

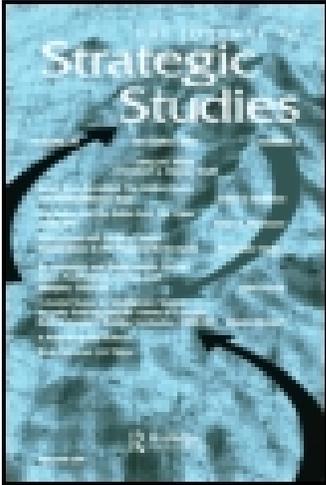
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Publisher: Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954

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Journal of Strategic Studies

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/fjss20>

'Hearts and Minds'? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq

Paul Dixon ^a

^a Kingston University, Surrey, Greater London, UK

Published online: 26 Jun 2009.

To cite this article: Paul Dixon (2009) 'Hearts and Minds'? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 32:3, 353-381, DOI: [10.1080/01402390902928172](https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390902928172)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01402390902928172>

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ARTICLES

‘Hearts and Minds’? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq

PAUL DIXON

Kingston University, Surrey, Greater London, UK

ABSTRACT This article introduces this special issue of *The Journal of Strategic Studies* by discussing the British model of counter-insurgency. General (later Field Marshal) Sir Gerald Templer associated the phrase ‘hearts and minds’ with Britain’s apparently successful counter-insurgency campaign in Malaya (1948–60). The phrase ‘hearts and minds’ is generally associated with a less coercive approach to counter-insurgency which emphasises the importance of using ‘minimum force’ in order to win the ‘hearts and minds’ of the people. This article argues that the phrase ‘hearts and minds’ does not accurately describe Britain’s highly coercive campaign in Malaya. The British approach in Malaya did involve high levels of force, was not fought within the law and led to abuses of human rights. Britain’s counter-insurgency campaign in Northern Ireland did not deploy the same levels of coercion that were used in Malaya but, nevertheless, considerable levels of coercion were used which did not succeed in winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the local people. The various interpretations of ‘hearts and minds’ leads to confusion about what degree of consent should be expected from the people and the implication of this for the use of force. While the term ‘hearts and minds’ does not accurately represent Britain’s experience of counter-insurgency in the retreat from Empire; in the post-Cold War period the British military has been *generally* more ‘political’ and less coercive in its approach to counter-insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq than the more conventional US approach to counter-insurgency. The British approach to counter-insurgency has influenced the recent development of US counter-insurgency doctrine but there are still considerable differences in the British and US approach to counter-insurgency which has led to severe tensions in the relationship between these allies. The ‘hearts and minds’ description of the British approach to counter-insurgency may be useful in public relations terms but it undermines the theory as a guide to operations because it can be interpreted in such divergent ways. The future may be to more carefully and practically specify in what contexts and circumstances the deployment of force is legitimate.

KEY WORDS: British, Counter-insurgency, ‘Hearts and Minds’

The answer [to the uprising] lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the people. (General Sir Gerald Templer, 'Tiger of Malaya', 1952)

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

We must be able to fight with the Americans. That does not mean we must be able to fight as the Americans. (General Sir Mike Jackson, 2004)

This article introduces this special issue of *The Journal of Strategic Studies* and discusses the British model of counter-insurgency and asks whether the phrase 'hearts and minds' is an appropriate or useful description of this model.¹ Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer's phrase 'hearts and minds' has been used to describe the British approach to counter-insurgency since the 'Malayan Emergency' of 1948–60 which Templer conducted for over two years. This approach emphasises 'winning the hearts and minds' of the people by using less coercive tactics against insurgents and thereby securing the support of the people. It is usually contrasted with the use of more violent, conventional warfare tactics which deploys overwhelming force and is more willing to accept civilian casualties. The Malayan campaign was one of the few apparently successful counter-insurgency operations of the post-war

¹I would like to thank the contributors to this issue for their hardwork and patience in staying with this project. Thank you also to Dr Joseph Maiolo, the editor at *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, for helping me navigate this volume to a successful conclusion. The anonymous referee was generous, insightful and diplomatic in providing suggestions for improvement and I hope s/he will think we achieved 'touch down'. Jolene Butt and her staff at Taylor and Francis have been incredibly efficient in turning the manuscripts around and producing this special issue. I would also like thank the participants in the conference 'Hearts and Minds? British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq', jointly organised between Kingston University and the Royal United Services Institute on 21 Sept. 2007. Conference details and podcasts are available at <http://fass.kingston.ac.uk/activities/item.php?updatenum=533>. In particular I would like to acknowledge my co-organisers at RUSI, Michael Codner and Louise Heywood, and Kingston University's Lisa Hall. Professors John Davis and Philip Spencer at Kingston University provide financial and moral support. Thanks also to Brigadier Neil Baverstock, Colonel David Benest, Dr Huw Bennett, Professor Brice Dickson and Dr Karl Hack for their perceptive comments on this article. I am grateful to the 'War Studies' students at King's College London, particularly Jo Painter, for the opportunity to present and then refine the arguments in this article. I am solely responsible for the content of this article.

period and contrasted starkly with the US military's subsequent debacle in Vietnam.

The credibility of the British Army's approach to counter-insurgency has since been enhanced by the recent conclusion of Operation 'Banner', the Army's campaign in Northern Ireland (1969–2007). British counter-insurgency theory has also informed the British Army's widely admired approach to peacekeeping.² The British counter-insurgency model has been analysed for its lessons for counter-insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq.³ It has also been argued that the 'Global War on Terrorism' is an insurgency and could be fought more effectively as a counter-insurgency campaign.⁴

This article argues that the phrase 'hearts and minds' does not accurately describe Britain's highly coercive campaign in Malaya. The British approach in Malaya did involve high levels of force, was not fought within the law and led to abuses of human rights. Britain's counter-insurgency campaign in Northern Ireland did not deploy the same levels of coercion that were used in Malaya but, nevertheless, considerable levels of coercion were used which did not succeed in winning the 'hearts and minds' of Irish nationalists. As Colonel David Benest argues of the British case, 'Bluntly put, coercion was the reality – "hearts and minds" the myth.'⁵ The various interpretations of 'hearts and minds' leads to confusion about what degree of consent should be expected from the people and the implication of this for the use of force.

While the term 'hearts and minds' does not accurately represent Britain's experience of counter-insurgency in the retreat from Empire, in the post-Cold War period the British military has been *generally* more 'political' and less coercive in its approach to counter-insurgency in Afghanistan and Iraq than the more conventional US model. British counter-insurgency

²Rod Thornton, 'The Role of Peace Support Operations Doctrine in the British Army', *International Peacekeeping* 7/2 (Summer 2000), 43, 56.

³See James Fergusson, *A Million Bullets* (London: Bantam Press 2008) for Britain's use of the 'Malayan model' in Afghanistan and for influence on the US military see Lt. Gen. David W. Barno, 'Fighting "The Other War": Counterinsurgency Strategy in Afghanistan, 2003–2005', *Military Review* (Sept.–Oct. 2007), 34, 40. For the influence of Britain's experience in Northern Ireland on the US military in Iraq see for example, Peter Baker, 'Commanders Draw Lessons of Belfast in Countering Attacks', *Washington Post*, 30 March 2003; *Washington Times*, 24 Oct. 2006.

⁴Thomas R. Mockaitis, 'Winning Hearts and Minds in the "War on Terrorism"', in idem and Paul B. Rich, *Grand Strategy in the War against Terrorism* (London: Routledge 2004), 21–38; Robert M. Cassidy, *Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror* (Westport, CT: Greenwood 2006).

⁵David Benest, 'Aden to Northern Ireland, 1966–76', in H. Strachan (ed.), *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and the Lessons of War in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge 2006), 118–19.

theory has influenced the recent development of US counter-insurgency doctrine, but there are still considerable differences in the British and US approach to counter-insurgency (and other NATO militaries) which has led to severe tensions in the relationship between these allies in Iraq and Afghanistan. Describing British counter-insurgency theory as ‘hearts and minds’ may be useful in terms of public relations, but it undermines the theory as a guide to operations because it can be interpreted in such divergent ways. The future may be to acknowledge the range of approaches to counter-insurgency and more carefully and practically specify in what contexts and circumstances the deployment of force is legitimate.

This article will first, describe the ‘classical’ British ‘hearts and minds’ model of counter-insurgency that developed out of the Malayan campaign. Second, discuss the origins and interpretations of the phrase ‘hearts and minds’. Third, question whether the phrase ‘hearts and minds’ accurately describes the campaigns in Malaya and Northern Ireland. Fourth, describe the different approaches and tensions in the relationship between the British and US militaries in Iraq and Afghanistan. Finally, it will be suggested that the phrase ‘hearts and minds’ may be good in public relations terms but that it could get in the way of a more nuanced debate about the tactics and levels of force that are appropriately deployed in counter-insurgencies.

The Classical 1960s British Model of Counter-Insurgency

US politicians and military first coined the term ‘counter-insurgency’ by 1962 to describe wars against ‘national liberation movements’ (or guerrillas) during the Cold War. Counter-insurgency was preferred to ‘counterrevolutionary’ because of the positive and heroic connotations that ‘revolution’ has for Americans. Counter-insurgency 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
- Counter-insurgency may be distinguished from counterterrorism by the substantial popular support for insurgents

Counter-insurgency campaigns can be a particularly brutal form of warfare because of the difficulties 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’.⁶ Some

⁶Benjamin Valentino, *Final Solutions: Mass Killing and Genocide in the 20th Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP 2004), 5.

argue that in the post-Cold War period these kinds of ‘wars amongst the people’ represent the future of armed conflict.⁷

The British Army has used the term ‘hearts and minds’ to refer to what it claims is its less coercive approach to counter-insurgency which emphasises winning the ‘hearts and minds’ of the people, the importance of politics and rejects the idea of a ‘purely’ military approach. A body of semi-formal, counter-insurgency theory had been developed drawing on the broadly complementary writings of Sir Julian Paget (born 1921), Sir Robert Thompson (1916–92), Major General Richard Clutterbuck (1917–98) and General Sir Frank Kitson (born 1926). This drew on ‘lessons’ from Britain’s apparent success in Malaya, an outcome which contrasted sharply with the America’s humiliating defeat in Vietnam.⁸ This ‘classic’ model continues to be influential on British and US counter-insurgency thinking (see General Sir Mike Jackson this issue).⁹ The British approach to counter-insurgency, like ‘hearts and minds’, may be interpreted in very different ways with contrasting implications for policy. Nonetheless, it may be defined as comprising four inter-related requirements:¹⁰

1. *Political Will: The Key to Victory*

The primary factor for victory is the determination of the political elite to defeat the insurgents. There could be no solely military victory or defeat, but if the insurgents won the battle for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the local population then all was lost. General Sir Frank Kitson, a leading British counter-insurgency practitioner with experience of Malaya, Kenya and Northern Ireland, argued that, ‘there can be no such thing as a purely military solution because insurgency is not

⁷Gen. Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane 2005).

⁸T. R. Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60* (London: Macmillan 1990).

⁹Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning* (London: Faber 1967); Robert Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency* (London: Chatto 1967) and *No Exit From Vietnam* (London: Chatto 1969); Richard Clutterbuck, *The Long Long War* (London: Cassell 1967); Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (London: Faber 1971).

¹⁰Robert Thompson’s five basic principles of counter-insurgency are:

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.

primarily a military activity'.¹¹ Counter-insurgency doctrine echoed this: 'All ranks must understand the political background. Often purely military aims become subservient to political requirements.'¹² The government's determination to defeat the insurgency would win over the mass of the neutral or near neutral population, while negotiations show weakness and undermine the government's campaign.¹³ Civil-military cooperation would ensure the pursuit of a common goal and clear military and political aims.

British counter-insurgency doctrine's emphasis on the responsibility of the government and the political dimension of defeating insurgency potentially places a lot of stress on civil-military relations. If only 20–25 per cent of counter-insurgency is shooting then the responsibility for defeating insurgents rests largely with the politicians and, perhaps, therefore a large degree of responsibility for the casualties inflicted on British soldiers. This emphasis on the role of the civil authorities also clashes with the model of having a 'supremo', such as Templer in Malaya who was the civil High Commissioner and the military Director of Operations, in charge of bringing the full force of the state to bear against insurgents (point 4 below). If counter-insurgency is a largely civil affair then, presumably, politicians should be in charge.

2. *Winning 'the Battle for Hearts and Minds'*

Political will is necessary to win 'the battle for hearts and minds' of the affected population because only if the people believe that the government will win can they be drawn away from the insurgent's cause. If the people think the government will lose, then they may well throw in their lot with their future masters, the insurgents. If the government win the battle for 'hearts and minds', intelligence – a key component of counter-insurgency operations – will be forthcoming and the insurgents identified.¹⁴

There were three ways that the battle for 'hearts and minds' could be won:

- *Good government and nation-building* would induce the population away from the insurgent's cause. The military would engage in civil

¹¹Frank Kitson, *A Bunch of Five* (London: Faber 1977), 283.

¹²Ministry of Defence, *Land Operations* (London: MOD 1970), 2, 4.

¹³Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*; Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*, 186; Paget, *Counterinsurgency Campaigning*. Paget was a Coldstream Guards lieutenant colonel with 28 years service.

¹⁴Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, 168. Intelligence was identified as key by Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*.

projects and social activities to improve relations with the local population. 'The major task is the re-establishment of a cohesive system of local government rather than the defeat of an enemy.'¹⁵

- *Psychological operations* (black 'deceptive' and white 'truthful') would persuade the local population to support the government's side. The television revolution meant that the media would potentially play a significantly more important role in the battle for hearts and minds, both in the affected territory and domestically, than it had in the far-flung reaches of the British Empire.
- *The use of 'minimum force'* to avoid alienating the local population. The use of minimum force may have been dictated as much by necessity as tactics. Global responsibilities, manpower shortages and a relatively small volunteer force constrained the British Army's room for manoeuvre. The aggressive role of soldiers in conventional warfare was seen as inappropriate in the more politically sensitive climate of a counter-insurgency campaign.¹⁶ If the local population was not to be alienated the Army had to act with 'sensitivity' to the political implications of its actions and there had to be tighter constraints on the level of violence used. The employment of 'minimum force' in 'peacekeeping' operations places a considerable strain on soldiers and their families, who can feel that the restrictions placed on the soldiers are intolerable. All may agree on the need for 'sensitivity' but there can be widely differing interpretations as to what constitutes 'minimum force'. Paget rejected reprisals and 'harsh punitive measures' but was willing to consider collective punishments, such as curfews, collective fines, detention of suspects, and various restrictions on individual liberties.¹⁷

The impact of British public opinion has been neglected by traditional counter-insurgency thinking and may be of growing importance.¹⁸

3. Police Primacy

British counter-insurgency doctrine tended to favour the primacy of the Police (and other locally-recruited forces) in fighting insurgents and a

¹⁵Ministry of Defence, *Land Operations*, 1970, 3.

¹⁶Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Campaigning*, 167.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 169.

¹⁸Paul Dixon, 'Britain's "Vietnam Syndrome"? Public Opinion and Military Intervention from Palestine to Yugoslavia', *Review of International Studies* 26/1 (Jan. 2000), 99–121; Susan Carruthers, *Winning Hearts and Minds: British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency 1944–1960* (London: Leicester UP 1995), 2, 16–17; Rupert Smith, *The Utility of War*, 205.

more restricted role for the Army. Counter-insurgency doctrine published in 1970 states: 'The aim of our forces is therefore to re-establish stable civil government, which at local level means the normal civil/police system.'¹⁹ There were several reasons for this, the police: were more effective intelligence gatherers; more likely to be sensitive to local opinion, and therefore more effective at winning hearts and minds; helped to create an image of normality; could be cheaper than the Army; and better trained for a 'peacekeeping' role (more likely to use less force). Police primacy also reduced the chances of British soldiers being killed leading to domestic calls for the troops to be brought home, which had been a consideration in British withdrawal from Empire.²⁰ The Police, unlike the Army, will operate in an area long-term and will usually attempt to build relations with the local community. Consequently they are also the primary source of intelligence in counter-insurgency operations. A local police force is usually more familiar with the terrain, culture and population than the Army and tend to be more adept at gathering intelligence whether on or off duty.²¹ Police primacy, however, can exacerbate communal antagonisms, if the Police are drawn predominantly from one group, and their deployment in a paramilitary role can inhibit 'normal' policing activities.²² There was some disagreement among counter-insurgency theorists over police primacy between Thompson, in favour, and Paget against.

4. *The Centralised Coordination of Effort on All Fronts*

Finally, the counter-insurgency effort was to be coordinated across all relevant actors to bring the full force of the state to bear against insurgents. According to British doctrine in 1970:

The outstanding lesson from recent revolutionary wars is that no single programme – political, social, psychological, economic or military – will in itself succeed. It is a combination of all these elements together with a joint government/police/military approach to the problem, which will counter the efforts of the insurgents, and restore lawful authority.²³

¹⁹Ministry of Defence, *Land Operations*, 1970, 2, see also 16.

²⁰Dixon, 'Britain's "Vietnam Syndrome"?'.

²¹Brig. G.L.C. Cooper, 'Some Aspects of Conflict in Ulster', *British Army Review* 43 (1974), 73.

²²D. Anderson and D. Killingray (eds.), *Policing and Decolonisation: Nationalism, Politics and the Police, 1917–65* (Manchester: Manchester UP 1992).

²³Ministry of Defence, *Land Operations*, 1970, 2.

This coordination could be under the control of a ‘military supremo’ like Templer, but there have been civilian fears of military dictatorship and the militarisation of the civil administration.²⁴ As General Sir Mike Jackson argues, the ‘threads of the rope’ or the ‘instruments of the orchestra’ must work together to bring success in a counter-insurgency campaign. When working together they represent more than the sum of their parts (see Jackson). The coordination of the counter-insurgency effort in Afghanistan and Iraq involves British forces cooperating with international actors who may well have different approaches to counter-insurgency and the use of force, this can create problems for British forces as they are affected by the policies of their allies.

The Origin of ‘Hearts and Minds’

Thomas Mockaitis has championed the British approach to counter-insurgency and sees it as a model to be used in Afghanistan, Iraq and against Al-Qa’eda.²⁵ He has argued that the phrase ‘winning the hearts and minds’ of the people was not used first by Sir Gerald Templer about Malaya in 1952, but by Lieutenant-Colonel C. E. Bruce of the Indian Political Department in his book about the North-West Frontier of India in 1938. Winning ‘hearts and minds’ referred to ‘a clear understanding that military force is useful only in conjunction with a policy of economic and political development that attacks the causes of unrest.’²⁶ The origins of the phrase can be traced back to John Adams, the second US President, who argued that: ‘The [American] Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people; a change in their religious sentiments of their duties and obligations. This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution.’

The phrase ‘hearts and minds’ is however most famously associated with Templer’s successful campaign against communist insurgents in Malaya. Templer argued, ‘The answer [to the uprising] lies not in pouring more troops into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the

²⁴Hew Strachan, *The Politics of the British Army* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1997), 172–3.

²⁵Mockaitis, ‘Winning Hearts and Minds in the “War on Terrorism”’; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–1960*; Thomas Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency in the Post-Imperial Era* (Manchester: Manchester UP 1995). For a more critical perspective see John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan 2001).

²⁶Thomas Mockaitis, ‘The Origins of British Counterinsurgency’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 1/3 (Dec. 1990), 215.

people.²⁷ Remarkably, a soldier was emphasising the importance of the non-military aspects of counter-insurgency rather than the pre-eminence of the military: '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.'²⁸

Templer's call for a 'hearts and minds' approach is often seen as a response to the success of Mao Zedong's guerrilla warfare in China in 1949. Mao emphasised winning the hearts and minds of the people, he famously commented that 'The guerrilla must move amongst the people as a fish swims in the sea.' Dry up the sea, or 'drain the swamp', through a 'hearts and minds' campaign and the fish die. 'Hearts and minds' is usually associated with a less coercive approach to counter-insurgency which, therefore, has more chance of winning the support of the local population. It is contrasted with those who would use 'conventional' warfare against an insurgency deploying overwhelming force, using high levels of firepower and low levels of contact with the population. The conventional approach may seek the annihilation of the enemy and a less discriminate use of force in order to terrorise the civilian population, in which the enemy lives, into submission.

In 1965 President Lyndon Johnson stated, 'so we must be ready to fight in Vietnam, but the ultimate victory will depend on the hearts and minds of the people who actually live out there'. US politicians and military adopted the phrase 'hearts and minds' to describe their approach to counter-insurgency in Vietnam, but the phrase concealed the reality of a far more conventional and coercive approach to counter-insurgency.²⁹ The US approach to counter-insurgency included: the strategic hamlet programme (moving villagers into guarded camps); poisoning the rice crop; assassination campaigns (including the Phoenix programme which set a monthly quota of guerrillas to be 'neutralized'); saturation bombing; and designating free-fire zones where anything living was presumed to be hostile.³⁰ In Vietnam, Richard Stubbs argues, the US military associated the 'hearts and minds' approach with coercive tactics, such as 'search and destroy', which were more forceful than the

²⁷Quoted in Brian Lapping, *End of Empire* (London: Granada 1985), 224. John Cloake, *Templer, Tiger of Malaya: The Life of Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer* (London: Harrap 1985), 477 fn 1 records Templer's first use of the term as 26 April 1952.

²⁸John Cloake, *Templer, Tiger of Malaya: The Life of Field Marshall Sir Gerald Templer* (London: Harrap 1985), 262. The French soldier Lt. Col. David Galula, argued similarly that counterinsurgency was 20 per cent military and 80 per cent political, *Counter-insurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (Westport, CT: Praeger 1964 repr. 2006), 63.

²⁹John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press 2002), *passim*.

³⁰Marilyn B. Young, 'Counterinsurgency, Now and Forever', in idem and Lloyd C. Gardner, *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam: Or, How Not to Learn from the Past* (New York: The New Press 2007).

policies followed in Malaya.³¹ The disdain for the ‘hearts and minds’ approach by the champions of a more conventional approach to counter-insurgency is captured in the legendary, cynical slogan of a US officer in Vietnam, ‘grab ‘em by the balls and their hearts and minds will follow’. By 1968 Field Marshal Templer was referring to ‘hearts and minds’ as ‘that nauseating phrase I think I invented’.³²

Interpreting ‘Hearts and Minds’

The contrast between a conventional warfare and a ‘hearts and minds’ approach to counter-insurgency conceals the divergent ways in which the British ‘hearts and minds’ model can be interpreted.³³ These different interpretations have implications for the levels of consent that is sought from the local population and, therefore, the degree of coercion that it is ‘effective’ and right to deploy. At one end of the spectrum are those who believe that ‘hearts and minds’ is winning the population through creating fear, then there are those who believe it means the acquiescence of the population. At the other end of the spectrum are those who require a greater degree of popular consent and seek the active, enthusiastic consent, support and trust of the people.

‘Hearts and minds’ can be divided into its two components:

Hearts – winning the emotional support of the people.

Minds – the people as pursuing their ‘rational self-interest’.

Richard Stubbs in *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: Malayan Emergency, 1948–1960* argues that the ‘hearts and minds’ approach was about gaining the enthusiastic support of the population rather than just their acquiescence.³⁴ By 1970 British counter-insurgency doctrine required a strong degree of support from the local population as one of the key ingredients for success:

Hearts and Minds. Unless the trust, confidence and respect of the people are won by the government and the security forces the

³¹Richard Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: Malayan Emergency, 1948–60* (Oxford: Oxford UP 1989), 3. See Peter Davis’ Academy Award winning documentary ‘Hearts and Minds’ (1974) which contrasts the phrase with the violent reality of US policy in Vietnam.

³²*Straits Times*, 27 March 1968, quoted in Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 1; Cloake, *Templer*, 2.

³³Brig. (ret.) Gavin Bulloch, ‘Winning “Hearts and Minds” – An Evolving Concept’, notes from a presentation to the joint Kingston Univ./Royal United Services Institute ‘Hearts and Minds’ conference, RUSI, London, UK, 21 Sept. 2007.

³⁴Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 249–50.

chance of success is greatly reduced. If the people support the government and the security forces the insurgents become isolated and cut off from their supplies, shelter and intelligence.³⁵

Thomas Mockaitis defends ‘hearts and minds’ against its critics but in doing so emphasises the role of material grievances and downplays the importance of political freedoms and consent:

Winning hearts and minds has become a much maligned and often misunderstood concept that conjures up images of soldiers building playgrounds for smiling children, diverting personnel and resources from their proper task of fighting wars. A hearts-and-minds campaign, however, consists of soberly assessing what motivates people to rebel and devising a strategy to address the underlying causes of unrest. In most cases discontent stems from bread-and-butter issues. Lack of jobs, decent housing, electricity, running water, health care, and education can motivate people to accept or even actively support insurgents. Once their basic needs have been met, however, people may desire political freedoms, the absence of which can also fuel an insurgency.³⁶

Hew Strachan’s definition, by contrast, implies that the enthusiastic support of the population is not necessary:

When we speak about ‘Hearts and minds’, we are not talking about being nice to the natives, but about giving them the firm smack of government. ‘Hearts and minds’ denoted authority, not appeasement. Of course, political and social reform might accompany firm government.³⁷

Colonel I.A. Rigden, of the British Army, also argues in favour of a more forceful interpretation of ‘hearts and minds’:

‘Hearts and minds’ is often mistaken to mean taking a soft approach when dealing with the civilian population, but this is a misnomer. The key is changing the mindset of the target audience

³⁵Ministry of Defence, *Land Operations, Volume III – Counter Revolutionary Operations, Part 3 – Counter Insurgency* Army Code No. 70516 (Part 3) (London: Ministry of Defence 1970), 4.

³⁶Thomas R. Mockaitis, *Iraq and the Challenge of Counterinsurgency* (London: Praeger Security International 2008), 23–4.

³⁷Hew Strachan, ‘British Counter-Insurgency from Malaya to Iraq’, *Royal United Services Institute Journal* 152/6 (Dec. 2007), 8.

and, sometimes, this requires tough measures and a hard approach i.e., mass movement of the population, curfews and direct military action (riot control). As the mindset is being changed, small acts of support (i.e., medical and veterinary support) and the way in which government security forces interact with the population, combined with an effective information operations campaign, wins over their hearts.³⁸

Ashley Jackson argues that ‘hearts and minds was as much about creating fear as winning the socio-economic battle for the support of the general population’. While he argues that the army used ‘minimum force’ in colonial campaigns the civil authorities ‘often used methods more likely to be found in a police state or feudal monarchy than a liberal democracy’. He suggests that ‘far from minimum force being the keynote of British victory in colonial counter-insurgency campaigns, it can be argued that victory was won by the availability, and sometimes the application, of overwhelming force’.³⁹

The US Army’s *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (2006) emphasises ‘rational self-interest’ over ‘emotive’ ‘liking’ of the military, yet at the same time seeks to build ‘trusted networks’:

Once the unit settles into the AO [Area of Operations], its next task is to build trusted networks. This is the true meaning of the phrase ‘hearts and minds’, which comprises two separate components. ‘Hearts’ means persuading people that their best interests are served by COIN success. ‘Minds’ means convincing them that the force can protect them and that resisting it is pointless. Note that neither concerns whether people like Soldiers and Marines. Calculated self-interest, not emotion, is what counts. Over time, successful trusted networks grow like roots into the populace. They displace enemy networks, which forces enemies into the open, letting military forces seize the initiative and destroy the insurgents.⁴⁰

Different interpretations of what winning ‘hearts and minds’ means could be influenced by what is seen as realistic in current operations.

³⁸Col. I.A. Rigden, ‘The British Approach to Counter-Insurgency: Myths, Realities, and Strategic Challenges’, Strategy Research Project, US Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 2008, 12.

³⁹Ashley Jackson, ‘British Counter-insurgency in History: A Useful Precedent?’, *British Army Review* 139 (Spring 2006), 12–22.

⁴⁰The US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press 2007), 294.

For example, as the lack of enthusiasm for the Anglo-American-led occupation in Iraq becomes apparent the definition changes from one of winning the support and consent of the people to their more reluctant acquiescence and toleration.

The definition of 'hearts and minds' is associated with different attitudes to the role of human rights and the level of force that it is appropriate to deploy in a counter-insurgency. Those wishing to win the consent and support of the population may well deploy less violence and coercion, with a higher regard for human rights because they believe that this is more likely to win the positive endorsement of the people and this is necessary if the objective is to establish a democracy. This is because a democracy, if it is associated with rule by the people, potentially gives the people the power through the ballot box (or, perhaps, opinion polls) to register their consent or lack of it for the government and its allied forces. Those who wish merely to win the acquiescence, 'respect', toleration or fear of the population may believe that this is possible even with the use of much higher levels of violence and that this had been the recipe for success in the British Empire.

There may be some confusion in the debate on the meaning of 'hearts and minds'. There are those who argue that success in Malaya is due to an approach to counter-insurgency that can be categorised as 'hearts and minds', even though it involved the use of high levels of force and the abuse of human rights. Britain's success in Malaya and other counter-insurgencies was due to coercion and it is this more aggressive approach that is required in Iraq and Afghanistan. It is argued here, by contrast, that the phrase 'hearts and minds' does not accurately convey the impression that the Malayan campaign was highly coercive (see next section and the papers by Hack and Bennett). Merriam-Webster's *Dictionary of Allusions* defines 'hearts and minds' as 'Conviction felt in every way, emotional and intellectual, thoroughly and completely.'⁴¹ Therefore, the phrase should be reserved for those campaigns that seek to win consent rather than inspire fear, in which case it is not clear that the British were pursuing 'hearts and minds' in Malaya.

There may be some confusion here over whether the phrase 'hearts and minds' accurately describes the British approach to counter-insurgency in the retreat from Empire? Or whether the 'hearts and minds' model does imply high levels of coercion and, therefore, this is what should be deployed in current counter-insurgency campaigns?

British counter-insurgency theory may benefit from the debates about the role of consent in peacekeeping operations. Traditional 'peacekeeping' has been defined as the deployment of United Nations (UN)

⁴¹Merriam-Webster, *Dictionary of Allusions* (Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster 1999).

personnel with the consent of the parties concerned, employing minimum force and impartiality. 'Wider peacekeeping' was also a deployment with the consent of the belligerent parties but in a volatile environment and within states rather than between them.

'Peace enforcement' and 'Peace Support Operations' are more comparable to counter-insurgency because they permit the more robust deployment of force. 'Peace enforcement' was defined as 'Operations carried out to restore peace between belligerent parties who do not all consent to intervention and who may be engaged in combat activities.'⁴² 'Peace Support Operations' combine military force with a civilian component, 'Their aim is to transform war-torn societies into liberal democratic societies.'⁴³ This involves the more robust deployment of coercion and an appreciation of the circumstances in which it should be deployed. In 'Peace Support Operations' there is the 'general consent of target populations but not of spoilers'.⁴⁴ 'Consent' is defined as a variable which may increase and decrease over time and 'it emphasised the idea that peacekeepers themselves had an important role to play in promoting and maximising consent.'⁴⁵

The phrase 'hearts and minds' has been interpreted in highly divergent ways implying radically different approaches to the use of coercion and consent within an army or across a military coalition. If counter-insurgency theory is a guide to action then this ambiguity could lead to inconsistencies with a less coercive approach being deployed to win 'hearts and minds' alongside a highly coercive approach which undermines those pursuing the less coercive strategy. The ambiguity of definition leads to confusion allowing advocates of the British approach to claim that their approach is working whether there is either consent among the local population, mere acquiescence or even hostility.

Malaya: Hearts and Minds?

It is possible to construct very different accounts about the impact of British counter-insurgency in Malaya and from this draw contrasting 'lessons' about the implications of these stories for counter-insurgency practice. Templer's proclaimed 'hearts and minds' campaign in Malaya

⁴²Ministry of Defence, *The Army Field Manual, Volume 5, Operations Other than War, Part 2, Wider Peacekeeping*, 1994, 1–2.

⁴³Alex J. Bellamy, Paul Williams and Stuart Griffin, *Understanding Peacekeeping* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2004), 128–9, 165.

⁴⁴Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge: Polity Press 2005), 143.

⁴⁵Bellamy *et al.*, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 170–1.

may serve to conceal the extent to which coercion and repression was used by the British. This included:⁴⁶

- The Briggs Plan (1950) which forcibly resettled 500,000 people, about 25 per cent of Malaya's Chinese population
- Mass arrests
- The death penalty for carrying arms
- Detention without trial for up to two years, between 1948 and 1957 a total of 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'⁴⁷
- The Batang Kali massacre of 24 unarmed civilians in December 1948
- Treating prisoners as criminals and hanging hundreds of them

The 'lessons' of Malaya can be interpreted to support a more or less coercive approach to counter-insurgency. General Sir Rupert Smith discusses British success in Malaya but does not draw attention to the high levels of coercion and abuse of human rights.⁴⁸ Stubbs acknowledges the abuses but argues for the success of a less coercive 'hearts and minds' approach arguing that, 'From 1952 onward, the government gradually gained the upper hand as the shift from a predominantly "search and destroy" approach to a new "hearts and minds" strategy began to take effect.'⁴⁹ This coincides with the arrival of Gerald Templer as High Commissioner and Director of Operations in February 1952, 'The hearts and minds strategy, then, was a constantly evolving approach to counter-insurgency based on both an underlying philosophy of gaining the confidence of the general population and a

⁴⁶The sources for this list are Hack and Bennett in this issue; Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*; Newsinger, *British Counter-insurgency*.

⁴⁷Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 256.

⁴⁸Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 202–6.

⁴⁹Richard Stubbs, 'From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of British Strategy in Malaya 1948–60', in D. Marston and C. Malkasian, *Counter-insurgency in Modern Warfare* (London: Osprey Publishing 2008), 114.

willingness to engage in trial and error on all fronts – administrative, military, policing, social, and political.⁵⁰

Karl Hack and Huw Bennett both emphasise the role of ‘counter-terror’ particularly in the early stage of the insurgency and consider whether this is a general attribute of British counter-insurgency. Bennett has found a remarkable statement from the 1948–51 High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, arguing that the Malayan counter-insurgency 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. Bennett argues that the government did not authorise the deliberate killing of civilians but 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’.

The Malayan Emergency of 1948–60 has been repeatedly cited as a source of counter-insurgency lessons, with debate over the relative importance of coercion, ‘winning hearts and minds’, and achieving unified and dynamic control.⁵¹ Karl Hack argues that the British used various techniques, both ‘hearts and minds’ and coercion, in Malaya but that their weight varied dramatically across quite distinct campaign phases. Effective counter-insurgency must, therefore, 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’.⁵² The emphasis in British propaganda from 1950 to 1953 was on ‘persuading’ and coercing reluctant minds rather than winning ‘hearts and minds’. The defeat of the insurgency was largely achieved during 1950–52, prior to Templer’s arrival, by ‘securing population security, and holding populated areas continuously’.

The Malayan communists had also changed the prioritisation of their tactics away from the military struggle and towards politics. Chin Peng, the Secretary of the Malayan Communist Party, perceived that the most hopeful period for the insurgents was 1949–50. Hack concludes that effective counter-insurgency analysis must integrate cognition of phases (there must be different ‘lessons’ for different phases); and that in the Malayan case rapid build-up of barely trained local as well as

⁵⁰Stubbs, ‘From Search and Destroy’, 127.

⁵¹Fergusson, *A Million Bullets*.

⁵²Karl Hack, ‘Screwing Down the People: The Malayan Emergency, Decolonisation and Ethnicity’, in H. Antlov and S. Tonnesson (eds.), *Imperial Policy and Southeast Asian Nationalism* (Richmond, UK: Curzon Press 1995), 95.

extraneous forces, and the achievement of area and population security, were key to turning around the campaign in the most intense phase. While persuasive techniques were always present, ‘winning hearts’ came to the fore more in the later optimisation phase.

A more repressive interpretation of Britain’s success in Malaya has been used to justify coercion in operations in Iraq. Lieutenant Colonel Wade Markel, a US Army strategist who has served in Afghanistan, has argued that it was the British ‘strategy of population control’ and other repressive measures (rather than ‘hearts and minds’) which were successful in Malaya. Markel’s conclusion from his comparative analysis of Malaya, Kenya and Vietnam is that ‘the vital element in both [Malaya and Kenya] counter-insurgency efforts was the effective internment of the subject populations, and not efforts at social amelioration. While we would like to believe that “winning hearts and minds” is both important and effective, these examples suggest that the effort is neither essential nor decisive.’ Drawing on the British experience Markel argues that if ‘Sunni’ insurgents in Iraq continue to strike at will, ‘and if the Sunni community persists in its active and tacit support of the insurgency’, that ‘involuntary internment’ of the Sunni minority in Iraq might work in ending the insurgency.⁵³

The defeat of the insurgents in Malaya has also been attributed to rising economic prosperity, the emerging democratic political system and the prospect of decolonisation and Malayan independence.⁵⁴ Since the British did not achieve their original 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’.

The phrase ‘hearts and minds’ when applied to the successful operation in Malaya conceals the reality that the counter-insurgency campaign was not fought within the law and involved high levels of coercion and the abuse of human rights. The coercion deployed by the British in Malaya was not an isolated case, in Kenya too (and other colonial conflicts) the British campaign against the Mau Mau was also conducted with considerable force and brutality.⁵⁵ The lesson could be

⁵³Lt. Col. Wade Markel, ‘Draining the Swamp: The British Strategy of Population Control’, *Parameters* 36/1 (Spring 2006), 44, 47.

⁵⁴R. Popplewell, “‘Lacking Intelligence’: Some Reflections on Recent Approaches to British Counterinsurgency, 1900–1960”, *Intelligence and National Security* 10/2 (April 1995), 337.

⁵⁵David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: Britain’s Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (London: Phoenix 2005); Huw Bennett, ‘The Other Side of the COIN: Minimum and Exemplary Force in British Army Counterinsurgency in Kenya’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18/4 (Dec. 2007), 638–64.

drawn that successful counter-insurgency operations cannot be fought within the law and without high levels of coercion and the abuse of human rights. From this perspective the phrase ‘hearts and minds’ is a useful way of concealing from human rights organisations, media and public opinion the reality that effective counter-insurgency practice is necessarily highly coercive. Paradoxically, this argument also suits those who argue that military interventions of any kind, whether counter-insurgency campaigns or ‘peace support operations’, should be avoided altogether because of the unavoidable abuse of human rights.

Northern Ireland: Hearts and Minds?

The ‘hearts and minds’ approach of British counter-insurgency policy was put to the test when British troops deployed onto the streets of Northern Ireland in August 1969. This campaign was fought within the United Kingdom, under the gaze of the media and just a short flight from London. While some of the techniques used in Malaya were also employed in Northern Ireland many were not. Although forced population movement was contemplated from time to time during the conflict it was never attempted. In his other contribution to this collection Paul Dixon considers the extent to which British counter-insurgency doctrine was implemented in Northern Ireland and its implications for the conflict there. It is argued that British counter-insurgency theory cannot adequately describe the challenge facing the Army or account for the success of the recent peace process. While the British used a less coercive approach in Northern Ireland than in Malaya considerable, illegitimate and counterproductive force was used which did little to win ‘hearts and minds’.⁵⁶

The former Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, Professor Brice Dickson, rejects the arguments of ‘realists’ that human rights are a luxury in a counter-insurgency operation. He argues that ‘the protection of human rights is not just consistent with counter-insurgency operations but actually essential to their effectiveness’. Dickson draws attention to the inaccurate metaphors and false dichotomies that have shaped the discussion of human rights in counter-insurgency operations. First among these is the idea that protecting people’s security as well as their human rights is a zero-sum game in which a gain on one side necessarily means a deficit on the other. A second is that, while individuals may have rights, society has overarching interests

⁵⁶Brig. Bulloch argues of Northern Ireland, ‘In the end, weariness and a recognition that it was impossible to change people’s hearts and very difficult to alter minds and thinking resulted in a fresh approach.’ ‘Winning “Hearts and Minds” – An Evolving Concept’.

which necessarily trump those rights for the sake of some greater good. A third is that protecting human rights and using physical force are inimical to each other – human rights, allegedly, cannot be protected by force because that somehow destroys their *raison d'être*. And, fourth, some take the view that whenever the chips are really down – in a war or a situation of grave national danger – standards on human rights must be replaced by standards on humanitarianism: it is enough, then, to be humane to others, but it is unnecessary to respect their rights.

Unlike some champions of human rights, Dickson recognises that human rights abuses are perpetrated by state and non-state actors and abuses of human rights by both the British government and paramilitary groups prolonged the conflict. Human rights standards could have been applied by the courts and other official agencies even at the height of the Troubles; if this had been the case it may have served to undermine the adverse propaganda which members of paramilitary groups, and their political representatives, were able to engage in, thereby reducing the credibility of such groups in the eyes of local residents as well as outside observers. The recent peace process has been relatively successful in spite of rather than because of the abuses and violence.

Iraq and Afghanistan: Not Fighting as Americans?

In the post-Cold War period the British Army has been deployed in counter-insurgencies in Iraq and Afghanistan alongside the US military and has sought to influence it in more 'political' and a less coercive direction (which some describe as a 'hearts and minds' approach). The invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 were initially conventional wars but have morphed into counter-insurgency campaigns. Glen Rangwala questions conventional counter-insurgency theory by emphasising the uniqueness of the Iraq conflict and in particular the problem of the ambiguous location of legitimate political authority in Iraq. Counter-insurgency theory has traditionally subscribed to a clear government versus insurgency dichotomy. The fragmentation of the Iraqi state during the occupation and its capture by competing political factions, makes it difficult to perceive who is preserving and who threatening the established political order. The fragmentation of the state was 'of key importance in understanding the limitations on how successful and persistent British military operations could be'. The US military tended to regard the Iraq conflict as an existential threat and this reinforced a tendency to the excessive deployment of force.⁵⁷ The US military was prepared for conventional

⁵⁷Brig. Nigel R.F. Aylwin-Foster, 'Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations', *Military Review* (Nov./Dec. 2005), 2–15.

conflict rather than counter-insurgency and applied the conventional approach of overwhelming force with disastrous results.⁵⁸

There was a strong British effort to influence US thinking and planning for the invasion of Iraq and then its approach to counter-insurgency, with the Army having an influence on policy disproportionate to Britain's contribution to the coalition.⁵⁹ The UK National Contingent Commander in Iraq, Air Marshal Brian Burrige, told the UK Defence Committee that the British were seen as a 'kind of US conscience'.⁶⁰ There were limits to British attempts to influence the US military from adopting a less conventional approach. In April 2004, US operations against Fallujah went ahead in spite of the opposition of leading British politicians and soldiers.⁶¹ One senior British Army officer criticised the US Army's rules of engagement for allowing the use of excessive violence and American soldiers for viewing Iraqis as 'untermenschen', a term used by the Nazis to refer to the 'under-people'.⁶² The British, by contrast, tended towards a traditional approach 'that emphasised the minimum use of force justified solely on grounds of necessity' and led to a low degree of intervention in Iraqi society (Rangwala in this issue).

The policy of the US in the north of Iraq could harm the attempts of British forces to manage the south. The US military sought the elimination of Moqtada al-Sadr's 'Mahdi Army' and this was perceived to have impacted on British attempts in the south to employ a less coercive approach. In Basra, it has been alleged, the British attempted to encourage the recruitment of paramilitaries into the police in order to bring the militia leaders into the political process – a similar approach was also attempted in Northern Ireland.⁶³ As Rangwala points out, by May 2004 UK officials 'were voicing severe disquiet at the US strategy' because many Iraqis 'saw the British presence in the

⁵⁸Carter Malkasian, 'Counterinsurgency in Iraq' in Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian (eds.), *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (Oxford: Osprey Publishing 2008); Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (London: Penguin 2006).

⁵⁹Col. A.R.D. Sharpe, Royal College of Defence Studies, 2005 course; Warren Chin, 'Examining the Application of British Counterinsurgency Doctrine by the American Army in Iraq', *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 18/1 (March 2007), 9–10.

⁶⁰House of Commons Defence Committee, *Lessons of Iraq* (London: TSO 2004), 53.

⁶¹Glen Rangwala, 'Deputizing in War: British Politicians and Predicaments in Iraq, 2003–07', *International Journal of Contemporary Iraqi Studies* 1/3 (Oct. 2007), 293–310. For a controversial critique of the US Army by Brig. Aylwin-Foster see 'Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations'.

⁶²Sean Rayment, 'US tactics condemned by British officers', *Daily Telegraph*, 11 April 2004.

⁶³Paul Dixon, *Northern Ireland: The Politics of War and Peace*, 2nd ed. (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan 2008), 106–7.

south as merely an extension of the US military...and thus an appropriate target for reprisals' and Rangwala adds this 'impeded the development of a distinctive British approach to winning the "hearts and minds" of Iraqis in the south'. In April 2004, General Sir Mike Jackson, head of the British Army, distanced himself from the US approach, 'We must be able to fight with the Americans. That does not mean we must be able to fight as the Americans.'⁶⁴

The political emphasis of the British approach is indicated by the attempt to accommodate and negotiate with militias rather than militarily defeat them in Southern Iraq. It was the British Lieutenant-General Graeme Lamb, as Deputy Commanding General Multinational Force Iraq, who made the first contacts with the Sunni tribes leading to the 'Anbar Awakening' and the relative decline of violence. General Lamb drew on his experience and revulsion of having to deal with the 'Irish Republican Army' (IRA) in order to achieve peace.⁶⁵ Opinion polls suggest the unpopularity of the occupation (apart from the Kurdish areas) from the beginning, 'with that unpopularity deepening as a consequence of the way the occupation has been conducted'.⁶⁶ By autumn 2006 it was becoming clear that the British Army was under severe strain and looking for a way out of Iraq. The then new Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt, told a newspaper that the British should get themselves out of Iraq 'sometime soon because our presence exacerbates the security problems'.⁶⁷

In Afghanistan the British and other NATO forces have *generally* pursued a different approach to counter-insurgency than that of the United States.⁶⁸ Again, the British have been 'more political' rather than military and have been more willing than the US to contemplate reconciliation and a negotiated settlement with the neo-Taliban.⁶⁹ In autumn 2006 the British negotiated a truce in Musa Qala in which the British withdrew from the town and the provincial governor and local elders took over, but the Taliban agreed to keep out. The Taliban later retook the town and another assault had to be undertaken by

⁶⁴Richard Norton-Taylor, 'General hits out at US tactics', *The Guardian*, 21 April 2004.

⁶⁵*The Economist*, 31 Jan. 2009, see comments by Linda Robinson at <www.usacac.army.mil/CAC2/cgsc/events/MHLS/RobinsonTranscript.doc> and also *NavyTimes*, 28 May 2007.

⁶⁶Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments* (London: Hurst 2006), 89.

⁶⁷Gen. Dannatt interview with Sarah Sands, *Daily Mail*, 12 Oct. 2006.

⁶⁸Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan* (London: Hurst 2007), Ch. 6.

⁶⁹*The Times*, 5 Oct. 2008; *The Daily Telegraph*, 22 June 2008, the Obama administration may be changing this approach; *The Guardian*, 9 March 2008; *The Observer*, 23 March 2009.

NATO forces to retake it in December 2007. The British continued to see such deals to hand over power to the Afghan government and security forces as the key to defeating the Taliban while this approach attracted strong criticism from the US. It has also been suggested that the US military deliberately undermined the Musa Qala deal to push the British into adopting a more aggressive approach.⁷⁰ As in Iraq, there have also been British complaints at the excessive use of force and the civilian casualties caused by US military operations.⁷¹

In order to win the battle for 'hearts and minds' the British have been reluctant to destroy the opium poppy crop in Helmand Province until alternative forms of income can be provided to the farmers. The US, on the other hand, has pushed for the destruction of poppy fields. A British colonel, Nick Carter, pioneered the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that combined military and development workers to support reconstruction efforts which were adopted in Afghanistan and exported to Iraq.⁷² There have also been tensions between the British and US over the excessive use of force, the Geneva Conventions and the treatment of prisoners (Abu Ghraib, Guantanamo Bay and Bagram Airbase) and its attitude to US attacks in Pakistan.⁷³

Powerful elements within the US military were sympathetic to the British 'hearts and minds' model of counter-insurgency and may have welcomed British criticism of US operations as a spur to reform US counter-insurgency doctrine.⁷⁴ These included General David Petraeus who was appointed to lead US forces in Iraq from February 2007, implemented the 'surge' and on 31 October 2008, promoted Commander in Chief Central Command, became responsible as well for US operations in Afghanistan. While serving in Iraq, Petraeus saw the war as 'a race to win over the people' and he implemented aspects of an approach to insurgency 'long advocated by British doctrine'.⁷⁵ In December 2006 the US Army and Marine Corps published their

⁷⁰*The Observer*, 4 Feb. 2007; *New York Times*, 3 and 5 Feb. 2007; Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, 211–12; Fergusson, *A Million Bullets*, 272.

⁷¹*Daily Mail*, 9 Aug. 2007.

⁷²'Britain's armed forces: losing their way', *The Economist*, 31 Jan. 2009.

⁷³*The Guardian*, 17 Sept. 2008.

⁷⁴John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press 2002); *New York Times*, 13 Nov. 2004; Eric Herring and Glen Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments: The Occupation and its Legacy* (London: Hurst 2006), 172, 178. On US welcome of British criticisms, see *The Economist*, 31 Jan. 2009. Chin, 'Examining the Application of British Counter-insurgency Doctrine by the American Army in Iraq'.

⁷⁵Michael R. Gordon and Thom Shanker, 'Bush to name a new general to oversee Iraq', *New York Times*, 5 Jan. 2007; Bruce Hoffman, *Insurgency and Counter-insurgency* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp. 2004), 9.

Counterinsurgency Field Manual, the first official American counter-insurgency doctrine field manual since 1966. This manual had input from the British military and was by implication critical of US military policy in Iraq since the invasion.

More recently, the US government and military have been highly critical of the British approach to counter-insurgency which has been described as ‘a minor crisis in Anglo-American military relations’.⁷⁶ In January 2008, Robert Gates, US Defense Secretary, criticised British, Canadian and Dutch troops for their lack of progress in the South of Afghanistan when compared with US success in the East. He claimed that these troops were trained for conventional war rather than counter-insurgency. The NATO forces in the south were also accused of relying on airstrikes which alienated the local population.⁷⁷ Even US champions of the British approach to counter-insurgency have, more recently, become critical of Britain’s performance in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁷⁸ It has been claimed that the British are becoming ‘Europeanised’ favouring peacekeeping rather than making war and with its forces subjected to the ‘tyranny of the lawyers’ who constrain British operations.⁷⁹ Air Chief Marshal Sir Jock Stirrup, the Chief of the Defence Staff, accepted that Britain had become ‘too complacent’ and ‘smug’ about its experiences in Northern Ireland and Bosnia.

Conclusion

The British approach to counter-insurgency is highly ambiguous, capable of widely different interpretations about the appropriate way of dealing with an insurgency. It has been argued that the term ‘hearts and minds’ does not accurately describe Britain’s counter-insurgency campaigns in Malaya and Northern Ireland because these were fought with considerable degrees of coercion and abuse of human rights. To describe these campaigns as ‘hearts and minds’ disguises the reality of what occurred and, because these campaigns were seen as relatively

⁷⁶Tim Shipman, ‘British forces useless in Basra, say officials’, *Daily Telegraph*, 20 Aug. 2007.

⁷⁷*Los Angeles Times*, 16 Jan. 2008. Capt. Leo Docherty of the Scots Guards was also critical at the levels of force used by British troops in Afghanistan, Leo Docherty, *Desert of Death: A Soldier’s Journey from Iraq to Afghanistan* (London: Faber 2007).

⁷⁸*The Times*, 16 Dec. 2008. See the transcript of the book launch of Marston and Malkasian, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* for criticisms of British counter-insurgency practice, <<http://www.cna.org/documents/counterinsurgency%20transcript.pdf>>, downloaded 23 March 2009.

⁷⁹*The Daily Telegraph*, 11 Jan. 2009; *The Economist*, 31 Jan. 2009.

successful, encourages some to argue that similar techniques should be applied to current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The British Army has *generally* tended to use a less coercive approach to counter-insurgency than the US military. The head of the British Army, General Sir Richard Dannatt, has confirmed General Sir Mike Jackson's position, arguing that 'In Britain we accept that we will never fight "as" the Americans, but we do recognise the requirement to fight "with" the Americans, and recent experience shows that this is perfectly possible.'⁸⁰ The British military has, though, come under criticism that while it is less coercive than the US it is more 'macho' and coercive than other militaries.⁸¹ There have also been problems surrounding the use of force and the accountability of British troops in Northern Ireland and Iraq.⁸²

The question of the limits of counter-insurgency strategy is particularly apt where attempts are being made to establish a democracy and the consent of the people to occupation can be indicated at elections or through opinion polls. In these circumstances it is not sufficient for 'hearts and minds' to achieve a fearful acquiescence of the people, they must achieve a more positive endorsement of their presence and of the goals that they are trying to promote. Even a less aggressive approach to counter-insurgency may not be sufficient to overcome the opposition of the local population to what they may see as an occupation. Lieutenant-General Sir John Kiszely has argued that some counter-insurgency campaigns 'are quite simply unwinnable and should never be attempted in the first place'.⁸³ In October 2006, General Dannatt, the Chief of General Staff, argued that the invasion of Iraq 'effectively kicked the door in' uninvited, while in Afghanistan the British Army operated with the consent of the elected President.⁸⁴

The confusion over the meaning of the British 'hearts and minds' model of counter-insurgency raises the question as to what is the purpose of counter-insurgency theory and doctrine? To what extent is it a realistic guide to operations or a public relations device to cover the realities of war and win domestic and international support for those operations?

⁸⁰Gen. Sir Richard Dannatt, 'Foreword', in Charles Reed and David Ryall, *The Price of Peace: Just War in the Twenty-first Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2007), xiv.

⁸¹Fergusson, *A Million Bullets*, 172; *The Guardian*, 20 March 2009 for the diversity of international approaches to counterinsurgency see Guistozi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop*, Ch. 6.

⁸²Herring and Rangwala, *Iraq in Fragments*, 192–4; Rachel Kerr, *The Military on Trial: The British Army in Iraq* (Nijmegen: Wolf Legal Publishers 2008).

⁸³Lt.-Gen. Sir John Kiszely, 'Post-Modern Challenges for Modern Warriors', *Shrivenham Papers* No. 5, Dec. 2007. Kiszely was Deputy Commanding General Multinational Force, Iraq, Oct. 2004 to April 2005.

⁸⁴Gen. Dannatt interview, *Daily Mail*, 12 Oct. 2006.

Sarah Sewall, from the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy at Harvard University, was consulted in the development of the US military's 2006 counter-insurgency manual. She asks whether that manual is 'insincere', a cynical device to placate the public and military conscience by promising a less coercive, 'kinder and gentler counter-insurgency.' History 'provides plenty of reason to doubt contemporary claims': 'During Vietnam, the US spoke of winning hearts and minds even as it carpet bombed rural areas and rained napalm on village streets.'⁸⁵ She concludes that there is nothing to stop the new field manual's prescriptions 'from being ignored or even used to mask conduct that is counter to its precepts' and calls on humanitarians to monitor military actions in the field: 'The field manual requires engagement precisely from those who fear that its words will lack meaning.'⁸⁶

The ambiguity of British counter-insurgency theory and doctrine may be useful in public relations terms because it allows the state to present its role in counter-insurgency in terms of 'hearts and minds', 'minimum force' and winning the consent of local people. This may generally indicate a less coercive, conventional approach than adopted by the US, but nonetheless disguises the reality of high levels of violence and the alienation of the local population.⁸⁷ Counter-insurgency theory becomes a means of justifying current operations to a variety of audiences rather than a guide to their conduct. Domestic political and public opinion is protected from the brutal realities of counter-insurgency in order to sustain support. The British military may also want to justify its role, educate political masters or influence the US military and other potential military partners that the British approach is the most effective.⁸⁸

The ambiguity of British counter-insurgency theory may be useful in public relations terms but it undermines the theory as a guide to operations because it can be interpreted in such divergent ways. Just as the British military felt its 'hearts and minds' approach was undermined by the highly coercive nature of US military action in Iraq, one

⁸⁵Sarah Sewall, 'Introduction to the University of Chicago Press Edition: A Radical Field Manual', in The US Army and Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press 2007), xxiv.

⁸⁶Sewall, 'A Radical Field Manual', xxxvi.

⁸⁷David Benest, 'Aden to Northern Ireland, 1966–76', in H. Strachan (ed.), *Big Wars and Small Wars: The British Army and the Lessons of War in the Twentieth Century* (London: Routledge 2006), 118–19.

⁸⁸See Thornton, 'Peace Support Operations Doctrine in the British Army', for some of these uses of doctrine. The *Daily Telegraph* of 22 June 2008 reports a delegation of British military officers travelling to Washington to meet members of conservative think-tanks to explain British policy in Afghanistan.

British soldier's 'human rights' interpretation of 'hearts and minds' (or 'minimum force') may be undermined by another British soldier's 'coercive interpretation'.⁸⁹ Dichotomous, over-generalised thinking ('hearts and minds' versus conventional warfare) also prevents a more clearly focussed debate on which measures in what context and circumstances are justifiable in counter-insurgency operations and the role of human rights discourse in legitimising this. This means discussion of Just War theory, government policies, the legitimacy of various tactics, the rules of engagement and the accountability of soldiers as well as their rights.⁹⁰

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⁸⁹Or indeed US soldier, in Iraq Gen. Petraeus pursued a less coercive approach that was criticised by some of his fellow officers for its 'softly, softly' approach, *The Times*, 11 Jan. 2007; Malkasian, 'Counterinsurgency in Iraq', 243–4.

⁹⁰See for example Alex J. Bellamy's discussion of aerial bombing in Afghanistan in *Just Wars: From Cicero to Iraq* (Cambridge, UK: Polity 2006), Ch. 9; and C.A.J. Coady, *Morality and Political Violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP 2008) on morality in war. For interesting and contrasting analyses of US operations in Iraq and civilian casualties see Thomas W. Smith, 'Protecting Civilians . . . or Soldiers? Humanitarian Law and the Economy of Risk in Iraq', *International Studies Perspectives* 9 (2008), 144–64; and Colin H. Kahl, 'In the Crossfire or the Crosshairs? Norms, Civilian Casualties, and US Conduct in Iraq', *International Security* 32/1 (Summer 2007), 7–46.

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