraq. The British plan was for a 'hearts and minds' operation in central Helmand, based on the 'ink spot' tactic used in Malaya. This plan was, controversially, abandoned as British troops were deployed to 'platoon houses' in Northern Helmand and quickly became besieged and involved in highly violent conventional warfare. Paradoxically, some British officers learnt counterinsurgency from the US Field Manual, not realising the extent to which it was influenced by classical British counterinsurgency thinking. In June 2010 the US took control of NATO forces in Helmand. The British Prime Minister declared that British combat troops would be out of Afghanistan by 2014. While there was an attempt to claim success for Iraq and Afghanistan, there was growing criticism of the military from within and without.

### **This book**

This book examines the 'classic' British 'hearts and minds' approach to counterinsurgency and evaluates to what extent it has been a successful model by focusing on the experiences of Malaya, Northern Ireland, Iraq and Afghanistan. The key advocates of this 'classic' approach are Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson. Robert Thompson drew on his experience of Malaya to advise the US military and President Nixon on Vietnam and wrote his classic study *Defeating Communist Insurgency* in 1966. Frank Kitson served in the British army in Kenya, Malaya, Cyprus, Oman and Northern Ireland and published *Low Intensity Operations* in 1971, a guide to counterinsurgency and peace-keeping operations. Thompson and Kitson's principles for fighting

counterinsurgencies were influential on and probably more widely read than the army's counterinsurgency doctrine.

There is no single perspective running through this book (each author is responsible only for their contribution), but it does bring new interpretations to bear on the case studies and seeks to broaden the narrow focus of the current counterinsurgency literature (feminism, perspectives, domestic public opinion, human rights, army abuses). The book is not written by 'counterinsurgency experts' but by area and thematic specialists. This leads to a scepticism about the merit of over-generalised counterinsurgency theorising and an emphasis on the complexity and diversity of conflict situations (Table 1.1).

This chapter will introduce the themes and case studies in the book. It will argue that the classic British counterinsurgency approach is highly ambiguous and capable of being interpreted in diverse, if not contradictory, ways providing a poor guide to action (see also Dixon Chapter 2). British counterinsurgency thinking has tended to oversimplify conflicts and provide apparently simple technocratic 'solutions' to highly complex situations. Counterinsurgency theory tends not to question the morality or feasibility of the mission but, it is argued, encourages over-optimism about the effectiveness of counterinsurgency operations. The phrase 'hearts and minds' does not accurately describe the brutal reality of Britain's campaign in Malaya (and other colonies) or Northern Ireland. As Colonel David Benest has argued, 'Bluntly put, coercion was the reality – "hearts and minds" the myth' (Benest 2006: 118–19). The myth of 'hearts and minds', however, has led to a complacency about the control and accountability of the military in Iraq and Afghanistan (Bennett Chapter 6; Dickson Chapter 10). This raises issues about the suitability of the military and the dominant model of masculinity for carrying out counterinsurgency and peace-enforcement operations (Duncanson and Cornish Chapter 5). Vietnam starkly illustrates the way in which rhetoric about winning the 'hearts and minds' of the people in the name of democracy and human rights can conceal the brutal realities of a 'dirty war' (Hunt Chapter 8). British counterinsurgency theory was not designed to deal with a conflict such as Iraq, where the structures of local and national government were often starkly divided against each other (Rangwala Chapter 11). Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles, the former British Ambassador in Kabul, critiques the over-optimism of the military in Afghanistan and argues for a more assertive political elite to take control of

Table 1.1 The diversity of 'counterinsurgency' operations

	Malaya 1948–60	Vietnam 1950–75	Northern Ireland 1969–2007	Iraq 2003–09	Afghanistan 2001–12
Intervention	Colonial power	Cold War	Internal UK	'War on Terror' invasion	'War on Terror' invasion
Environment	Jungle	Jungle, urban	Urban, rural	Urban, desert	Urban, desert
Role of local state	British Empire No majority resistance	South Vietnam state welcomes US intervention	Local state (Stormont) welcomes troops	Opposes invasion	Opposes invasion
Local state	Colonial	Highly corrupt	Discriminatory, communal	Initial destruction, fragmented	Corruption, communal?
Local support for counterinsurgency	Sympathy among Malays, some Chinese	Limited	Majority sympathy	Some initial support	Considerable initial support
Popular support for insurgents	Low, largely 'Chinese'	High, US official estimates 80%, but 80% of these not communists	10–15% (rising after peace process) to 27%	Some	Some

Table 1.1 The diversity of 'counterinsurgency' operations – continued

	Malaya 1948–60	Vietnam 1950–75	Northern Ireland 1969–2007	Iraq 2003–09	Afghanistan 2001–12
Role of bordering states and international opinion in support of insurgents	Little external support for insurgency	Considerable external support for insurgency: North Vietnam, China, USSR	Limited external support mainly in Republic of Ireland and US	Significant role of bordering states and others for different insurgents	Significant role of Pakistan but also India, Iran. Sanctuary for insurgents
UK military operating with partners?	UK operation with local support	Small British Advisory Mission to Vietnam (BRIAM)	UK operation	UK operate as largest partner of US (other smaller partners)	UK operates as largest partner of US (other smaller partners). Substantial NATO support
UK military fatalities	272	US = 55,750 die, 292,000 wounded	651	179	422
Total deaths/casualties	20,000	2–3 million	3,700	110,000–1 million	40,000
Role of media	Limited	Significant	Significant	More limited, controlled	More limited, controlled
Outcome	Independence	Withdrawal, insurgent victory	Negotiated accommodation	Ongoing	Ongoing

(This table is intended to give a general sense of the diversity of the 'counterinsurgency' operations in this book. The figures and judgements are estimates, highly contestable and controversial.)

counterinsurgency (Chapter 12). The influence of the media and public opinion in counterinsurgency campaigns have, in the past, been deliberately played down (Dixon Chapter 3). In Iraq and Afghanistan, however, they have been a powerful constraint on British policy. These campaigns have also enhanced the power of the military in domestic politics and increased the militarisation of British society. This militarisation, however, has not produced public support for the wars (Dixon Chapter 4).

### **The classical British ‘hearts and minds’ approach to counterinsurgency**

US politicians and military first coined the term ‘counterinsurgency’ in the sixties to describe wars against ‘national liberation movements’ (or guerrillas) during the Cold War (Hunt Chapter 8). Counterinsurgency was preferred to ‘counterrevolutionary’ because of the positive and heroic connotations that ‘revolution’ has for Americans in their successful insurgency against British rule (1775–83). Counterinsurgency is frequently defined as having some of the following characteristics:

- A war waged by governments against a non-state actor
- The aim of insurgents is to remove the government or an occupation
- Counterinsurgency may be distinguished from counterterrorism by the substantial popular support for insurgents.

‘Counterinsurgency’ may be a less problematic term than ‘terrorism’, but it does have connotations with the suppression of popular movements during the Cold War. A serious problem is the way diverse conflicts are grouped together into the category of counterinsurgency. It can imply that there is some essential similarity between these conflicts and this encourages a belief that there is a common solution (see Table 1.1).

Counterinsurgency campaigns can be a particularly brutal form of warfare because of the difficulties for combatants of distinguishing insurgents from civilians. Valentino, for example, argues that ‘...the intentional slaughter of civilians in the effort to defeat guerrilla insurgencies was the most common impetus for mass killing in the twentieth century’ (Valentino 2004: 5). Some argue that in the post-

Cold War period these kinds of ‘wars amongst the people’ represent the future of armed conflict (Smith 2005).

The classic British approach to counterinsurgency was developed by Thompson and Kitson during the Cold War as the universal key to defeating insurgencies whether or not motivated by communism (Dixon Chapter 2). Paradoxically, perhaps, classic British COIN although developed by soldiers emphasised the importance of politics and government activity in defeating insurgents. Robert Thompson outlined five basic principles of counterinsurgency:

1. The government must have a clear political aim.
2. The government must function in accordance with law.
3. The government must have an overall plan.
4. The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.
5. In the guerrilla phase of an insurgency the government must secure its base.

Robert Thompson and Frank Kitson both emphasised the importance of the government demonstrating ‘political will’ and determination in order to defeat insurgents. This would convince the people that the government side will win and this leads the people to supply intelligence on the insurgents. Insurgent morale is undermined because they realise that they cannot win. Thompson and Kitson placed little emphasis on: the morality of counterinsurgency operations; the possibility that they would be ineffective and should not be attempted; the impact of the culture of the military on its operations; human rights abuses by British soldiers; and the role of domestic opinion.

Field Marshall, Sir Gerald Templer was the British military ‘supremo’ in Malaya and is most associated with applying the phrase ‘hearts and minds’ to the British approach to counterinsurgency (on ‘hearts and minds’ see Dixon 2009). In 1952 he stated, ‘The answer [to the uprising] lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the people.’ Templer emphasised the political rather than military aspects of defeating an insurgency: ‘The shooting side of this business is only 25 per cent of the trouble and the other 75 per cent lies in getting the people of this country behind us’ (Cloake 1985: 262).

The phrase 'hearts and minds' is associated with Malaya and usually interpreted to imply 'minimum force' or a very low level of coercion to win over the active consent of the population. This is highly misleading because of the considerable degree of coercion and abuse of human rights employed there (see below). The result of this confusion is that some advocates of the British 'hearts and minds' approach to counterinsurgency see it as entailing very low levels of coercion and as compatible with human rights standards. Other advocates of the British 'hearts and minds' approach point to the high levels of coercion used by the British in Malaya and argue that coercion has played an important role in the British approach to defeating insurgents (Dixon 2009; French 2011: 247, 251). Arguably, the dominant interpretation of the British approach to counterinsurgency and its practice has been highly coercive and unsympathetic to human rights (Dickson Chapter 10). This raises the issue as to whether the purpose of counterinsurgency theory and doctrine has been to conceal the realities of war in order to win domestic and international support for military interventions rather than as a guide to operations (Dixon Chapter 2)? British counterinsurgency theory and doctrine is also used to justify the military's role, educate political masters and influence the US and other military partners (Dixon 2009).

In Vietnam the phrase 'hearts and minds' became associated with a far more conventional and coercive approach to counterinsurgency and fell into disrepute (Hunt Chapter 8). By 1968 Templer was referring to 'hearts and minds' as 'that nauseating phrase I think I invented' (Cloake 1985: 2). Since the invasion of Iraq 2003 the phrase 'hearts and minds' has been widely used to describe the British approach to counterinsurgency but has become, according to General Sir David Richards, 'somewhat discredited'. While Thompson and Kitson may have been read by British soldiers interested in counterinsurgency, doctrine seems to have been less seriously considered. General Sir Richard Dannatt commented that the British army had 'never been a huge advocate of doctrine', to admit interest 'was considered a fairly appalling crime, and a somewhat ungentlemanly expression of trying too hard...' (Dannatt, Address to IISS 21 September 2007). Counterinsurgency practice may be less influenced by counterinsurgency doctrine than by the culture(s) of the British military and those of different regiments (Duncanson and Cornish Chapter 5).

There has been an influential view in the US that the Europeans have been reluctant to be more aggressive in their use of force in



Iraq and Afghanistan. The US Secretary of State for Defence, Robert Gates, caused controversy when he appeared to criticise NATO allies – Britain, the Netherlands and Canada – in Southern Afghanistan for lack of experience in fighting counterinsurgencies (*The Times* 17 January 2008). In March 2010 he stated:

The demilitarization of Europe – where large swaths of the general public and political class are averse to military force and the risks that go with it – has gone from a blessing in the 20th century to an impediment to achieving real security and lasting peace in the 21st century (*New York Times* 3 March 2010).

The European militaries deployed to Afghanistan operate under different political constraints, according to a variety of military traditions and with diverse rules of engagement. Generally, the British military has prided itself on using ‘minimum force’ in counterinsurgency situations, in contrast to what it sees as the highly aggressive approach of the US military. There have been criticisms from the US that the British are becoming ‘Europeanised’ favouring peacekeeping rather than making war, with its operations subjected to the ‘tyranny of the lawyers’ (*The Economist* 29 January 2009). Yet, compared to some other European militaries the British are seen as too coercive and ‘macho’ in their approach (Giustozzi 2007). These national stereotypes conceal the diversity of approaches to counterinsurgency *within* these armies, where some troops may be trained to be more aggressive, shock troops for conventional warfare – such as the Parachute Regiment – and others more suitably deployed for peacekeeping or counterinsurgency warfare. This can lead to tensions within as well as between armies (Fergusson 2008: 183–4; French 2011).

### **The use and abuse of military history**

In 1961, the British military historian, Professor Sir Michael Howard, defended the role of the ‘historian proper’ in discovering and recording the complicated and ‘most disagreeable facts of life’ against ‘nursery history’. ‘Nursery history’ is provided by the ‘regimental historian’ who consciously or unconsciously promotes the view that the regiment ‘has usually been flawlessly brave and efficient’, emphasising the glorious episodes in its history and passing quickly over its

'murkier passages', 'knowing full well that his work is to serve a practical purpose in sustaining regimental morale in the future'. By contrast the 'historian proper' must critically analyse the 'myth', 'assessing and discarding its patriotic basis and probing deeply into the things it leaves unsaid'. But he warns, 'the process of disillusionment is necessarily a disagreeable one and often extremely painful. For many of us, the "myth" has become so much a part of our world that it is anguish to be deprived of it'. The 'honest historian' exposes national myths 'but to allow him to do so is necessary, not simply to conform to the values which the war was fought to defend, but to preserve military efficiency for the future'. Historians are sceptical of the practical value of military history because they are 'conscious of the uniqueness of every historical event'. Analogies 'may be illuminating, but equally they mislead; for only certain features in situations at different epochs resemble one another, and what is valid in one situation may, because of entirely altered circumstances, be quite untenable next time it seems to occur' (Howard 1962; Table 1.1). Michael Howard famously commented, 'I am tempted to declare dogmatically that whatever the doctrine the Armed Forces are working on now, they have got it wrong. What matters is their capacity to get it right quickly when the moment arrives'. Military historians have argued against any institutional bond between the military establishment and military historians for fear of producing 'useful' national security history which does not challenge 'national myths', encourages military interventions and bolsters the reputation and power of the military.

In the nineties, the British Conservative government and the military were reluctant to be drawn into the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, fearing 'another Northern Ireland'. Since 1997 there has been an attempt to rehabilitate Britain's imperial past in order to justify military interventions against 'rogue' or 'failing' states and for 'humanitarian' reasons. The myths about Britain's 'successful' counterinsurgency operations in Malaya and Northern Ireland encouraged over-confidence in the army's ability to fight counterinsurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan and to build states (Bennett 2010: 460). A sanitised view of Britain's history of counterinsurgency also underplays the coercion, mislabelled 'hearts and minds', that was used in the retreat from Empire and encourages a misleadingly optimistic view of the impact of counterinsurgency campaigns.

British counterinsurgency theory encourages the belief that there is a universal formula to defeating insurgencies, even though this theory has thrown up highly diverging interpretations. The '*orthodox*' *interpretation* of Britain's success in Malaya and Northern Ireland argues that this was achieved by winning 'hearts and minds' through social and economic reforms and the security force's use of 'minimum force'. A '*coercive*' *interpretation* suggests that force was successful in Malaya and Northern Ireland and implies that this is the formula for producing success in Iraq and Afghanistan (Dixon Chapter 2). These contrasting interpretations of the reasons for the 'success' of British counterinsurgency are used to advocate more or less coercive approaches to current policy. The implication is that all counterinsurgencies are the same, that the conflicts in Malaya and Northern Ireland are comparable to Iraq and Afghanistan, and therefore the successful prescriptions from those counterinsurgencies can simply be applied to current conflicts.

A critical approach to counterinsurgency would acknowledge that the conflicts in Malaya and Northern Ireland can be interpreted in a variety of ways, with different implications for how these operations should be conducted in the present. While some interpretations may be more 'objective' and driven by a desire to understand those particular conflicts, others are more 'subjective' and present-oriented, seeking to find a justification in history for current policy. An overly-optimistic, 'mythical' interpretation of Britain's experiences in Malaya and Northern Ireland leads to an optimistic and interventionist disposition to intervene in Iraq and Afghanistan. Challenging the myths about British counterinsurgency may be unpopular because it challenges the prestige of the military which may be bound up with the British sense of national identity (Howard 1962).

### **Malaya: 'Hearts and minds'?**

The Malaya and Northern Ireland cases are chosen because they are the examples most used to establish the credibility of the British approach. Palestine, Aden, Cyprus and Kenya are not usually regarded as success stories. The orthodox view of the Malayan 'emergency' is that the appointment of General Templer as High Commissioner and Director of Operations in February 1952 was a turning point in the conflict. British tactics gradually shifted from 'search and destroy' to a new counterinsurgency, 'hearts and minds' approach (Stubbs 2008).

The 'hearts and minds' rhetoric conceals the extent to which coercion and repression was used which included:

- The Briggs Plan which forcibly resettled 500,000 people, about 25% of Malaya's Chinese population
- Mass arrests
- The death penalty for carrying arms
- Detention without trial for up to two years, between 1948–57 34,000 people were held without trial for more than 28 days
- Deportations (over 10,000 in 1949)
- Identity cards and movement restriction
- Control of food and shops
- Arson against the homes of communist sympathisers
- Censorship
- Collective punishment in the form of curfews and fines
- 'the indiscriminate shooting of rural Chinese squatters fleeing army patrols' (Stubbs 2008: 256)
- The Batang Kali massacre of 24 unarmed civilians in December 1948
- Treating prisoners as criminals and hanging hundreds of them.

Senior British officers, in their account of Malaya, do not draw attention to the high levels of coercion and abuse of human rights (e.g. Smith 2005: 256; French 2011).

Karl Hack emphasises the role of 'counter-terror', particularly in the early stage of the insurgency before Templer arrived, and considers whether this is a general attribute of British counterinsurgency (Chapter 7). He argues that the British used various techniques in Malaya, both 'hearts and minds' and coercion, but their weight varied dramatically across quite distinct campaign phases. Effective counterinsurgency must, he argues, relate different 'lessons' for different phases of an insurgency. Initially, British strategy was massive control and intimidation, with the key to the campaign lying more in 'screwing down the people' than in winning their 'hearts and minds': '...the back of the Emergency was broken by a "law and order" and resettlement approach, with "hearts and minds" tactics playing an important but auxiliary role' (Hack 1995: 95). The emphasis in British propaganda from 1950 to 1953 was on 'persuading' and coercing reluctant minds rather than winning 'hearts and minds' (Chapter 7). The High Commissioner,

Sir Henry Gurney, argued that the Malayan counterinsurgency could not be fought within the law and, paradoxically, that it was necessary for the police and army to break the law every day to maintain law and order. While the government did not authorise the deliberate killing of civilians it 'created a permissive environment by encouraging a hostile attitude towards an entire population' which meant that the behaviour of the security forces varied '...depending on the local interpretation of ambiguous rules' (Bennett 2009: 432). The defeat of the insurgents in Malaya has also been attributed to the emerging democratic political system and the prospect of decolonisation and Malayan independence (Poplewell 1995: 337; French 2011: 198). Tony Stockwell argues that the Malayan communists 'had won a victory of sorts, since, without the armed struggle, Malaya would not have achieved independence as soon as it did'. The 'Templer model' was not a panacea, the outcome of the conflict 'was determined not by universal formulae but by circumstances, people and events peculiar to Malaya' (Stockwell 2006: 49). Since the British did not achieve their goal of keeping Malaya within the Empire, it could be argued, they did not achieve the outcome that was set at the beginning of the campaign and this casts doubt on British 'success'. Hew Strachan argues, 'The army had "defeated" the insurgents in a military sense in only a minority of its earlier campaigns. What had ensured "victory" was timely political concession, most often resting on the abandonment of the country concerned' (Strachan 1997: 182).

The phrase 'hearts and minds' when applied to the successful operation in Malaya conceals the reality that the counterinsurgency campaign was not fought within the law and involved high levels of coercion and the abuse of human rights. The brutality deployed by the British in Malaya was not an isolated example. In Kenya the British did not employ 'minimum force': 'the population were persuaded to support the government by a combination of increasing military success and violent coercion, rather than by winning "hearts and minds"' (Bennett 2007b: 155; Anderson 2005; French 2011). David French concludes that winning 'hearts and minds' of the local population was too expensive and 'more rhetorical than real'. Furthermore, 'The claim that the British conducted counter-insurgency campaigns in ways that were somehow more gentle than other colonial powers need to be treated with some caution' (French 2011: 198, 188, 137). This judgement is borne out as documents from Empire, concealed in a secret Foreign Office archive, are released revealing further abuses by

the British state. Thousands of other incriminating documents from the end of Empire were destroyed (*The Guardian* 18 April 2012).

## **Vietnam**

The US experience in Vietnam impacted on British counterinsurgency theory and practice in a number of ways. The US became the hegemonic world power in the post-war period, the only superpower after the end of the Cold War and an imperial power after 9/11 with ambitions to expand its dominance across the world. The power of the US constrains British governments which have been anxious to preserve their 'special relationship' and provide a bridge between Europe and the US. The symbolic presence of allies helps the US President to demonstrate the legitimacy of US interventions to international and US domestic opinion. Nonetheless, the Labour Prime Minister, Harold Wilson, did avoid sending ground troops to Vietnam, in spite of President Johnson's desire to have a 'platoon of bagpipers' so that the British flag was in Vietnam. The British government has sought to influence US policy and the perceived price for this influence has been participation in US-led coalitions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The British government did show support for the US intervention in Vietnam by establishing the British Advisory Mission to Vietnam (BRIAM) 1961–65. This was established under the leadership of Britain's counterinsurgency expert, Robert Thompson, to offer counterinsurgency advice based on Britain's campaign in Malaya. This is an interesting episode because of Britain's later attempt to influence the US military to adopt a counterinsurgency approach in Iraq and Afghanistan. The British view was that the Americans were training the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) for the wrong war: a Korean-style, conventional conflict (Busch 2003). Thompson believed that the Malayan emergency and the Vietnam war were very similar conflicts and Britain's approach to counterinsurgency would be similarly successful in Vietnam (Busch 2003: 70). General L. L. Lemnitzer, Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff 1960–62, was highly sceptical of the Malaya analogy and pointed to five major differences between Malaya and Vietnam:

1. The Malayan border was more controllable.
2. Most insurgents in Malaya were Chinese Malaysians and this facilitated their identification and segregation.