Why Time Works Against a Counterinsurgency

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Time is an integral aspect of all military campaigns. Events always occur within its inexorable constraints and it is within this context that war's opposing adversaries interact. As military technologies have evolved from slower to faster paced ordinance and means, the central and effective role of time at the tactical and operational levels has been similarly augmented, creating a "fourth dimension" for all military engagements.[1] Here, the increasingly rapid passage of time is both drawn into and related to the military unit's decision making cycle. That is, to its ability to identify, decide, and to act in response to an enemy. Force quality, in terms of technology, doctrine, and training, and surprise, are the largest determinants of the successful exploitation of time at these lower-levels. In the active moment of decision, when two opposing forces confront each other in martial combat, time will play this role. The force which can exploit this "fourth dimension" will likely obtain a qualitative advantage over their opponents by interrupting their decision making cycle by taking the initiative.

Yet, at a higher level of the military campaign, time works in a different, but no less important way. In the context of so-called conventional wars, those waged along exterior lines of engagement and between two or more regularly organized, equipped, and employed forces,

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[1] Ajay Singh, "Time: The New Dimension in War," *Joint Force Quarterly* No. 19 (Winter 1995-1996): pp. 56-61.

the passage of time works in favour of the stronger power at the strategical level. A weaker opponent cannot help but be overwhelmed by the crushing weight of a stronger force, particularly if it engages in straight forward combat. Thus, the principle of attrition dictates that time favours the stronger party.

In the context of a small war waged for revolutionary objectives, however, such as Canada's mission in Afghanistan, time seems to serve in a central, and yet inverted, capacity. Within this type of war, time, quite paradoxically, favours the weaker party over the stronger power. Such an inverted advantage of time in the waging of small wars is not, of course, restricted to Canada's current engagement in Afghanistan. For example, as Norman B. Hannah noted in his review of American General Westmoreland's autobiography:

> … [General] Westmoreland mentions several factors that prolonged the war [in Vietnam], but … we are entitled to conclude that he did not regard these factors [as] likely to be decisive. Indeed, he tells us he suffered these impediments because he believed that 'success would eventually be ours.' But it was not. Why not?

> General Westmoreland does not directly answer the question but the answer emerges without being stated. We ran out of time. This is the tragedy of Vietnam—we were fighting for time rather than space. And time ran out.[2]

General Westmoreland was acting upon a conventional understanding of the principle of attrition and its central dynamic that time favours the stronger party. Thus, America ought to have eventually overcome its weaker adversary, but the reality of the Vietnam war contradicted this logic. This represents a final and ultimate inversion of the principle of attrition, and it begs for detailed study and consideration. What is even more pressing, perhaps, is that successful guerrillas have observed that time works in this inverted capacity . As the Cuban revolutionary, Fidel Castro, once whispered to American journalist Herbert Matthews:

> …We have been fighting for seventy-nine days now are and stronger than ever.
> … Batista has 3,000 men in the field against us. I will not tell you how many we
> have, for obvious reasons [estimates for this time range from a few dozen to a

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[2] Norman B. Hannah, cited in, Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1955), p. 89.

couple of hundred]. He works in columns of 200; we in groups of ten to forty, and we are winning. *It is a battle against time and time is on our side.*[3]

Nevertheless, within the current literature, little analytical or historical work can be found to explain the origins of this particularly paradoxical outcome. And, indeed, without the identification of such a source of origin, the inversion of this principle will, in all likelihood, continue and time will persistently favour the weaker side. The paradoxical quality of this inversion is quite intriguing and has spurred the primary research question of this work: Why does time work against a counterinsurgency?

While the most pressing case studies of this phenomenon would involve either Iraq or Afghanistan, the author has elected to forgo a detailed study of either. Primarily, he finds that any analysis which seeks an explanation for why an event persistently reoccurs is difficult to conduct in contemporary situations, when much information as to means, methods, and circumstances are absent due to both temporal proximity and the necessity of national, strategic, and operational security. This paper, then, considers the case study of the British counterinsurgency in Malaya from the declaration of the emergency in 1948 through 1954 when time, once again, favoured the stronger party. Over and above the analytical concerns as to the credibility and availability of information presented above, this case was selected for two other primary reasons. First, the Malayan Emergency was a large-scale small war that was fought for revolutionary objectives. Indeed, at its height, more than 100,000 security personnel were employed. Second, in contrast to the larger American operations in Vietnam or the Soviet operations in Afghanistan, the British were ultimately successful in their war.

Terminology: Small and Revolutionary Wars

This work is concerned with a distinct category of warfare and, in consequence, speaks only to the role of time in these particular circumstances. Clarity of terminology is, therefore, essential. When this paper speaks of small wars that are waged for revolutionary objectives it delimits a specific, and yet prolific, category of warfare, complete with some enduring assumptions as to their proper conduct or commission.

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[3] Fidel Castro, cited in, Robert B. Asprey, *War is The Shadows: The Guerrilla in History* vol. 2 (Lincoln: Backinpress.com, 2002): p. 702. Emphasis added.

First, the category of small war speaks to the means, or, more properly, to the methods and conduct of a type of warfare. As Colonel C. E Callwell wrote of this category of military campaigning:

> "Whenever a regular army finds itself engaged upon hostilities against irregular forces, or forces which in their armament, their organization, and their discipline are palpably inferior to it, the conditions of the campaign become distinct from the conditions of modern regular warfare."[4]

That is, the conditions of the campaign come to be shaped by the conduct and principles of small warfare whenever a regular force is faced with an irregular opponent. Thus, the Vietnam War, which, at its height, saw hundreds of thousands of soldiers committed to combat, remained a small war until the final territorial invasion of the south by North Vietnamese conventional forces.[5] This category speaks only to methods employed and not to the actual scope of the overall campaign.

The category of revolutionary war, on the other hand, denotes the ends, or the ultimate political objectives of the campaign. As John Shy and Thomas W. Collier have noted, "'Revolutionary war' refers to the seizure of political power by the means of armed force."[6] Shy and Collier also maintain, however, that "revolutionary war is also distinguished by what it is not. It is not 'war' in the generally understood sense of the word, not international war or war between nations. … Revolutionary wars occur *within* nations, and have as their aim the seizure of state power."[7] However, the exclusion of international wars from the first portion of this passage seems to be highly artificial, as it effectively treats the outbreak of a revolutionary war as only beginning when the local population decides to takes up arms to counter a perceived occupation. This definition would erroneously exclude, for example, the Revolutionary Wars of the late 18th century from the category of revolutionary war. Yet, as Alan Forrest has noted,

> The Revolutionary Wars [the Continental wars following the French Revolution] were different from traditional eighteenth-century conflicts between monarch

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[4] C.E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* (London: Bison Books, 1996), p. 22.

[5] For a wonderfully composed analysis of the Vietnam war that draws out this point, see Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1955).

[6] John Shy and Thomas W. Collier, "Revolutionary War," in *Makers of Modern Strategy: From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 817.

[7] Ibid., p. 817.

and monarch, since in the event of victory one side would now seek to destroy the [political] institutions of its enemy, the French imposing a liberal constitution on the Austrians or Prussians, and they in turn restoring the Bourbons to the throne of France.[8]

The essence of revolutionary war must include, therefore, variants of 'international war'; yet, only those with the ultimate purpose of imposing and constructing a system of political control that is amenable to the victor's interests.

In the context of a small war that is fought for revolutionary purposes, the actors, too, take on specific and highly familiar titles. The dominant power is, by definition, in the role of the counterinsurgency; whereas their adversaries—that is, the weaker side—is in the role of the insurgency.

As was first mentioned in the beginning of this section, as a specific category of war, these small wars fought for revolutionary ends have certain ahistorical assumptions that are derived from the broadest historical evidence of their commission. Thus, while each war is properly considered distinct in terms of its particular circumstances, each is also subject to certain principles of conduct that appear regardless of the eccentricity of conditions within the campaign.[9]

Some Fundamental Principles of Conduct in Counterinsurgency and Insurgency

In the study of war, there are two dominant schools of thought as to both the enduring nature of war's processes of commission, and the principles of war: the materialist and the historical schools.[10] This work follows the latter school—that is the historical school—in so far as much as my work presumes that "*there is an essential unity to all strategic experience in all periods of history because nothing vital to the nature and function of war and strategy changes.*"[11]

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[8] Alan Forrest, "The Nation in Arms I: The French Wars," in *The Oxford History of Modern War*, ed. Charles Townshend (London: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 59-60.

[9] For a full argument on this point see, for example, Mark O'Neill, "Back to the Future: The Enduring Characteristics of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Australian Army Journal* 5, no. 2 (Winter 2008): p. 44.

[10] Colin S. Gray, *Modern Strategy* (London: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 1.

[11] Ibid., emphasis in the original.

From this perspective, there are certain aspects of these small wars fought for revolutionary ends that are beyond the means employed or the idiosyncratic circumstances of their commission. That is, some assumptions and principles of conduct function in all wars of this nature. And, indeed, these assumptions are, as we shall come to see, crucial to any lucid understanding of why time works against the strong in these campaigns.

The Path to Victory Lies with the Support of the Population

Revolutionary wars are fought, in the first instance, not for the control of territory, the acquisition of industrial means, the retention of commercial assets, or the destruction of enemy forces; they are fought for the political support of the population on the part of insurgents and counterinsurgents alike.[12] Mao clearly notes this central aspect of a revolutionary struggle, stating: "Because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation."[13] And, as General Vo Nguyen Giap, the highly capable military commander of the Viet Minh claimed, "Without the people we have no information … They hide us, protect us and tend [to] our wounded."[14] Similarly, the *U.S. Counterinsurgency Field Manual* notes, that, "in the end, victory comes in large measure, by convincing the populace that their life will be better under the HN [Host Nation] government [that is the counterinsurgent's forces] than under an insurgent regime."[15]

Revolutionary War is Predominantly Political in Nature, not Military

With the popular sympathy of the people as the key to victory in revolutionary warfare, this type of struggle takes on an enduring and peculiar admixture of political activity in relation to military operations. General Sir Gerald Templer arithmetically illustrated this point during his tenure as High Commissioner of Malaya from 1952-1954, when he stated: "The

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[12] This point is noted by David Galula in *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice* (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), p. 4.

[13] Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), p. 44.

[14] Vo Nguyen Giap, cite in, Max Boot, *The Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power* (New York: Basic Books, 2003), p. 297.

[15] *The U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 45.

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 the country behind us."[16] Or, as General Hubert Lyautey argued of the counterinsurgency operations in French Morocco: "This country ought not to be handled with force alone. The rational method—the only one, the proper one … is the constant interplay of force with politics."[17] Similarly, speaking for insurgency, Mao noted in *Guerrilla Warfare*, that "without a political goal, guerrilla warfare [revolutionary war] must fail, as it must if its political objectives do not coincide with the aspirations of the people and their sympathy, cooperation, and assistance cannot be gained."[18] Later, in his lectures *On Protracted War*, Mao refined this point by stating: "This question of the political mobilization of the army and the people is indeed of the greatest importance. … There are, of course, many other conditions indispensable to victory, but political mobilization is the most fundamental."[19] Assiduous politic activity is, therefore, crucial for both sides in winning the support of the population.

The Insurgent Possesses the Strategic Initiative

It is from this fundamental political aspect of revolutionary warfare that an initial and foundational contrast between the position of the insurgent and the counterinsurgent emerges. Careful insurgencies will, as a general rule, have the political support of the population, both actively and inactively, once they emerge. If an insurrection does not hold this popular sympathy, then its actions ought to be viewed as brigandage and not insurgenc.y, Only when the population supports the insurgent's political cause can it long endure against the counterinsurgent's superior forces. As Mao noted of the indispensible relationship between the population and the insurgent, "the former may be likened to water and the latter to the fish

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[16] General Sir Gerald Templer, cited in, Simon C. Smith, "General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence, and Propaganda," *Intelligence and National Security* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): p. 65.

[17] Hubert Lyautey, cited in, Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: BackinPrint.com, 2002), p. 156.

[18] Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare* trans., Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), p. 43. Guerrilla warfare and revolutionary war are different. Despite this difference, Mao's meaning in his work *On Guerrilla Warfare* is best understood as a consideration of the use of guerrilla tactics within a revolutionary war and not a discussion, for example, of the use of guerrilla warfare as an auxiliary of a conventional struggle.

[19] Mao Tse-tung, *On Protracted War* (Honolulu: The University of the Pacific Press, 2001), p. 107.

who inhabit it. … It is only undisciplined [insurgent] troops who make the people their enemies and who, like the fish out of its native element, cannot live."[20]

In the presence of this political support, the insurgency obtains a clear advantage. It functionally retains the strategic initiative, which, as Lieutenant Colonel David Galula observed, entails that "the insurgent alone can initiate conflict (which is not to say that he is necessarily the first to use force)."[21] Robert Taber agrees: "The guerrilla has the initiative; it is he who begins the war, and he who decides when and where to strike. His military opponent must wait, and while waiting, he must be on guard *everywhere*."[22] With the counterinsurgency placed on guard everywhere, it is subject, as Sun Tzu has written, to a persistent conundrum, for if one "prepares everywhere he will be weak everywhere."[23] Thus placed onto the defensive, the counterinsurgent is often initially compelled to stay at rest, passively "awaiting the blow."[24]

Revolutionary Wars are predominantly Waged along Interior, rather than Exterior, Lines of Engagements[25]

The counterinsurgent's defensive role and materiel superiority entails a responsibility for security everywhere. The *U.S. Counterinsurgency Field Manual* notes, "insurgents succeed by sowing chaos and disorder anywhere; the government fails unless it maintains a degree of order everywhere."[26] The military implications of this runs counter to the positioning of opposing armies in set-piece conventional war, where operations are largely conducted on the basis of *exterior lines* of engagements. Instead, small wars for revolutionary purposes lack the territoriality of conventional struggles. As Mao noted: "There are … readily apparent differences [between the counterinsurgent and the insurgent] … in conception of the terms 'front' and 'rear.'"[27] Because we can assume, at least initially, that the insurgent holds both the

[20] Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), p. 93.

[21] David Galula, *Counterinsurgency: Theory and Practice* (London: Praeger Security International, 2006), p. 3.

[22] Robert Taber, *War of the Flea: The Classic Study of Guerrilla Warfare* (Washington: Potomac Books, 2002), p. 11.

[23] Sun Tzu, *The Art of War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 98.

[24] Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 357.

[25] For my particular conception of the issue of interior and exterior lines, I am relying upon Baron Antoine-Henri Jomini's early conception. See Baron De Jomini, *The Art of War* (Radford: Wilder Publications, 2008), pp. 54-117.

[26] *The U.S. Army Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 4.

[27] Mao Tse-tung, *On Guerrilla Warfare*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 2005), p. 51.

support of the population as well as the strategic initiative, he is "in the position of operating on *interior lines*. All this is due to the fact that the enemy is strong while we are weak."[28]

War's Reactive Nature

These principles depict two clearly contending strategic contexts. The counterinsurgency is stronger and placed into a dominant role and the insurgency is weaker and certainly exists in a more tenuous material position. This would seem to indicate that a counterinsurgency could easily bend its adversary to its will. Yet, as Carl Von Clausewitz, has noted: "In war, the will is directed at an animate object that *reacts*."[29] Each side must always contend with the simple truth: "it is axiomatic in military strategy that one can never factor out the enemy."[30] Chief of the German General Staff, Helmut Von Moltke, once famously stated: "No plan of operations can look with any certainty beyond the first meeting with the major forces of the enemy. … All consecutive acts of war are, therefore, not executions of a premeditated plan, but spontaneous actions, directed by military tact."[31] The counterinsurgency's greater material position can not be borne directly down upon their enemies, as the latter will react and move away from most direct confrontations with this vast strength.

Crucially, then, the issue remains: What is the role of time in these types of wars? From the two contending strategic positions, and given the constant presence of a reactive and adaptable opponent, what can be said of why time works against the counterinsurgents?

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[28] Mao Tse-tung, *On Protracted War* (Honolulu: The University of the Pacific Press, 2001), p. 65. Emphasis added.
[29] Carl Von Clausewitz, cited in, Harry G. Summers Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1995), p. 46.
[30] Harry G. Summers, Jr., *On Strategy: A Critical Analysis of the Vietnam War* (New York: Presidio Press, 1955), p. 1.
[31] Helmut Von Moltke, cited in, Max Boot, *War Made New: Weapons Warriors, and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Gotham Books, 2007), p. 126.

A Case Study: The British Efforts in Malaya, 1948-1954: The Historical Context and the Coming of the Emergency

After the embarrassing British defeat in Malaya at the hands of the Japanese Imperial Army in the early stages of World War II, the political dynamics on that small peninsula were forever changed. When, after a few years of Japanese occupation and internal struggle, the British once again returned to Malaya, the political situation was so drastically altered that it would have been almost unrecognizable to the previous colonial administrators.

Internal strife and revolutionary ideologies had gripped the local Chinese population, 34 per cent of the total Malayan demography. This situation had been engendered throughout the course of the war against the Japanese. During the years of the war, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA), under the political leadership of the Malayan Communist Party, had struggled against the occupation. Yet, despite the presence of real partisan resistance against the Japanese occupiers, the Communist guerrillas, remaining true to the military principles of Maoist protracted warfare, did not rigorously attempt to oust the new occupiers. Indeed, the total casualty rate of the Japanese army, directly attributable to the actions of the MPAJA, did not exceed a few hundred during the entire three years and eight months of the occupation.[32] Initiating, instead, a classic dual-pronged insurgent strategy of political indoctrination and the removal of political opposition, the Malayan Communist Party was responsible for the execution of 2,542 "traitors" of Malayan, Indian, and Chinese ethnicity.[33] By the end of 1945, this gradual strategy of protracted warfare had little impact on the defeat of the Japanese, whose surrender came about suddenly as a result of the American nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima.

Despite the seemingly lackadaisical war efforts of the Communist guerrillas, their leadership's clear political acumen recognized the advantageous situation which was presented to them by the defeat of the Japanese. Thus, as word of the Japanese surrender spread, the Malayan Communist Party did not used the news of Japan's defeat to their potential partisan advantage. As Richard Broome, a veteran of the British Force 136 that had remained behind to train and equip the Malayan partisans and act as liaisons with the Allied commanders in the Pacific, noted: "The Chinese Communists immediately spread the rumor

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[32] Lucian W. Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 69.
[33] Ibid.

that they were responsible for the whole victory [over the Japanese]."[34] In many regions, the claims surrounding the origins of the victory were accepted at face value and the Malayan Communist Party was welcomed out of the receding jungle depths as civic heroes.[35]

As the Japanese military units began to withdraw from villages and towns across Malaya, the guerrilla units of the MPAJA moved swiftly to fill the power vacuum. Mirroring the conduct of the war before the Japanese surrender, the MPAJA units often ignored the presence of Japanese soldiers and moved to control the captured towns' military supply dumps, police stations, and transport vehicles.[36] The acquisition of these supplies, particularly motorized transportation, had a positive effect on the speed with which the MPAJA could move into new regions, while simultaneously consolidating their control over other areas where they retained a solid power base. In many towns and villages, the Malayan Communist Party began to establish a shadow hierarchy of 'people's committees' which would come to parallel the official political structure that was gradually reinstated. Indeed, within a few weeks of the Japanese surrender, it was estimated that some 70 per cent of rural towns were under this nascent form of dual political control.[37] In the hamlets and villages of Johore province, for example, Major H.H. Wright of Force 136 was to report that the people's committees "were all-powerful in those small towns."[38]

Once the Malayan Communist Party had obtained effective, if unofficial, political control, the strained ethnic tensions that had been exacerbated, by both the collapse of the former social order and the divisions and mistrust fostered by the Japanese occupation, quickly flared. The resulting violence was profound, with Malayan Communist Party members attacking Malays and Indians, and regional Malays. Often uniting followers under the banner of Islam, they also attacked ethnic Chinese. "[M]uch of the killing was merely the settling of old scores … In some areas it began to develop into ethnic war."[39] For, during the

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[34] Richard Broom, cited in, John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons form Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 62.

[35] Lucian W. Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), pp. 69-70.

[36] Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), pp. 38-39.

[37] Ibid.

[38] H.H. Wright, cited in, Ibid., p. 39.

[39] Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 42.

preceding years of Japanese administration, the previously effective system of economic and political management had been torn asunder; and, as a result of these changed socio-economic circumstances, more than 400,000 ethnic Chinese where internally displaced.[40] This great tide of humanity swirled about until its contents came to rest in numerous and densely populated 'squatter communities', ringing Malaya's expansive jungles. There was, moreover, a profound natural connection that emerged between the Malayan Communist Party and these squatter communities. The ethnic divisions that had tugged at the stability of the peninsula were also to have an effect on the constitution of the Communist Party's membership, creating a situation wherein roughly 90[41] to 95[42] per cent of the Party was ethnically Chinese.

The sentiment of armed resistance to imperial power was then disseminated to Asian Communist Parties at the international Calcutta Youth Conference in February of 1948. While the conference did not explicitly call for armed resistance and the use of violence, "its mood was one of extreme belligerence towards colonial rule."[43] Lee Soong, the Malayan Communist Party representative at the Calcutta Conference, did not return to Malaya until March 22nd, 1948, the day following the conclusion of the Fourth Plenary Session of the Malayan Communist Party. Prior to his return, there had already been calls for limited armed struggle, and the beginning of the ideological preparation that is necessary for the conduct of successful insurgency.[44] It was likely, however, that the belligerent sentiment expounded at the Calcutta conference was to provide tacit political support to the Malayan Communist Party's desired course towards insurrection. Thus, the Fifth Plenary Session of the Central Committee, which took place in Singapore on May 10th, 1948, reiterated the tendency towards the increased use of violence, calling for the adoption of "a graduated political struggle."[45]

Following these plenary sessions, the Communists began to organize guerrilla units and then initiated an active series of terrorist actions against colonial targets. In early June of 1948, for example, riots were instigated by 200 Party members, resulting in 7 deaths and 10

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[40] Richard Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1996), p. 21.

[41] Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Backinprint.com, 2002), p. 564.

[42] John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 49.

[43] Ibid., p. 46.

[44] Ibid., pp. 50-51.

[45] Ibid., p. 56.

injuries.[46] As the British Commissioner-General, Malcolm MacDonald, subsequently stated on June 6th, the Communists were "making a desperate effort to impose the rule of the knife and gun in plantations, mines and factories."[47] Finally, after a further series of attacks and a clearly escalating spiral of violence, terrorism, and armed resistance, the British High Commissioner of Malaya, Sir Edward Gent, declared a state of emergency on June 17th, 1948.

High Commissioner Sir Henry Gurney and the Role of Time

The tenure of Sir Edward Gent as High Commissioner was to be quite short lived. Gent actively called for large-scale tactical operations, which exacerbated the conduct of the war by compelling their reactive adversary to adopt an operational stratagem of "relative dispersal." As one communist party document noted:

> Heavy concentrations of our forces will put us in a disadvantageous position for withdrawal in the face of a large scale enemy assault. Because of this we must utilize the tactics of "Relative Dispersion," to be adopted by all units in our army. The aim of these tactics is to enable our Army to concentrate and to disperse swiftly and smoothly.[48]

Although Gent's proposed large battalion tactical work was much in line with the military sentiment in the Imperial Staff Office, the lack of demonstrable results and the persistence of a deteriorating situation resulted in Sir Gent's recall to London.[49] On July 4th, 1948, on-route to the British Isles, the airplane carrying Sir Edward Gent crashed, killing everyone onboard.

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[46] Richard Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1966), p. 35.

[47] Lucian W. Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 88.

[48] Text in Gene Z. Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya* (New York: Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954), pp. 117-130, cited in, John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 60.

[49] John Nagl, *Learning to Eat soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 67.

Gent's replacement as High Commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, assumed his new duties on October 8th, 1948. While Gurney did not redress the military side of the war, he was, nevertheless, well attuned to some aspects of counterinsurgency which had escaped his predecessor. Bound by the tactical paradox of diminishing returns for a preponderance of effort, Gurney never had any personal doubts as to the ultimate ability of large-scale battalions to militarily defeat the incessantly harassed and increasingly exhausted guerrillas. Yet, the actual conduct of a counterinsurgency is highly sensitive to the inexorable passage of time. Extended periods spent in pursuit of a largely absent enemy can often result in a pervasive and general apathy amongst both the local population as well as the home population towards the political objectives of the counterinsurgency. Politically, and in comparison to indigenous insurgents, external counterinsurgents often cannot maintain the same temporal extent of political commitment, necessary to wage successful revolutionary wars. The clearest and most reasonable justification for these divergent political circumstances can be explained as a simple difference in territory and political locality. Local insurgents cannot easily leave the area of combat, and so, must either fight or surrender. External counterinsurgencies, in contrast, can always elect to withdrawal their forces and return to their homes. On October 25, 1948, Gurney reflected on this vexing dynamic of counterinsurgency operations in an inward telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Mr. Creech Jones.

> Since my arrival, I have been giving most careful consideration to [the] question [of] whether measures being taken to meet [the] terrorist situation are adequate. … It is true that their [the guerrillas'] destruction is only a matter of time but *it is time that matters*. It is vitally important that we should prevent [the] situation [from] dragging on which we cannot afford financially on in any other way.[50]

Gurney recognized the emergence of a dangerous and paradoxical situation wherein a protracted struggle would come to work against the materielly dominant party. This is, of course, an inversion of the typical principle of attrition within conventional wars as it almost always favours the stronger side.

Within this context, the situation in Malaya continued to deteriorate, as Gurney later noted on March 5th, 1949: "there are constant demands for more troops to be sent. The situation

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[50] CO 717/167/52849/2/1948, ff 108-110 [Squatters] 25 Oct 1948: inward telegram no 1326 from Sir H Gurney to Mr. Creech Jones on measure to deal with alien Chinese squatters. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 77. Emphasis added.

would be helped by a few spectacular successes and more active collaboration of the Chinese community; otherwise it looks as if we are faced with *a long struggle of attrition*."[51] This struggle presented two simple dangers. First, the British population would likely find such a struggle politically unacceptable and economically unsustainable, as their preponderance of effort did not offset nor redress the creation of a tenuous and increasingly uncertain situation in Malaya despite its great costs. The second difficulty involved the perception and sentiment of the local population. As a Malayan member of the Legislative Council, Inche Nasaruddin, stated on September 20th, 1951, the danger was that:

> far from producing the opposite effect [that is, a sense of security], the number of troops pouring into this country has been creating a feeling of suspicion on the part of the masses. They think—and are probably justified in thinking—that the signal for a bloodthirsty war is what they are seeing.[52]

Both of these political problems speak only to outcomes, however. Thus, they cannot serve as an explanation for why a weaker opponent was, within the context of this small war, fought for a revolutionary purpose, able to outlast the materiel strength of their adversary. They speak only to the role of time in a political sense. Under the broad auspices of these two political problems, there operated a general interactive dynamic which comes to best explain why time, quite paradoxically, played against the stronger party, why time, in a material sense, works against the counterinsurgency. This was one of the foremost issues that Gurney faced and, yet, he had failed during the course of his ruminations to properly identify this, the ultimate crux of the matter. Thus, the cause of this paradoxical inversion of the principle of attrition went somewhat unaddressed by Gurney's actions as High Commissioner.

Why Time Works against the Materially Stronger

Placed into a position of dominance, a counterinsurgency is often compelled by the political aspects of its mission to expend an inordinate amount of resources to maintain that

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[51] CAB 129/33/1, CP (49)52 [Situation in Malaya and Hong Kong] 5 Mar 1949: Cabinet memorandum by Mr. Creech Jones. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 119. Emphasis added.

[52] Inche Nasaruddin, cited in, Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya: 1948-1960* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1975), p. 297.

control, be it through the provision of security or, crucially, through the supply of public goods. An insurgency, in contrast, can actually come to depend upon the counterinsurgent's very provision of these public goods to satisfy many of their own material needs. Thus, distributive food programs, for example, naively and ideally intended to aid the local population, come to cost the counterinsurgency much monetary and material resources and can often work at cross purposes, particularly as the insurgency will likely appropriate many of these goods for their own efforts. Thus, a counterinsurgency, blindly ensconced within its pursuit of the 'hearts and minds' of the local population, will, through the provision of public goods, come to provide much of the material support upon which its enemy effectively depends. Indeed, the greater the disparity in material between a counterinsurgency and an insurgency, the greater the disproportionate effect. A very strong counterinsurgency can, with exceedingly good graces, provide a lot of public goods to a local population and a very weak insurgency can easily employ this discrepancy in position to its own advantage and to its great effective gain. Moreover, it is the latter's very weakness that accounts for why this exploitation becomes possible. A weaker insurgency does not require many goods for the survival of its organization, and can easily retain a high degree of mobility that is conveyed by the relative impunity of this position. It can, therefore, drain off extra resources to fuel the growth of both its general insurrection and to promote the actual development of its organization. Thus, a careful insurgency will be employing in its war efforts many resources that would not, in the absence of a stronger opponent, have been readily available.

This, then, forms the basic pattern of the inverted principle of attrition in the context of small wars that are fought for revolutionary purposes. Many of the resources that are expended by a counterinsurgency to support the local population actually come to serve and maintain their adversaries. The simplest analogy of this pattern would be an image of a man sitting in a chair, holding the seat in both hand and attempting to lift himself. His increasing efforts would fail; and the more strength he brought to bear at any given moment the greater the fatigue and, effectively, the greater the moral decline that would result. The greater a counterinsurgency's material position, therefore, the more they can expend without reducing their actual strength, but the more they expend the greater the flagging of their tenuous moral.

Ultimately, given the presumption that an insurgency will initially hold the support of the local population, the more material that is expended in this fashion the greater the insurgency often becomes, for, as was the case in the earlier years in Malaya, the counterinsurgency essentially comes to be the material guarantor of the very insurrection

which confronts them. The frequent end of this scenario is either a long and protracted war that favours the insurgency because of the cursory political reasons and aspects of time that were previously mentioned, or, when the relative difference in material means between an insurgency and a counterinsurgency is drastically lessened, the war comes to takes on conventional characteristics as the parties achieve a relative equality in their overall military positions.

The Indirect Approach: Operational Methods to Separate 'the Fish from the Water'

Yet, even without explicitly recognizing the central dynamic which explained why time, in a material sense, worked against him, Gurney, nevertheless, saw that the British efforts were faced with this likely scenario of a battle of attrition that would have dammed the counterinsurgency's efforts. Gurney's solution was to employ an indirect method: to surreptitiously strangle the lifeblood of the Malayan Communist Party by targeting those who supported them. To do this, it was necessary to target and disrupt the Min Yuen, People's Movement, which controlled the political shadow hierarchies in the towns and villages across Malaya, which had emerged in the few months and years following the defeat of the Japanese, because, as Lucian Pye noted, the Min Yuen "was … a [supportive] civilian organization" for the embattled Communist guerrillas.[53]

Indeed, by the later months of 1948, the ethnic location of the Communist insurgency had been clearly recognized, as had the fact that the illicit squatter communities that ringed the jungle fringes were the singular source of information, food, and security for the somewhat beleaguered insurgents. As Gurney noted, in October of 1948:

> All my advisers are in unanimous agreement that we must make an immediate
> and serious attempt to deal with alien Chinese squatters who are providing bases
> from which bandits operate and are helping them, in some cases under duress and

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[53] Lucian Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 90.

in many others willingly with food, arms, money and other means of resistance to our forces. *These people are a positive and formidable menace to security*.[54]

Certainly, the Chinese were not always willingly complicit with the Communist bandits; indeed, it was estimated at the time that it was quite probable that upwards of 90 per cent of the ethnic group "only wanted peace."[55] In many of the Malayan provinces, however, the Chinese mine and plantation owners were keenly aware of the general inability of the government forces to provide for their security, a perception which had resulted from the absence of sufficient tactical contacts and the limited static defences of their villages and towns. They were, therefore, willing to admit quite openly to government officials that they had routinely provided as much as $10,000 a month to the Communist insurgents because of the conspicuous danger of punitive measures such as kidnapping and execution.[56] Moreover, "the [very] need of the Min Yuen to apply coercion to its 'sympathizers' in order to obtain even the minimum supplies necessary for the survival of those in the jungle was itself a major factor in increasing terrorism."[57]

In response to these issues, Gurney expanded the legal boundaries of the Emergency Regulations, adding Regulation 17C, which provided for the deportation of detainees; Regulation 17D, which provided the government with the right to employ collective punishment; and Regulations 17E and F, which allowed for the compulsory resettlement of those select individuals or whole villages that were thought to be a threat to the security and stability of the Peninsula.[58] The extent to which these new Regulations were implemented was rather profound. On December 20th, 1948, for example, Gurney presented his objectives in relation to the use of Regulation 17C:

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[54] CO 717/167/52849/2/1948, ff 108-110 [Squatters] 25 Oct 1948: inward telegram no 1326 from Sir H Gurney to Mr. Creech Jones on measure to deal with alien Chinese squatters. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 78. Emphasis added.

[55] CO 537/4242, no. 1 [Enlisting Chinese Support and Plans for a Malayan Chinese Association] 19 Dec 1948: inward telegram no 1636 from Sir H Gurney to Mr. Creech Jones. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 88.

[56] CO 717/167/52849/2/1948, ff 108-110 [Squatters] 25 Oct 1948: Inward telegram no 1326 from Sir H Gurney to Mr. Creech Jones on measure to deal with alien Chinese squatters. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 79.

[57] Lucian Pye, *Guerrilla Communism in Malaya: its Social and Political Meaning* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956), p. 98.

[58] John Nagl, *Learning to Eat soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 66.

We are now aiming at banishing and repatriating Chinese at a total rate of two thousand a month including dependants. The only estimate I have given officially for this is five thousand over the next six months and I should prefer not to depart from this official forecast at present. We are hoping, however, at least to double this figure.[59]

Operationally, this viewpoint was also codified through the work of the British Director of Operations, Lieutenant General Harold Briggs. With a long Regimental history in South East Asia, jungle combat experience from the Burma campaign, and a distinct understanding of the preview of the Director of Operations as more than the mere coordination and implementation of military measures, Briggs was extraordinarily suited to the position.[60] He was also attuned to the need for defensive security of the local population and the indirect operational approach, which were, in the end, left perfectly recognized and yet unresolved by High Commissioner Gurney. As Briggs quite properly noted of the range of benefits and limitations which the provision of defensive security to the local population entailed:

> The problem of clearing Communist banditry from Malaya was similar to that of eradicating malaria from a country. Flit guns and mosquito nets, in the form of military and the police, though giving some very local security if continuously maintained, effected no permanent cure.[61]

Briggs further illustrated a clear knowledge of the role of indirect political operations in consolidating the offensive actions of the military and the defensive actions of the police:

> [The obtainment of] such a permanent cure entails the closing of all breeding areas. In this case the breeding areas of the Communists were the isolated squatter areas. … Once these were concentrated there might be some chance of controlling the Communist cells therein.[62]

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[59] CO 537/3758, no 25 [Enlisting Chinese Support] 20 Dec 1948: Letter from Sir H Gurney to Sir T Lloyd on the problems and methods of winning the Chinese support. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 89.

[60] John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 81.

[61] Ibid., 75.

[62] Ibid.

To implement this remedy for the great scourge of Communism, Briggs developed the Federation Plan for the Elimination of the Communist Organization and Armed Forces in Malaya, or, as it was soon to be become known, the Briggs Plan.

Drafted and then approved by the High Commissioner on May 24th, 1950, the Briggs Plan was considered and debated by the British Cabinet's Malayan Committee a little over a month and a half later, on the 17th of July. As Briggs was to note within the text of the actual plan, the central knot within which all threads were bound was the symbiotic relationship between the Communist guerrillas and the Chinese squatter populations. "The Malayan Communist Party" wrote Briggs, "… rely very largely for food, money, information and propaganda on the Min Yuen … in the populated areas, particularly where Chinese predominate."[63] He further noted: "The Min Yuen is able to exist and function in populated areas mainly because the population as a whole lacks confidence in the ability of the forces of law and order to protect them against gangster Communist extortion and terrorism."[64] Unless the symbiotic link between the people and the insurgents was severed, time, in a material sense, would continue to work against the stronger British force and favour the weaker insurgency. Effectively, the people where the insurgents logistical supply lines, most food, development aid, and, potentially, any material goods that were provided to the local people could then become potential resources for the insurgency.

Calling for the employing of a systematic south to north approach, Briggs had envisioned a slow and yet purposeful procession throughout the country. The offensive tactical innovations of the British military would work in conjunction with indirect political operations such as squatter relocation and food control, which followed from Gurney's identification of these communities as the source of material supply for the Communist guerrillas. Ultimately, these 'New Villages' would be supported by an emphasis on static defences and the provision of local security, while civil-administration was constructed from the ground up. That is, the Briggs Plan envisioned quite well the functional combination of the offensive, the defensive, and the indirect civil aspect of proper counterinsurgency campaigning; all employed in fundamental conjunction so as to overcome the distinct and binding paradoxes of this style of conflict.

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[63] CAB 21/1681, MAL C(50)23, Appendix [Federation plan for the elimination of the communist organization and armed forces in Malaya] (the Briggs plan) 24 May 1950: Report by COS for Cabinet Malaya Committee. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 216.

[64] Ibid.

Within the Briggs Plan, each aspect of the counterinsurgency effort was to interact with the other components. The desired and effective result was the limitation of the most likely deficiencies within the other methods with each separate element's own potential strengths. By combining the increasingly effective military and security methods with the indirect political aspects espoused by the High Commissioner, the Briggs Plan focused clearly upon the central knot of the issue that is present in all small wars that are fought for revolutionary purposes, the central political aspect, which involves the imposition of a regime that is amenable to one's interests. As General Clutterbuck later noted:

> In his first directive, Briggs put his finger on what this war is really about—a competition in government. He aimed not only to resettle the squatters but to give them a standard of local government and a degree of prosperity that they would not wish to exchange for the barren austerity of life under the Communists' parallel hierarchy; in other words, to give them something to lose.[65]

The employed method to accomplish this political task was both systematic and simple. As the Briggs Plan outlined:

> Broadly the intention is to clear the country step by step, from South to North, by:—
>
> a) domination of the populated areas and building up a feeling of complete security in them, with the object of obtaining a steady and increasing flow of information from all sources;
>
> b) Breaking up the Min Yuen within the populated areas;
>
> c) Thereby isolating the bandits from their food and information supply organization in the populated areas;

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[65] Richard Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger Security International, 1966), p. 57.

And finally destroying the bandits by forcing them to attack us on our own ground.[66]

Yet, quite fortuitously for the British counterinsurgency, Sir Henry Gurney, the High Commissioner, was killed in an ambush on October 6th, 1951. Shortly thereafter, Lieutenant General Briggs retired as Director of Operations. This situation provided an opportunity to redress a central issue in the counterinsurgency effort. The presence of two high ranking officials, both directing a type of war that blended civil administration and war fighting to a remarkable extent, confused orders, jurisdictions, and the execution of the counterinsurgency. As one Cabinet summary, dated March 9th, 1951, indicated:

> Sir Henry Gurney and General Briggs were [now] working well together on […
> the Federal War Council] … the position had not always been so satisfactory. It
> was not until his last visit to London that Sir Henry Gurney had [even] sat on the
> War Council. Until that time he had tended to be somewhat divorced from the
> operational side of the emergency, which he had left to General Briggs, and to
> concentrate rather on economic and social questions and on political reforms.[67]

And, as the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton, further noted on December 21st, 1951:

> War is a matter of violence; the art of administration is a matter of reflection and
> check and counter-check. These two widely different activities have to be geared
> so that they move in concert and express themselves in immediate impact upon
> the enemy.[68]

The necessity of a unity of command was achieved the next year with the appointment of General Sir Gerald Templer to the newly combined office of High Commissioner and Director of Operations.

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[66] CAB 21/1681, MAL C(50)23, Appendix [Federation plan for the elimination of the communist organization and armed forces in Malaya] (the Briggs plan) 24 May 1950: Report by COS for Cabinet Malaya Committee. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection*, *1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 217.

[67] PREM 8/1406/2, GEN 345/7 [Briggs Plan] 9 Mar 1951: Cabinet Office summary of a further meeting at 10 Downing Street on 8 Mar called by Mr. Attlee to consider the Plan's slow progress. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection*, *1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 281.

[68] CAB 129/48, C(51)59 [Malaya] 21 Dec 1951: Cabinet memorandum by Mr. Lyttelton. Appendices I-XV. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection*, *1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 334.

General Sir Gerald Templer: Resettlement, Food Control, and the Effective use of Time

In early February, 1952, General Sir Gerald Templer assumed the newly amalgamated position of Director of Operations and High Commissioner. Templer emerged, in many ways, as the personification of the increasing recognition amongst the British counterinsurgency that a unity of command was essential to properly direct the two divergent, and yet interdependent, aspects of counterinsurgency: war fighting and civil administration. As one Cabinet memorandum states of the perceived difficulties: "The idea of having, in effect, two heads at the summit, one for military operations and the other for civil administration, in a condition of affairs that differs from both war and peace, must inevitably lead either to conflict between the authorities or to long drawn-out discussions to reach an accommodation and compromise between two points of view."[69] As the Colonial Secretary, Oliver Lyttelton, noted in an inward telegram to Prime Minister Churchill: "This [new] High Commissioner would assume [the] entire responsibility for both military operations and civil administration. He would be called the High Commissioner and Director of Operations."[70]

Templer has, in the years that followed his tenure as High Commissioner, been the subject of both wild praise and despondent admonishment. The context of Templer's assumption of control of the British counterinsurgency effort was characterized by the very real danger of, at best, a tendency towards military stalemate between the government forces and the guerrilla communists, which would have politically favoured the insurgency; and, at worst, the clear possibility of failure. Thus, as John Cloake argues, Templer took "a difficult, deteriorating situation, checked it, and turned it around."[71] Yet there is also historical evidence

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[69] CAB 129/48, C(51)59 [Malaya] 21 Dec 1951: Cabinet memorandum by Mr. Lyttelton. Appendices I-XV. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection*, *1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 257.

[70] PREM 11/639, f 51 [Reorganization of Malayan government] 8 Dec 1951: Inward telegram no 1214 from Mr. Lyttelton to Mr. Churchill. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection*, *1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 317.

[71] John Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya* (London: Harrap, 1985), p. 326.

to suggest that Templer actually "arrived in February of 1952 with the turning tide, but before it was obvious this was in fact what it was."[72]

As with most things, the truth of the matter is likely somewhere in the middle. As this final section will illustrate, Templer arrived after most operational plans were already in effect and gradually producing results. But, gradual progress is insufficient within the context of such wars, where time, in a political sense, favours your adversary, and where, in a material sense, your own actions eliminate the final possibility of a military resolution. The virtue of Sir Gerald Templer, then, was found in his energy and the manner in which he expedited the process.[73] Materielly, by early 1951, before Templer's arrival, the British had begun to obtain a true preponderance in force over the guerrillas. The police force had expanded drastically, with its ranks expanding to 1,918 officers and 19,704 Regulars and 38,466 Special Constables.[74] By 1952, there was also some 23 infantry Battalions amounting to 30,000 armed troops, with 23,000 being combat ready.[75] Britain had also brought its considerable materiel advantage to bear in the skies: where the counterinsurgent forces routinely employed "two Beaufighter light bomber squadrons, two spitfire squadrons, three Dakota (DC-3) squadrons, one Mosquito photoreconnaissance squadron, three squadrons of Sunderland flying boats, and one flight of Auster light liaison/observation aircraft."[76] Yet, in small wars that are fought for revolutionary purposes, "superior technology and resources played a shadow second to the human performance in a war […the nature of which] blended civil and military factors to an almost inexplicable degree."[77]

The causes of the increased alacrity of operations, then, were largely an outgrowth of Templer's energetic personality and the manner in which he "instinctively understood that

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[72] Karl Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya: The Historiography of the Malayan Emergency," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 30, no. 1 (March 1999): p. 112.

[73] Kumar Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: the Impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952-1954)" *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (February 2001): pp. 79-92.

[74] CAB 129/48, C(51)59 [Malaya] 21 Dec 1951: Cabinet memorandum by Mr. Lyttelton. Appendices I-XV. Reprinted in ed. A.J. Stockwell, *British Document on the End of Empire: Malaya*, vol. 2 *The Communist Insurrection, 1948-1953* (London: HMSO, 1995), p. 327.

[75] Richard Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of British Strategy in Malaya 1948-1960," in eds., Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2008), p. 114.

[76] James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, *Air Power in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists* (Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2003), p. 189.

[77] Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Backinprint.com, 2002), p. 572.

high levels of confidence bred salutary operational consequences."[78] The main areas of political and civil operations that were implemented, which also redressed the negative impact of time, in a material sense, against the stronger power, were resettlement and food denial. These two features added a final element to the overall military campaign and fully addressed one of the central paradoxes of this type of war. Time comes in to play against the dominant power because the counterinsurgent's provision of public goods comes to materially support the insurgency. With Templer's arrival, the death knell for the Malayan Communist party had been sounded.

Resettlement

As High Commissioner Gurney had clearly identified, the Chinese squatter population was a formidable source of insecurity, and, ultimately, the life blood and logistical supply line of the Communist guerrillas, operating out of the jungle. During the tenure of Gurney and Briggs, the resettlement of the squatter population was undertaken with the explicit purpose of stopping the provision of supply to the guerrillas by the Min Yuen, as this connection was the crucial political, economic, and material infrastructure that needed to be severed if the insurrection was to be defeated.[79] As Robert B. Asprey has noted:

> So long as guerrillas controlled large segments of the Chinese 'squatter' population, police and troops would be deprived of intelligence concerning communist village infrastructure and guerrilla movements; conversely, guerrillas would continue to receive intelligence regarding police and military movements.[80]

Indeed, through the massive resettlement program called for in the Briggs Plan, the closing off of this essential tap was precisely what began to occur. By the end of 1949, "perhaps

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[78] Kumar Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: the Impact of Sir Gerald Templer (1952-1954)," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (February 2001): p. 80.

[79] Paul Melshen, "Mapping Out a Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan: Critical Considerations in Counterinsurgency Campaigning," *Small War and Insurgencies* 18, no. 4 (December 2007): p. 670.

[80] Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Backinprint.com, 2002), p. 568.

fewer than 5,000 Chinese" had been resettled.[81] Yet, as Lieutenant Colonel John Nagl noted, "by the end of 1951 some 400,000 squatters had been resettled in over four hundred 'New Villages'".[82] The effect of this resettlement on the Communist organization was profound:

> for the guerrilla it meant that the tide was going out; that he could no longer move among the people as the fish moves through the water; and that when he was now forced to go close inshore he not only gave away his position but ran the risk of being caught in the shallows.[83]

Templer's additions to this grand procedure were in the areas of security provision and development, but, more fundamentally, it was about the obtainment of restriction and control over the population. First, in terms of the provision of security, he moved to delay the inhabitation of all 'New Villages' until such time as a local police garrison had been setup and was adequately functioning. His purpose was to prevent the Min Yuen from simply moving along with the resettled squatters and, thereby, reestablishing its parallel shadow hierarchies within the new villages and towns.[84] This was particularly necessary, as the provision of local security allowed for the re-inversion of the principle of time back upon the embattled insurgents, prompting their rash action and the possibility of military decision. Too hasty a relocation, then, would have resulted in a net-decrease in perceptions of security as the insurgents fought against unprepared government forces to retain their access to the populace.

The second addition which Templer made to the resettlement program was in the area of development and civil administration. Essentially, he formulated "a checklist for evaluating [...the squatter's] quality of life." [85] These criteria included the provision of adequate agricultural land, the right to property titles for the inhabitants of the 'New Villages', a uniform level of hygiene and sanitation, as well as teachers and the construction of local

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[81] Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 490.

[82] John Nagl, *Learning to Eat soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 75.

[83] Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya: 1948-1960* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1975),p. 295.

[84] Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Backinprint.com, 2002), pp. 570-571.

[85] Kumar Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya: The Impact of Sir Gerald Templer," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies* 32, no. 1 (February 2001):pp. 87-88.

schools.[86] This addition struck to the center of the issue. The relocated squatters needed to be shown a bright and acceptable vision of a contending political narrative and governmental structure, so as to prevent a potential mass uprising.

For their part, the Communist's strategic response to this program was one of calculated passivity to the overall processes of relocation. The assumption was that the removal of the squatters aided the insurgent's cause by illustrating government brutality and coercion. Certainly, at times, the counterinsurgent forces played into this typecast. For example, one British District Officer, C.E. Howe, in regard to the difficulty of tracking Chinese squatters and the salutary value of resettlement, stated: "the Japs [*sic*] put barbed wire around Titi and Pentang, garrisoned these towns with troops and made all Chinese of the locality live within the defended areas … could we not try the same idea?"[87] The conjuration of vivid images of the Japanese occupation made the local population highly receptive to the Communist's subsequent propaganda campaign, as rumors of concentration camps affecting mass extermination and detention proliferated.[88] As one Communist Party Member, Liew Tain Choy, the ongoing processes of resettlement, "allows the people to see how heartless government is. The bandits realize that the government cannot remove all the squatters."[89] This final point, that the government would be unable to relocate all the squatters, was a critical strategic assumption. However, in many ways, the insurgency had underestimated the will and capacity of the British counterinsurgents. By the end of 1954, some 572,000 Chinese had been resettled into 'New Villages.'[90] An additional 560,000 people, moreover, had been regrouped into existing towns and villages that were already benefiting from in-place static defences.[91] The logistical fountain of insurgent support had dried up. With the cessation of material supply, time, too, came to play against the weaker party and the result was that "as

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[86] Ibid., pp. 87-88.

[87] C.E. Howe, cited in, Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 489.

[88] Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 489.

[89] Liew Tain Choy, cited in, Ibid., p. 477.

[90] Richard Stubbs, "From Search and Destroy to Hearts and Minds: The Evolution of British Strategy in Malaya 1948-1960," in eds., Daniel Marston and Carter Malkasian, *Counterinsurgency in Modern Warfare* (New York: Osprey Publishing, 2008), p. 119.

[91] Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 490.

the effects of resettlement began to bite, conditions in the forest deteriorated sharply."[92] Indeed, food denial operations also came into effect as the control of the squatter populations was systematically achieved, and the guerrilla fighters began to suffer the withering effects of starvation.

Population Registration and Food Denial Operations: the Control of Material Resources

As the resettlement continued, the relocated population was subject to an intensive registration program, with each individual being photographed and fingerprinted, then issued an identification card. These cards were crucial to life within the 'New Villages'. First, the assigned police unit, particularly in the earlier months after resettlement when local knowledge as to the identity of the inhabitants was limited, conducted intensive screenings of the population to ensure that everyone belonged within the cordoned-off area of the village. As well, because the guerrillas depended so entirely upon the local population for intelligence and material supply, these actions placed their forces in danger of exposure as the registration system allowed for the careful control and observation of the movements and interactions of the population. As General Clutterbuck noted:

> The system had its greatest effect inside the villages … because it became almost impossible for the guerrillas to live among the people. It truly separated the guerrillas from the people. This is the prime requisite in defeating a guerrilla insurgency; it gives the people protection and forces the guerrillas to make prearranged contacts with their supporters. Such contacts provide the most fruitful field for the intelligence that kills.[93]

The identification cards were also essential for the villagers to obtain a grant for house construction and business development, space within the new settlement, extra land for farming purposes, as well as food rations from the local government authorities.[94]

While all these aspects served the indirect political role of the counterinsurgency by positively impacting the villagers' perceptions of the government forces, the essence of food

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[92] Ibid., p. 513.

[93] Richard Clutterbuck, *The Long, Long War: Counterinsurgency in Malaya and Vietnam* (New York: Praeger Security International, 1966), p. 38.

[94] Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Backinprint.com, 2002), p. 566.

denial was offensive in its nature and purposefully targeted towards only the guerrilla forces. The general rubric which guided the implementation of these food control measures was systematic and divided into three overlapping parts. First, intelligence was gathered as to the identity of likely food suppliers within areas of high guerrilla activity. Second, food control measures were strictly imposed and all rubber tappers and tin miners that may have had occasion to leave the villages where thoroughly searched. Finally, local security forces engaged in frequent offensive security patrols, often laying in ambush for days to capture both suppliers and their guerrilla dependents.[95]

The successful administration of these new villages, therefore, made this final aspect of food control, a foremost example of the need to control the provision of material to the local population, a highly valuable indirect counterinsurgency tool. When guerrilla units were known to be operating within an area, the government forces would impose strict food control measures upon the populations of the 'New Villages'. For example, all distributed rice would be pre-cooked, and cans of meat punctured at time of sale. The effect, given the hot and humid jungle climate, was to severely curtail any further redistribution of the food, as neither the rice nor the canned meat would last more than a few days. The immediate effects upon the local population were minimal, as food was still routinely distributed to those people under government control. Yet, as Anthony Short has noted, the effects on the insurgents were profound:

> The purpose of a food denial operation was to destroy a specific guerrilla target
> by the interruption of its supply lines and a complete stoppage of its supplies so
> that the guerrilla, weakened by hunger, was induced to surrender or be captured
> or killed by security force action or information.[96]

Indeed, the real effect on the guerrilla forces was both primordial and swift. As the Malayan Communist Party leader, Chin Peng, later recalled: "Our people said at the time, 'we had … a haversack full of money … but we cannot get a bit of food.'"[97]

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[95] Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya: 1948-1960* (London: Frederick Muller Limited, 1975), p. 376.

[96] Ibid.

[97] Chin Peng, cited in, Christopher Bayly and Tim Harper, *Forgotten Wars: The End of Britain's Asian Empire* (Toronto: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 486.

In military terms, the effect of these diminishing food supplies upon the guerrilla forces was that the insurgent units needed to be broken up into ever smaller, more politically independent groups. As the old food supply dumps cached away within the jungle were emptied, any remaining form of political centralization lessened. This meant that the insurgent forces were increasingly forced to fend for themselves with no potential assistance coming from the central Communist Party officials.

The food denial program, therefore, aided the counterinsurgents in two ways. First, the employment of smaller insurgent units made them more martially susceptible to the ongoing tactical innovations of the British forces as they favoured the comparable employment of small-unit tactical methods.[98] Also, this lack of food, in conjunction with Templer's employment of other psychological operations, including "the use of voice aircraft, newspapers, and pamphlets to persuade insurgents to surrender," had a profound impact.[99] The increasingly independent and starved Communist forces could not help but be more receptive to the government's promises of amnesty in return for their surrender and provision of information on the remaining guerrilla forces' location.[100] Indeed, as figures surrounding the rationale for enemy surrender indicated, the percentage of surrendered enemy personnel who cited hunger as their primary motive increased during the course of the years that are under consideration. Between 1949 and 1951, a reported zero per cent of the surrendered enemy personnel cited hunger as their reason for defection. This number rose steeply as the food denial plans came into operational effect. Starting in 1952, the year of Templer's arrival, the number jumped to 26.8 per cent. Indeed, the numbers stayed at roughly this level for 1953, with an average of about 25.0 per cent citing hunger as a primary reason for surrender. Then, in 1954, there is another precipitous increase with 26.6 per cent of surrendered enemy personnel citing hunger as the rationale during the first half of that year, with the number rising to 35.6 per cent for the last half of the year.[101]

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[98] For a wonderful discussion of British organizational learning in Malaya see, John Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

[99] Simon C. Smith, "General Templer and Counter-Insurgency in Malaya: Hearts and Minds, Intelligence, and Propaganda," *Intelligence and National Security* 16, no. 3 (Autumn 2001): p. 73.

[100] John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), pp. 156-157.

[101] All the preceding numbers are drawn from an Operational Research Memorandum and are cited in, John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1992), p. 65.

With control of the population obtained by resettlement and registration, food control became an essential indirect tool. Thus, "time [once again] favoured [the] security forces, for as the strength, organization, and tactical abilities [of the counterinsurgency forces] increased, the guerrilla could only suffer proportionally."[102] As the material flow to the insurgents stopped, the strength of the counterinsurgents could once again play against them in a satisfying correction of the principle of attrition. Moreover, with control over the ultimate course of these resources accounted for, the British's provision of public goods to the local population improved their own political position without assisting the material position of the insurgency.

Conclusion: Altered Strategic Relations and the Absence of Control

This study has implications for Canada's counterinsurgency in Afghanistan. Given the assumption that an insurgency will not emerge and persist unless it has the support of the population, actively, passively, and through both voluntary and involuntary methods, it can be argued that there is almost always a profound connection between any insurgency and some identifiable segment of a local population. This identification, in the case of Malaya, was ethnic, with the Communist Party's membership bourgeoning with ethnic Chinese to the virtual exclusion of the Malay and Indian ethnicities that were also present. Yet, this identification could also be tribal, and, depending on the security situation, even geographic in the sense that a counterinsurgency's inability to provide security to an area passes on the rational choice of allegiance to the insurgency.

Politically, time generally favours the insurgents because they are indigenous, whereas the counterinsurgents are commonly non-indigenous. All things being equal, those who cannot leave the battleground experience a greater temporal extent of political commitment and, a greater degree of acceptable sacrifice and hardship. This most fundamental rationale for the political role of time does, however, have implication exterior to its form.

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[102] Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows: The Guerrilla in History*, vol. 1 (Lincoln: Backinprint.com, 2002), p. 573.

The counterinsurgency, with an increasingly weary eye towards the passage of time, is tempted by fast solutions. First, it can employ extensive military methods to destroy the enemy. Often, the result of this is collateral damage or, as it should more properly be considered, the effective amalgamation of the local civilian population into the ranks of potential enemies. This seemingly expedient course can, obviously, lead to the exacerbation of the conflict by further alienating the population, and creating more insurgents. While this option often appears ineffective for both practical and moral reason, strategically it is less insidious. In a strategic sense, indiscriminate use of military force directs the counterinsurgent's resource against the insurgency. The outcome may well be an effective increase in the alienation of the population and the increase in the number of guerrillas, but the population was not on-side to begin with and, taken to its logically extreme, such action would produce a resolution. The nature of the strategic relationship is maintained. That is, the counterinsurgency uses its resources against its adversary.

The contrasting and often more political attractive strategy is the so called 'winning of the hearts and minds' of the local population. Yet, as the conduct of the Malayan Emergency shows, the provision of goods to the local population, absent effective control, has an effect on the passage of time in a material sense. Building upon the assumption that insurgency first retains the support of the local population, it stands to reason that the population also becomes the insurrection's most fruitful source of supply. In the presence of an under-considered heart and minds strategy, a symbiotic relationship between insurgent and counterinsurgent emerges, wherein the very strategical nature of the relationship inverts to the favour of the weaker party. After such a symbiotic regime has emerged, a most paradoxical and dangerous situation results. The counterinsurgency comes to be effectively directing its resources against itself.

With this caveat in mind, the real issue for a counterinsurgency effort then becomes less about 'winning the hearts and minds' of the local population, and more about obtaining control over them. Unless control is first maintained, resources and public goods that are supposedly used to win these parts of the soul will past on to the very insurgency which actively disrupts security and kills the counterinsurgents.

Here, once again, food programs are an interesting illustrative example of the potential of this phenomenon. Canada has allocated 111 million dollars in aid, over the next three years, to Afghanistan. A large portion of this assistance is to be given as food aid, which, according to

Canadian government sources, will provide "food aid for vulnerable populations, including refugees, drought-affected families, civilians affected by conflict, refugees who have returned to the country, and internally displaced persons."[103] The largest contributor of food aid to Afghanistan, however, is the World Food Program, which distributes 1,010,000 metric tons of food to some 14.8 million Afghanis, or what amounts to 848 million US dollars worth of food over the same three year period.[104]

Yet, it can be concluded on the basis of this study, that without some form of control exercised over both the local population and the distribution of this assistance, the counterinsurgency's efforts in this regard will persistently invert the principle of attrition, making time play against their very presence. Certainly not all distributed food supports the insurgency, but, without the control of the population, much will, and the organizational and material strength of the insurgency will continue to grow off these charitably minded efforts.

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[103] See the Canadian government's website on Afghanistan. www.afghanistan.gc.ca. Accessed on March 24th, 2009, available at: http://www.afghanistan.gc.ca/canada-afghanistan/priorities-priorites/aid-assistance.aspx?menu_id=47&menu=L

[104] See the official WFP website for more details. Accessed on March 30th, 2009. Available at: http://www.wfp.org/countries/afghanistan