

THE EVOLUTION OF BRITISH COIN

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“You cannot win the war without the help of the population, and you cannot get the support of the population without at least beginning to win the war.”

Oliver Lyttelton, UK Colonial Secretary, referring to the Malayan Emergency, 1951.

Introductory First Considerations

1. At the heart of any counter-insurgency (COIN) campaign lies one basic requirement – the population of the territory concerned should form the perception that the government offers a better deal than do the insurgents. In this perception, security of the person and of property, and the establishment of the rule of law, are paramount considerations. It follows that whatever else the government may do, it should start from that edict in the Hippocratic Oath which states: ‘do no harm’.
2. The word ‘perception’ is vital. In contemporary times, perception is more important than truth. It is no longer sufficient that governments take the right action; they now need to convince the population that this is the case. The way facts are presented – opinion forming, influencing the collective mind of the population – has become as, if not more, important than the facts themselves.
3. These thoughts are included here as indicators of the changes in mindset that have taken place in the half century since the ‘high period’ of British COIN operations – roughly speaking, the 1950s.

Aim

4. The aim of this paper is to provide a historically-based overview of the development of British COIN principles and practice, as an introduction to present-day techniques.

Internal Security and Counter-Insurgency

5. Insurgency, according to the Concise Oxford English Dictionary, is ‘rebellion’; and rebellion, from the same source, is ‘organised armed resistance to authority’. The key word here is ‘organised’.
6. As an historical example, in Ireland the 19th Century was a time of ongoing low-level, sporadic and mostly uncoordinated violence against the British presence, largely directed against property and occasionally personnel of the landowning

community and government officials. In contrast, following the Easter Rising of 1916, from 1919 until the truce which ended the 'Tan War' in 1921, Ireland was in the grip of armed rebellion (which spilled over into the Six Counties of Ulster), directed by an illegal government whose authority was recognised (whether willingly or unwillingly) by the majority of the population, and with which the British Government was eventually obliged to treat.

7. The former situation was an internal security problem, containable by an armed gendarmerie (the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC)) with very occasional military support. The second was a large-scale insurgency requiring massive reinforcement of the police and military, as well as having national and, even international, political implications and involvement.

8. COIN, therefore, is a term covering those measures required to overcome, or at least contain, an insurgency. At first sight, COIN may be taken as internal security (IS) writ large; this approach is encapsulated in the term 'IS and COIN', bracketing the 2 together, which was common usage in the British Armed Forces up to recent times and affected thinking on the subject within the military community. Both in IS and COIN operations the military aim is the stabilisation of the state. However, the difference in scale brings with it differences in methodology which indicate that COIN is in fact a separate, though related, discipline.

Forms of Insurgency

9. The British experience dealt with 'classical' insurgencies, ranging from small-scale revolts to major campaigns. The common thread in classical insurgency is the attempt to change a government by violent means – the attempt to throw out a colonial or occupying power, or an indigenous government viewed as oppressive. The end is secular in nature, even though the players may be driven by a greater or lesser element of religious fervour, e.g. the Iranian revolution of 1979, or religion-related nationalism, as with the 1955-59 Cyprus insurgency. In classical insurgency, the fact that the insurgents have some defined material goal makes it easier both to comprehend and then counter their military activities, or to engage them in meaningful negotiation.

10. In contrast, today's insurgencies may be little more than ends in themselves. In Iraq from 2003–07, ongoing destabilisation with the aim of making the country ungovernable, with the possibility that this might cause coalition forces to leave, was apparently a sufficient driver. Nebulous ambitions toward the re-establishment of the Caliphate may be sufficient motive for violence, while in the UK a desire to punish the British people for their government's policies in the Middle East is enough to drive a domestic terrorist campaign.

Military Forces in COIN, IS and Peace Support Operations

11. During the post-Second World War period of decolonisation, the high watermark of British involvement in COIN referred to above, there were, in effect, 2 British Armies. One was engaged in IS and COIN activities world-wide, the other committed to the defence of the Central Region of NATO. It can be argued that the IS/COIN deployments constituted the Army's main effort at that time, but the importance of the NATO commitment ensured primary warfighting capability was not eroded.

THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE – TO 1900

Early Experiences

12. The development of nation-states is punctuated with outbreaks of resistance to authority as the inhabitants work out an effective system of consent-based governance. Britain is no exception, but was fortunate in that on the mainland the last major occurrence was the 1745 Jacobite rebellion. The Age of Revolution, beginning in 1776 with the American Declaration of Independence, passed Britain by. During the first half of the 19th Century, while continental armies were gaining useful experience in COIN on the streets of their capital cities, the British Army was more concerned with matters of the Empire. The colonial experience would shape the British approach to internal security and COIN.

13. For the British, the War of American Independence was a COIN campaign on a grand scale. It was fought at various levels, from formal warfare conducted with strict adherence to the current rules of war, down to vicious guerrilla actions. As far as the history of COIN is concerned, it is noteworthy that even at this early date, the perils of long range micromanagement – the 'long screwdriver'.

The Expanding Empire

14. Though the popular view of 19th Century imperial expansion was 'trade follows the flag', it is as arguable that the flag followed trade, as settlers and traders established themselves in new territories. Often they found themselves in trouble with indigenous inhabitants and called for help. Military action was therefore more for defensive purposes than deliberate territorial acquisition. British interests were seen to lie in maintaining the stability of the international system – much as today.

15. By the last quarter of the century the emphasis was changing from expansion of the Empire to holding it, from a dynamic into a more static phase. Territories were stabilised and pacified. The 'British model' of colonial government was developed and refined, and the area of red on the map of the world had become truly impressive. The high period of Empire was relatively short, a mere half century or so; signs of decline were apparent even before the First World War.

16. Unrest, of course, was always present. However, the 19th Century methodology for dealing with it was assisted by the forms it took, and by a climate of opinion conducive to robust rules of engagement. Low level disturbance was containable largely by police action. However, policing the Empire called for paramilitary gendarmerie, well-armed and mobile, rather than ‘bobbies on the beat’; in Canada the North West Mounted Police, modelled on the RIC, were originally to be titled the North West Mounted *Regiment*. Military assistance was necessary on occasion, particularly in India, where a substantial proportion of the Indian Army and British Army units were dispersed in single-battalion stations to provide a local military presence for quick reaction.

17. At the higher end of the scale, the shape of 19th Century insurgencies tended towards formal wars. The ethos of the times, not confined to Europeans, encouraged this. Cetewayo’s Zulus and the Mahdi’s forces in the Sudan were commended for their willingness to stand up and fight in a ‘manly’ fashion. Even the Great Mutiny of 1857 was settled by a series of pitched battles and sieges. Fighting these ‘small wars’ called for ingenuity and adaptability, but less in the area of tactics, where superior weapons technology could usually be relied on to win the battle, than in getting forces to the battle and in sustaining them in conditions where distance and terrain presented major challenges. C E Callwell’s book *Small Wars*, first published in 1896, became the bible for this form of campaigning; as a source of doctrine it was for many years the only one of its kind, and is still relevant (and in print) today.

THE 20TH CENTURY

18. This section deals with the development of British COIN practice and doctrine during the 20th Century. It is followed by a series of case studies relevant to this theme. These do not deal with all the campaigns undertaken during the period, or all aspects of those actually studied.

Background – The British Model of Colonial Governance

19. British COIN campaigns up to 1967 were conducted against the background of colonial government. The structures and *modus operandi* of government were integral to the tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) employed, and an understanding of how colonial government worked is essential. Central to the system was the principle of individual officers, even the most junior, exercising independent authority without supervision and without any requirement to staff decisions to higher level. This approach produced an ethos of ‘*government on the ground*’. District Officers (DO)s – high quality individuals – provided a visible and accessible face of government all the way down to village level.

20. The Public Works Department (PWD) was another acceptable and visible face of government. Not only did PWDs provide essential services, but by adopting

labour-intensive engineering methods they conformed to good Keynesian principles of injecting purchasing power into the local economy.

21. The colonial governmental model developed through the 19th Century settling into its final form by its end. All structures were based on the colony pattern, including the dominions in the early stages of their development, and also India. There was a degree of variation between cases, smaller colonies having simpler structures. The essentials were:

- **Top Level.** Governor/High Commissioner supported by advisory/legislative council, comprising senior civil service staff, Police Commissioner, Military Adviser; in certain cases colony citizens as co-opted or elected members.
- **Province/State/Major District.** Provincial Governor/District Commissioner and staff, Police Commander, PWD Province/District Officer and local military commander, if operations in progress. May also have included an advisory group of local leaders.
- **Minor District/Sub-district.** District Officer, on his own. Police representation probably no higher than inspector, locally enlisted. The DO would have an ad hoc local advisory group. DOs' reporting chain would vary on a case by case basis – in a small colony, direct to the central administration. In more developed colonies, DOs were recruited from the local population.
- **Boundaries.** Boundaries of police and military areas of responsibility were made to coincide with those of the civil administration. Where this sensible policy was not followed, disharmony usually followed.
- **India.** Despite its size, after the 1857 mutiny India was organised as above with the Viceroy in the Governor role and Commander –in-Chief India as the military commander and the province level of administration in place.

22. The entire process of colonial development was by definition 'nation-building', but evolutionary nation-building over a long term, rather than short-term and proactive. The growth of political institutions, the civil service and economic development happened at their own pace. Post-World War II, the build-up of pressure for decolonisation caused this process to be accelerated and some territories were thrust into independence before their internal structures had attained maturity. Colonial rule had, by the late 1950s, and for a variety of reasons, lost the acceptance which provided its legitimacy.

Security in a Colonial Setting

23. In the 20th Century, most colonies did not have Regular British soldiers as permanent garrisons. Security was the responsibility of police forces, reinforced as necessary by locally enlisted, but *British-officered*, military units. The intelligence function was undertaken by the police Special Branch. Experience showed that generally, the quality of Special Branch personnel and intelligence product was not up to the standard required. It did not help that intelligence personnel and their sources were the first targets in any serious insurrection. **Rebuilding an ineffective or damaged intelligence structure was a necessary part of all Britain's major counter-insurgency campaigns.**

24. Colonial police forces took differing forms depending on the characteristics of the territories in which they served. Officers were mainly of British origin; junior officers might be promoted from the ranks of the locally enlisted constables. A mounted, or later motorised or even light armoured *gendarmerie* element was a normal feature, employed on border patrol and as a mobile reserve in support of the static police posts.

25. Locally enlisted military units were responsible for external defence first, and for internal security duties as a secondary role. Though the majority were infantry (e.g. the King's African Rifles), light armour and supporting arms also featured, including coastal defence and field artillery (e.g. the Hong Kong Volunteer Artillery).

26. The particular strength of the colonial model, contrasting with today's emergencies, was the simplicity of its structures. Sovereignty (ownership of the security effort), direct rule as well as clear-cut responsibility and authority vested in individuals at all levels, facilitated decision-making and implementation.

27. A colony was intended to be self-supporting for both external and internal security matters up to a significant level of threat. When to ask for reinforcement on the one hand, and whether to provide it on the other, provided some difficult decision-making exercises during the colonial and decolonisation period, the tendency being to underestimate the seriousness of a deteriorating situation until it was too late. Nevertheless, the colonial security model worked well against low to moderate challenges. Where the challenge was sufficient to call in question the **legitimacy** of the colonial system itself, even massive reinforcement could not enable it to survive unchanged.

Hearts, Minds and Reconstruction

28. Classical COIN operations involved a substantial traditional ‘good works and deeds/hearts and minds’ element. In a colonial setting, this was little more than business a bit better than usual, in that an emergency would lead to the release of funds which could be channelled into already planned projects. However, in some cases, the requirements of security policy led to major construction projects. Examples are the secure villages programmes in Malaya and Kenya. The essential difference between construction programmes under the colonial model and ‘reconstruction’ in today’s settings is that the colonial government had, in the PWD, an in-place organisation capable of directing a large-scale works effort, making use of direct labour or contractors as necessary.

29. The classical hearts and minds argument is that government ensures that basic amenities and primary needs are met, and then conditions are progressively enhanced. The grateful population is thereby convinced that the government is offering the ‘better deal’ mentioned in the opening paragraph of this chapter, and ceases to support the insurgents. An example is Cyprus in the 1950s – ‘a tarmac road, electricity and a water supply to every village’. This programme, begun before the EOKA¹ ‘A’ insurgency began in 1955, was continued by the PWD during and despite the emergency. It was a strategic level measure, implemented across the entire island and could not be disputed as a universal benefit, not least because it provided employment to a large workforce. It was welcomed by the population, but appeared to have no impact whatsoever on the campaign itself.

30. What may be termed the ‘material well-being’ approach to hearts and minds, or the ‘better deal’ in general, falls down in the face of one fact. Most colonial populations in the end preferred to be governed badly by an administration of their own choice, rather than be governed well by outsiders. However, security considerations may override this; **security is the most pressing human need. The population is likely to support that player whom they perceive as most likely to provide a secure environment.**

The Development of British Counter-Insurgency Doctrine in the 20th Century

31. The British entered the twentieth century in a reflective mood, following mixed performance in the South African War (1899-1902). The first decade of the new century was a period of recognition of shortcomings and institution of substantial reforms. Unfortunately, COIN doctrine did not figure greatly in these. There was a general perception that Kitchener’s operational concept and tactics for defeating the Boer forces during the guerrilla phase of the conflict had brought about success. These were based on population and resource control measures (farm burning and

¹ EOKA stands for Ethniki Organosis Kyprion Agoniston, the National Organisation of Cypriot fighters.

enforced relocation of non-combatants to internment camps coupled with large-scale drives and sweeps within a network of barrier fences, these being reinforced with large numbers of blockhouses.

32. The effect of this perception was to enshrine the principle of sweeps, cordon-and-search and formal attacks, (all on a large scale) as the basis of counter-guerrilla operations. This was later transcribed into COIN doctrine. The third edition of Calwell's '*Small Wars*' (1906) reflects this thinking. It remained firmly lodged in the minds of British commanders into the early 1950s. Callwell's book remained the main doctrinal source until the 1930s, when the War Office published *Notes on Imperial Policing 1934*. This was in effect only a minor updating of previous doctrine in the light of more recent experience, as was *Imperial Policing*, written by Major-General Sir Charles Gwynn in 1936 and adopted as semi-official doctrine. Crucially, neither of these took great account of the lessons of the 1919-21 campaign against the Irish Republic Army (IRA), which had many of the characteristics of a modern insurgency. Given that the War Office had itself disseminated the *Irish Record*, the omission was surprising. Apparently, the Irish campaign was *sui generis* and irrelevant to 'normal' internal security operations.

33. British COIN doctrine for the last 50 years of the century evolved from a variety of sources. The Irish experience was revisited. WWII saw British agencies (Special Operations Europe (SOE), Force 136) in the business of fomenting insurgency in German (and Japanese) occupied territory, and studying enemy counter-action. German use of special forces and of pseudo-gangs against partisans (methods pioneered by Orde Wingate during the Arab Revolt in Palestine, 1936–39) was of particular interest. Similar techniques were taught by the SAS to Government forces during the Greek Civil War and then adopted to a limited extent in Palestine. Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus saw the development of British concepts until they attained their familiar characteristics:

Familiar Characteristics of British COIN Developed From Malaya, Kenya and Cyprus Campaigns

- Emphasis on winning the politico-strategic battle while containing at the tactical level.
- The doctrine of minimum force, meaning '**the minimum force necessary to achieve the aim**'.
- Joint unified command structures **integrating civil government, police and military**.
- **Intelligence-based operations**.
- Continuous offensive pressure on the insurgents by all elements of the

security forces.

- Small unit, patrol-based offensive tactics, but supported by a large security force.
- Extensive use of turned enemy personnel.
- Population/resource control, and self-defence measures, **to isolate the insurgent from the support of the population and to enhance the security of that population.**
- Establishing, clearing, securing and extending base areas to provide safe zones.
- Emphasis on winning hearts and minds, and on PSYOPS in general.

34. These were encapsulated in the successive editions of the manual '*The Conduct of Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya*', familiarly known as *ATOM*, which was adapted for use in other theatres and became the basis of the British Army's tactical doctrine manual *Keeping the Peace 1964*.

CASE STUDIES

South Africa 1899 – 1902

35. The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries coincided with the Second South African War (or Second Boer War), which had a major impact on the British Army. It was a counter-secessionist conflict fought to prevent the Afrikaner (Boer) inhabitants of the Transvaal and the Orange Free State removing themselves from British rule. It can be regarded as a hybrid conflict.² Operations initially went well for the Boers, and then regressed from conventional battles to a protracted and bitter guerilla phase after the substantial, well-equipped, and well-led Boer main forces were defeated in the field.

36. In this second phase the Boers operated in highly mobile mounted detachments (commandos) using raiding tactics. Kitchener's operational concept and tactics against them were based on population and resource control measures (farm burning and forced relocation of non-combatants to internment camps, thereby separating the commandos from their logistic support. These measures were coupled with large-scale drives and sweeps against the commandos, within a network of barrier fences and blockhouses. Meanwhile, 'safe zones' were established within the Boer provinces where normal living was as far as possible restored.

² Hoffman F, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*. Potomac Institute for Policy studies, December 2007.

37. Negotiations between the 2 sides ran in parallel with the fighting for more than a year and a settlement was achieved in 1902; a year later than might have been achieved if the British Government had followed Kitchener's recommendations early rather than late. The war was followed by a series of far-reaching enquiries (the Esher Committee *et al*) into the shortcomings of the Army as revealed by the war, but these did not include the counter-guerilla operations, which were generally regarded as having gone well.

38. Regrettably, this perception enshrined the principles of sweeps, cordon and search, and formal attacks, all on a large scale, as the basis of counter-guerilla operations. Later, these principles were read across into COIN doctrine.

Ireland 1919 – 1921

39. The 'Tan War' of 1919 – 1921, which led to the formation of the Irish Free State and eventual independence for the 26 counties, was an avoidable disaster. The Easter Rising of 1916 had been a minority action led by a group of romantics in tenuous touch with the real world, and was, initially, highly unpopular with the bulk of the Irish population. It was regarded by many as a stab in the back for the Southern Irish troops fighting with the British Army.

40. Unfortunately, the British succeeded in turning a potential triumph into a far-reaching defeat. The executions of 15 ringleaders, though logical as a consequence of armed insurrection in the middle of a war, were a colossal political misjudgment. The republican movement got its new batch of martyrs and the British government made matters worse by attempting to impose conscription on Ireland. This gave Sinn Féin a tangible campaigning issue, and by mid-1918 Michael Collins and Cathal Brugha, in the absence of most of the party leadership who were interned by the British, had persuaded the party executive that direct action was the way ahead. Their aim was to make Ireland ungovernable by the British. Sinn Féin took an overwhelming majority of Irish seats in the December 1918 election. On 21st January 1919, the Dáil met and declared the Republic, and on the same day the first shots were fired.

41. The insurgency was multi-faceted, having features of traditional Irish violence coupled with more modern aspects. 1919 saw a rising tide of violence, with attacks on the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) in country areas being coupled with assassinations of government officials in urban areas, Dublin in particular. Collins had a clear understanding of the importance of intelligence in an insurgency and established effective networks extending even into Dublin Castle, while mounting a ruthless campaign to eliminate Government intelligence officers. The British were just as aware of the intelligence requirement, and continued to build and rebuild their capability. Where informers were concerned, Irish Republican Army (IRA) paranoia was justified.

42. The operational response to IRA action remained police-led, and integrated command structures were not established. Boycott, pressures to resign, and casualties depleted RIC strengths. To restore these losses and increase the forces available, reserves were recruited from the UK mainland, mostly from unemployed ex-Service personnel. The first batch, the actual 'Black and Tans' (so called from the variety of uniforms worn) were intended as individual reinforcements to the RIC, though later on groups of Tans frequently operated independently of the regular force. The second group, the Auxiliaries, were ex-officers. Operating in formed companies, they were effective and had a justified reputation for ruthless action.

43. The campaign was brutal on both sides, violence begetting reprisal. This aroused public concern both on the UK mainland and around the world, particularly in America where there was widespread support for the insurgents. This concern extended up to the King himself, who in his speech opening the first Northern Ireland Parliament in June 1921 made an eloquent appeal for peace. The mounting pressure on the UK Government was a major factor in the opening of negotiations for a truce in the summer of 1921. The willingness of the IRA to treat should have alerted the British to the fact that their opposition were on the verge of defeat.

44. The 'Tan War' was an indicator of the shape of insurgencies to come. It took place in a country with more complex governmental structures than those of a colony, where the simplicities of direct rule gave substantial help to the security apparatus. It indicated that attritional solutions might be militarily possible, but could not be forced through in the face of public opinion influenced by a well-organised public information/propaganda campaign. The shape of the insurgency, combining widespread rural violence with well-targeted urban murder squads, was to be repeated in later emergencies. Finally, **the emphasis placed by both sides on intelligence-gathering and counter-intelligence operations was a thoroughly modern feature.**

45. The 1919–21 emergency was brought about by misjudgments, and its end was marked by another. Probably because it had been set in a developed, European country, the lessons learnt were set aside by an Army mostly concerned with what was becoming known as Imperial Policing.

Palestine 1930–1948

46. The post-First World War settlements bestowed territories of the former Central Powers on the victorious Allies under League of Nations mandate. The UK received a number of ex-German colonies in Africa, which were no trouble, and the former Ottoman provinces of Iraq and Palestine, which were the reverse.

47. Palestine had been the subject of conflicting pledges during the First World War, to the Arabs and the Jews. The Balfour declaration of 1917, for a Jewish National Home in Palestine (not a 'state', and note the 'in') was at variance with

assurances given in 1915 by the British Foreign Office to Sherif Hussein of Mecca regarding Arab control of the territory. There was, even by 1914, a significant Jewish presence in Palestine. The Jewish Agency had been purchasing property for settlements from Arab landowners. As this land had been occupied by tenant farmers, displacement of the Arab population had already become a minor problem. This accelerated as Jewish immigration built up between the wars, leading to inter-communal violence which escalated to a full-scale Arab revolt in 1936-38.

48. The security forces employed the traditional internal security TTPs highlighted above, and the revolt was contained, with the Jewish paramilitary organisation Haganah cooperating with the British forces. The noteworthy feature from the point of view of COIN methodology was the development by Orde Wingate, then a captain, of the 'Night Squads', drawn from Haganah. These used intelligence-based offensive patrol tactics to seek out specific targets, in contrast with the broad-brush conventional approach.

49. The 1939 White Paper on Palestine drastically reduced the permitted numbers of Jewish immigrants, and despite the Holocaust, its provisions remained in force after the Second World War. Haganah and its offshoots, the more extreme Irgun, and the terrorist Lehi (Stern Gang), were now ranged against the British and the Arab population. The British position lacked legitimacy in the eyes of world and particularly US opinion.

50. Despite the deployment of a total of three divisions, the situation could not be contained. British intelligence was poor, and suffered severely from targeted assassination of intelligence officers. The large forces deployed encouraged the use of traditional tactics; until too late in the campaign, the doctrine of large-scale sweep and cordon/search operations was followed, with little success. An attempt to recreate an organisation similar to the Night Squads brought some success but a number of excesses led to its being disbanded.

51. **The difficulties were exacerbated by differences of opinion at high level** – between the Attlee Government and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) (Montgomery), and between CIGS and in-theatre commanders as to the degree of force appropriate to the situation, with CIGS favouring a heavy hand. Eventually the only solution was to walk away from the mandate.

The Second World War

52. The intensive study of COIN methods conducted by British agencies in aid of Allied-supported irregular warfare has already been mentioned. The first use of the corpus of information in a post-war COIN setting was by Special Air Service (SAS) advisory teams working with Greek Government forces in the 1945-50 civil war. Some cross-fertilisation with Palestine took place leading to the establishment of the

Night Squad successor organisation. However, the overall result was an addition to corporate memory, which was to bear fruit in subsequent emergencies.

53. Though not a COIN operation, but possibly rating as IS or peace support, the experience of the Allied Military Government of Occupied Territories (AMGOT) operation in Germany post-1945 has relevance to stabilisation and reconstruction operations today. The situation in Germany in 1945 had features in common with Iraq in 2003. The Nazi party and government at both national and local levels were synonymous, as with the Ba'ath. Each of the Western Allied Powers established an AMGOT organisation. Initially, these ran their occupation zones, proceeding to early re-establishment of German executive responsibility at local level, and eventually of national government. Critical to the success achieved was the screening and categorisation ('de-nazification') of former Nazi officials, which permitted a rapid return of the majority to their previous employment.

54. Operations in the aftermath of the War in theatres other than Germany also have features relevant to modern stabilisation commitments. As an example, also paralleling Iraq in 2003, the end of the War in the Far East saw large areas of territory pass under British control; Indonesia and Vietnam had to be held until their respective Dutch and French colonial governments could be re-established. A shortage of Commonwealth troops led to surrendered Japanese units being employed to control local insurgent forces attempting to take advantage of the interregnum.

Malaya 1948–60

55. The Malayan emergency is one of the few COIN campaigns that has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. British COIN doctrine was based for many years on the Malayan experience, which underlines the dangers of applying the specific to the general. Another caveat which should be entered in the context of Malaya is that the circumstances were relatively benign, yet it took four years to put in place the TTPs that led to final success. Nevertheless, principles derived from Malaya remain applicable today, and have informed the stabilisation principles in the doctrine. It is noteworthy that the British were not defending a colonial regime but overseeing a transition to independence, which came into effect in the course of the emergency. This transfer of power, first as an impending event and then as a reality, gave a legitimacy to government action which minimised political opposition.

56. The emergency was declared in June 1948 following attacks on plantations, public utilities, and police by the Communist Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) – whose forerunner had been the wartime Malayan Peoples' Anti-Japanese Army. The initial response was police-led – an internal security approach. Despite an increasing level of violence, with the MRLA deploying strike forces of up to 200 fighters, the police force jealously guarded its primacy, even going to the extent of forming light infantry battalions to avoid calling on military assistance. The ludicrous

situation developed where troops were being employed on static police duties so that police personnel could carry out offensive operations. The situation continued to deteriorate until the High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, was assassinated in October 1951.

57. The new High Commissioner was General Sir Gerald Templer, who accepted the appointment on condition that he was to have complete authority over the police and military as well as the civil government apparatus. Templer's authority enabled the implementation of a number of measures such as the Briggs Plan, which had been held up by foot-dragging and turf wars. This included the extension of the top level unity of command to each level of government down to district. War executive committees at all levels, representing civil government, police, and military, were required to meet daily. This structure is often referred to as the 'three-legged stool', and was an essential feature of the developed British approach to COIN. The colonial governmental structure, with responsibility and authority concentrated in individuals, lent itself to these arrangements. The Briggs Plan also provided for resettlement of Chinese squatters in protected villages separated from the jungle, cutting off the MRLA from its support organisation, the Min Yuen.

58. **Intelligence fusion replaced private ownership;** Templer himself had a strong intelligence background, having served as Director Military Intelligence in the War Office. The responsibilities of the police and military were rationalised, with the Army taking on most offensive operations, and the police the security of the cleared areas, supplemented by locally enlisted troops and home guards.

59. The large-scale sweep had been the military operation of choice in the early days of the emergency, and had produced predictably poor results. It was replaced to an ever-increasing extent by deep patrol operations cued by improved intelligence, with the Malayan Scouts (forerunners of the resurrected SAS) pioneering parachute and helicopter insertion of patrols into deep jungle. A feature of the intelligence war was the offer of substantial **cash sums** to induce senior figures to defect. The increasing pressure on the MRLA eroded their numbers, from 8000 in 1951 to 3000 in 1955 and a remnant of under a thousand hiding out on the Malaysia-Thailand border in 1960, by which time Malaysian troops had taken over the campaign.

60. From the experience of the Malayan emergency, Sir Robert Thompson, Templer's Secretary for Defence, formulated what have come to be known as the Thompson Principles.

Sir Robert Thompson's Five Principles of COIN

- The government must have a clear political **aim**: to establish and maintain a free, independent and united country which is politically and economically stable and viable.
- The government must function in accordance with **law**.
- The government must have an overall **plan**.
- The government must give priority to defeating the political subversion, not the guerrillas.
- In the guerrilla phase of an emergency, a government must secure its base areas first.

Kenya 1952–56

61. The educated minority of the African population of Kenya had for many years looked towards independence, but had found it impossible to organise a mass movement in a society fragmented on tribal lines. In 1946 Jomo Kenyatta, newly returned from England, applied himself to extending the activities of the Kenya African Union with a view at first to remedying land-related grievances, primarily among the Kikuyu tribe. He also instituted a unity oath, taken at first by a few key Kikuyu members of the Kenya African Union (KAU).

62. From 1951, the 'oathing' movement increased and multiplied. Those taking the oath (and paying for the privilege) believed in its power and became an obedient force (Mau Mau) within the Kikuyu. The movement grew, its members calling for action, and during 1952 violence both in Nairobi and against white settler farms gradually increased. On 20 October 1952 a state of Emergency was declared and nearly 200 known leaders of the KAU detained. Settler farmers shed their Kikuyu workers, who drifted into Nairobi. This adjoins the tribal reserve areas, into the reserves themselves, or into the forests where they formed into large gangs under the leadership of oath administrators, a number of hard-core revolutionaries, and a proportion of criminals on the run.

63. The level of violence increased, coupled with calls for ruthless repression of the rebellion from the white settlers. Intelligence on Mau Mau was lacking; Special Branch was geared to working in an urban environment and had no idea of what was going on in the forests or of the activities of the support organisation (the 'passive wing'). Initial action was to deploy the five available battalions of the King's African Rifles in the tribal areas, and the single British battalion and the European-manned Kenya Regiment in the settled area, in a reactive posture.

64. Loyal Kikuyu were recruited into the Kikuyu Guard, a Home Guard force which grew to 30,000 strong, and took the brunt of Mau Mau attacks. The pattern of operations in the early part of 1953 was for raiding parties to slip out of the forest and hit Kikuyu Guard posts, killing as many as possible. In this period the movement also developed its recruiting and supply organisation in Nairobi. In late March Mau Mau overreached itself in a number of simultaneous incidents sufficient to attract notice in London. A brigade was despatched as reinforcements and General Sir George Erskine appointed to command in the colony. Air support was provided and a second reinforcing brigade followed.

65. By the end of 1953, measures similar to those used in Malaya were being put in place. A defended villages programme was put in hand and firearms issued to the Kikuyu Guards. A network of intelligence collection posts was established which in time produced a useful output. However, the main offensive tactic used by the security forces was the large-scale sweep, which in the forested areas produced predictably poor results in terms of kills or captures, though having an effect in breaking up and unsettling the gangs.

66. By early 1954 a Malayan-type command structure was in place. A massive cordon, search and detain operation covering the whole of Nairobi disrupted the Mau Mau infrastructure, cutting the city off from the tribal areas. The intelligence effort was enhanced by the use of pseudo-gangs, operating first in the tribal and settled areas, and then in the forests themselves. By 1955 sweeps in the forest areas had been abandoned, superseded by deep patrol and pseudo-gang operations. The emergency ended in October 1956. Kenya achieved independence in 1963 with Kenyatta, who dissociated himself from Mau Mau, as President.

67. The operational success in Kenya was the outcome of sound plans on the classic 'British model' producing results in the face of highly vocal criticism from the settler community, who were incensed that not enough effort was devoted to their close protection. The emergency was marred by the very large numbers of casualties – it was Britain's bloodiest campaign in the era of decolonisation. About 10,500 Mau Mau were killed, and 2,500 Africans on the Government side. European and Asian dead totalled 124.

Cyprus 1955–60

68. Cyprus had passed under British control in 1878, though sovereignty technically remained with the Ottoman Empire until the First World War. The island only became a colony in 1923. By then it had much of the character of a modern state, a mix of European and Levantine. The colonial regime was never fully accepted, and unrest broke out as early 1931.

69. During WWII both the Greek and Turkish communities contributed large numbers of personnel to the Commonwealth forces. After the war, the feeling on the island was that independence was a fair reward for services rendered. Unfortunately, by then the movement for *énosis*, union with Greece, was rampant among the Greek community. The British government, anxious to retain Cyprus as an alternative strategic base as the Canal Zone became less tenable, doubtful about the stability of a Greece that only emerged from civil war in 1950, and concerned for the well-being of the Turkish community, was unwilling to offer more than limited autonomy. The growing threat from the Soviet Union and the need to secure the eastern flank of NATO reinforced this position. The desire of the Greek Cypriot community for *énosis* was at apparent variance with self-interest; emotional ties, in which the Orthodox Church played a prominent part, taking precedence over the fact that Cyprus was far more advanced economically than Greece.

70. The EOKA 'A' emergency began in April 1955. Intended to make the island ungovernable, it began with a low-key bombing campaign, escalating to a rural guerrilla war, attacks on the police, and a programme of riot, largely involving school students. The breakdown of law and order had to be countered by the deployment of large numbers of troops in policing roles.

71. Sweep tactics, supported by helicopters, were more effective in Cyprus than in other theatres, helped by open terrain over much of the island and the small numbers of active EOKA fighters, only about 300 being involved. As the security forces' intelligence capability improved, patrol-based tactics became more effective. By autumn 1956 the rural war was going well, when the mounting of the Suez operation from Cyprus caused a major setback.

72. The British made increasing use of the Turkish community in an unacknowledged divide and rule policy. Improved intelligence performance, involving informers and turned personnel, led to EOKA turning on its own community and murdering increasing numbers of Greek Cypriots. Murder squads targeted off-duty British personnel, while occasional killings of service family members led to uncontrolled reprisals by troops. The latter stages of the insurgency were increasingly ugly, but from 1957 on negotiations began to bear fruit. The principal factors were British acceptance of the fact that what was required was a base in Cyprus rather than Cyprus as a base, and Greek agreement to a constitution ruling out *énosis*.

73. The Cyprus emergency bears out the need to contain while negotiating, although neither the containing nor the negotiating were models of tidiness. The 1960 constitution was designed to give a significant place to the minority Turkish community in the running of an independent Cyprus; it was sabotaged by Makarios *et al* in 1963, shutting out the Turks from any participation in government.

South Arabia 1963–67

74. South Arabia was the last of the British colonial COIN campaigns. The British intention was that the South Arabian Federation, formed by the amalgamation of the colony of Aden with the sheikdoms of the former Aden Protectorate in 1963, should achieve independence by 1968. Britain was to retain strategic basing facilities in the territory. The plan was opposed by 2 competing grass-roots revolutionary organisations, Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) and the National Liberation Front (FLN), externally supported by the Yemen government and Nasser's Egypt.

75. Low-level terrorist action in Yemen itself in 1963 was overshadowed in early 1964 by the major operations involved in keeping open the road from Aden to Dhala, on the disputed Yemen frontier, against attacks from the Radfan tribes. These operations, with overtones of past and present action in Afghanistan, involved ground forces, heavy RAF offensive support as well as transport support, and extensive use of helicopter troop insertion and extraction. A definite success was achieved when the tribesmen made the mistake of providing a concentrated target for air and artillery, and the operation closed down in June.

76. The success in the Radfan brought peace to the Federation area until 1966, when there was a decision to withdraw British forces from East of Suez, including Aden. This brought consternation to the Rulers of the Federation and by 1968, an upsurge of activity by FLN and FLOSY. The Rulers pleaded without success for a continued British presence until the Federation Army could be doubled in size; by mid-1967 the infantry force in the Federation had risen to 4 British brigades and 5 Federation Army battalions. This was insufficient to contain the situation. There was no political alternative to withdrawal and certainly no political will to remain. The final evacuation took place on 28 November 1967.

77. In addition to the mismanagement of the political situation, the South Arabian campaign became a byword for political interference with tactical action. The principle of minimum force was imposed in its literal sense, and the downside of improved communications was felt in the Prime Ministerial long screwdriver.

Northern Ireland 1969 – 1998

78. At first sight Northern Ireland is a case where the British have successfully defended an existing position. In fact, the substantial measure of success achieved has been accompanied by massive changes to the political and social structure of the Six Counties. The peculiarities of the status of the Province, of its political structures, and its police organisation led to difficulties in applying tried and tested COIN solutions, particularly in command and control and information-sharing. Initially the Army had no clear idea of what it was getting into, at times finding itself in situations where established doctrine, as contained in *Keeping the Peace*, offered no help.

79. As with the 1919-21 emergency, operations divided into a rural and an urban element, but the urban was in this case far more in evidence. The lack of doctrine or experience fitting a COIN campaign within the UK was a serious handicap at first, until the military began to learn and adapt with the formation of special-to-theatre training facilities (Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Team (NITAT)), following the example of jungle warfare training schools in Malaya and later being followed in the establishment of specialist training facilities for United Nations operations in the 1990s.

80. Internationalisation was a significant factor, whether in terms of cross-border support from the Republic of Ireland, PIRA links with other insurgent groups (e.g. ETA), or rogue states for supply of materiel (Libya). US influence, was for a long time negative, reflecting the effectiveness of PIRA information warfare and the burden of history.

81. Northern Ireland illustrates the need to allow a **long time frame** if fundamental differences are to be resolved or contending parties are to be persuaded to compromise. It remains a special and atypical case, in that the 2 sides were fighting different wars, the one to maintain the national integrity of the United Kingdom, the other, having identified the province as a ‘colony’, fighting what it saw as a war of colonial liberation. The campaign contains elements of ‘classical’ and ‘modern’ insurgency, examples of the latter being the small size of Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) active service units, their integration into the population and the high profile of **information operations**. The fact that the campaign was fought so close to the nation’s capital made closer political involvement inevitable. However, the presence of a Secretary of State provided a buffer between those doing the fighting and the Prime Minister.

82. The Northern Ireland campaign provides a pointer to the future, as an indication of the circumstances in which a democracy can summon the will, across party divisions, to see a campaign through to a solution over a generation of conflict coupled with wearisome negotiation. However, ideas successfully developed in

Northern Ireland relating to minimum force and political primacy were not effective when attempted in Iraq between 2003-2004.

CONCLUSIONS FROM HISTORY

83. Some key points emerge. First of all, every stabilisation is **different** from any other. It may have some characteristics in common with others, but any attempt to read across from one campaign to another is dangerous. In this account, the differences between the circumstances of Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus, all taking place in the same time frame, illustrate this point.

84. Nevertheless, some very broad principles can be applied to solving the problems involved. Sir Robert Thompson's Principles in their original form; with a little paraphrasing remain a good fit to today's situations and, with further adjustment, will probably remain enduring into the future.

85. The British experience of IS and COIN operations is by no means a story of continuous success. Even where a measure of success was achieved, it was usually after an extended learning period, much of which was taken up in unlearning preconceived ideas and getting rid of people who would not do so. Significant **adaptation in contact** was required.

86. The British were most fortunate in the fact that the majority of their COIN campaigns were conducted in a generally benign media environment. Equally, rules of engagement in operations prior to the South Arabia campaign were more relaxed, permitting the superiority of the counter-insurgents' weaponry to be used to full effect – just as in 19th Century colonial warfare. The case studies above chart the erosion of this advantage.

87. British successes in the field of IS and COIN can largely be attributed to simple and effective governmental and command structures coupled with clear directives and mandates.