

# The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) – Can Lessons be drawn for Present Day Situations?

by MAJ Lim Yu Sing

## Abstract:

Following the success of the British insurgency during the Malayan Emergency, there has been a countless host of works aimed at uncovering the ‘lessons’ to be learnt from their victory in Malaya. This essay explores whether the lessons learnt from the case of the Malayan Emergency, are indeed a practical template to base future counter-insurgency (COIN) campaigns on or, if the British Army’s success was uniquely contextual to the situation in Malaya at the time; that it cannot be replicated in other COIN campaigns since each insurgency has a distinct political and socio-economic character. The essay continues with an in-depth study of the situation during the Malayan Emergency, in an attempt to find out what the unique factors were that led to their success, what can and cannot be used as a ‘template’ for other COIN campaigns.

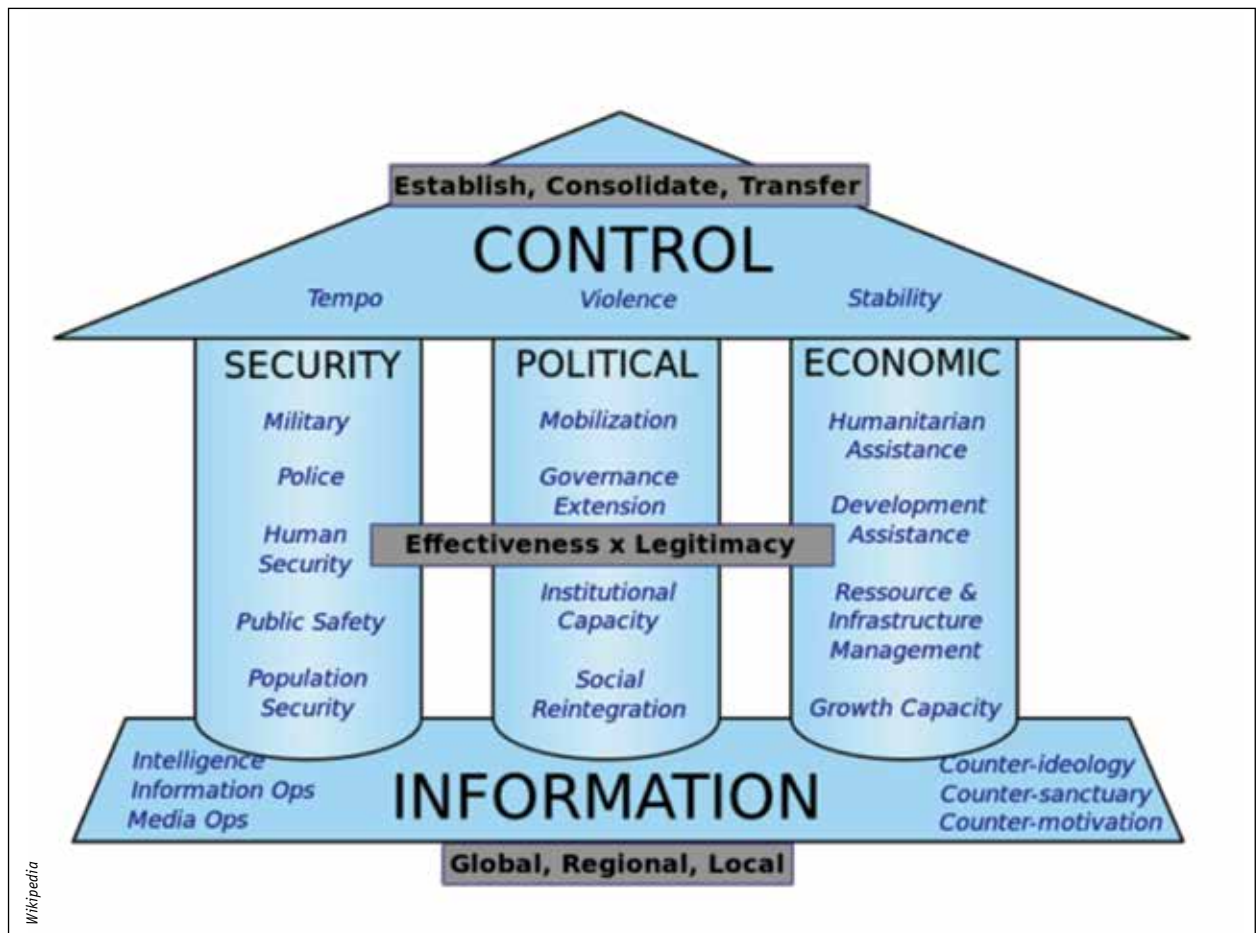
*Keywords: Counter-Insurgency; Terrorism; Case Study; Strategic Warfare; Anti-Guerilla*

## INTRODUCTION

In this essay, I will discuss the view that the Malayan Emergency is often viewed as a paradigm from which ‘lessons’ can be drawn for present day COIN situations and attempt to validate the prevalence of this assumption through literature review. I will then contend that the prevalence of such a view constitutes a propensity by COIN ‘practitioners’ and ‘experts’ to ‘template’ the British experiences in the Malayan Emergency and, that ‘templating’ has shown to be ineffective for the United States (US) and Britain in subsequent COIN campaigns because the ‘lessons’ drawn from the British success in the Malayan Emergency are fundamentally not universally enduring COIN maxims, independent of time, place and situation. Since all kinds of COIN ‘lessons’ have been drawn from the Malayan Emergency, all of which cannot possibly be covered in this essay, I will use two of the most

common lessons of the Malayan Emergency era that pervades COIN discourse today—population control and hearts and minds—to support my argument. I will first use population control to contend that its operational effectiveness was uniquely contextual to the confluence of demography socioeconomics and geography of Malaya at that time and that it cannot be replicated in other COIN campaigns. I will then use hearts and minds to argue a wider point that the ‘lessons’ from the Malayan Emergency era cannot be reasonably seen as universally enduring COIN maxims because there is no universal understanding of what is meant by the British success and the lessons.

In an introductory excerpt to an academic piece entitled *“Extracting Counterinsurgency Lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan,”* the Royal United Services Institute noted, *“British success in Malaya*



The three pillars of COIN – Security, Political, Economic, support the overarching goal of Control, but are based on Information.

appeared to show how an insurgency could be defeated by Western-led forces.” The campaign was plundered for ‘lessons’. Bennett’s observed that “...drawing lessons from the Malayan Emergency is a familiar practice in COIN studies. Admiration for ‘minimum force’ and ‘winning hearts and minds’ redounds.” Ampssler similarly notes, “the Malayan Emergency is still regarded as the shining paradigm of how to properly wage a COIN campaign and Templer’s emphasis on ‘hearts and minds’ established in

military circles, a fixation with these operations.”<sup>3</sup> A survey of the vast amount of literature on the Malayan Emergency and COIN would support these views and reveal that the Emergency is indeed often viewed as a paradigm from which ‘lessons’ can be drawn for present day COIN situations. Given that it would be impossible to account for every piece of intellectual work on COIN that has either explicitly or implicitly built its arguments on ‘lessons’ drawn from the British

**Overall, this prevalence of treating the Malayan Emergency as a paradigm from which ‘lessons’ can be drawn for present day COIN situations, constitutes a propensity by COIN ‘practitioners’, ‘experts’ and ‘commentators’ to ‘template’ the British experiences in the Malayan Emergency.**

'successes' in the Malayan Emergency, only a sample of the works will be highlighted.

One of the most well-known pieces of writing to draw 'lessons' from the Malayan Emergency is found in Robert Thompson's book entitled *'Defeating Communist Insurgency'* in which five COIN 'principles' are prescribed.<sup>4</sup> Against the backdrop of the United States' (US) involvement in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s, a series of US Department of Defense sponsored works that drew 'lessons' from the Malayan Emergency also emerged.<sup>5</sup> For example, Komer drew five 'lessons' from the Malayan Emergency for the US involvement in Vietnam and concluded, *"the case of Malaya...is instructive as an example of how another Western power dealt with a serious insurgency... successfully..."*<sup>6</sup> More recently, Nagl concluded with the 'lesson' that the US Army had to move away from the rigid practice of doctrine to adopt the British Army's organisational culture of learning and adaptation which had brought about its 'success' in the Malayan Emergency COIN campaign.<sup>7</sup> Ucko also drew 'insights' from the *"startling results witnessed in Malaya"* to comment on the US Marine Corps' COIN concept of 'Distributed Operations'.<sup>8</sup> Significantly, the 'lessons' from the Malayan Emergency also abound in the US and French COIN Doctrine.<sup>9</sup> Malayan Emergency history scholar Karl Hack also weighed-in on the contemporary COIN discourse as he highlighted 'underlying principles of British success' in Malaya that he thought would be applicable to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) COIN campaign in Afghanistan.<sup>10</sup>

In another piece, he 'periodised' the Malayan Emergency into three phases and suggested that this would yield *"differently weighted list of lessons"* because different phases required different policies: *"any COIN model that ignores this is likely to cause serious problems for at least some stages."*<sup>11</sup> A host of other works has

also referenced the Malayan Emergency for COIN 'best practices' and 'lessons'.<sup>12</sup> The view that the Malayan Emergency is indeed often viewed as a paradigm from which 'lessons' can be drawn for present day COIN situations, is perhaps best accounted for by Hack's observation that, British success in the Emergency has consequently been studied for COIN 'lessons', which can be categorised under the headings of:

- (1) 'population control';
- (2) persuasion, or 'winning hearts and minds' through using minimum force, political concessions, and social provision ;
- (3) command, unified and dynamic leadership; and
- (4) the need for security forces to become effective *"learning organisations."*<sup>13</sup>

Overall, this prevalence of treating the Malayan Emergency as a paradigm from which 'lessons' can be drawn for present day COIN situations, constitutes a propensity by COIN 'practitioners', 'experts' and 'commentators' to 'template' the British experiences in the Malayan Emergency. However, it is clear that this will not work because 'lessons' drawn from the Malayan Emergency are fundamentally not *"universally enduring COIN maxims independent of time, place and situation."* It is hence not surprising that despite having 'learnt' from the Malayan Emergency COIN campaign, the US still 'failed' in COIN in the Vietnam war while even the British, despite having 'succeeded' in Malaya and widely seen as being COIN 'experts', had 'failed' in Iraq after infamously losing control of Basra between 2006 and 2008.<sup>14</sup> In fact, the 'templating' of Malayan Emergency era 'lessons' reflect Eliot's point that *"all too often COIN is viewed as a toolkit of tactics or a grab bag of miscellaneous past experiences in dealing with insurgencies... the problem lies with these historical compendiums of COIN experiences is*



*Members of the Malay Regiment inspect equipment, supplies and documents captured in a raid on a communist terrorist jungle camp, circa 1949.*

*that they miss the most important point—that each insurgency has a distinctive political and socioeconomic character... in fact it detracts from understanding the crucial underlying political issues central and distinctive to each conflict.”<sup>15</sup>*

Echoing Eliot’s views, I will contend that the measures applied by the British were dependent on the confluence of specific demographic, socioeconomic and geographical conditions of Malaya at that time and cannot be replicated in any other COIN campaigns to reproduce the British ‘success’ in Malaya. One can also look at it from the other side of the coin (no pun intended) and argue that the demographically, socioeconomically and geographically ‘misplaced’ nature of the Malayan communist insurgency had contributed to the ‘success’ of the British COIN. To

put this into perspective, I will analyse ‘population control’—one of the most common ‘lessons’ of the Malayan Emergency era that still pervade COIN discourse today—to show how its operational effectiveness was dependent on the confluence of unique contexts.

Although ‘population control’ or ‘spatial and population control’ of the Chinese masses had prompted more information-sharing and cooperation as well as enabled better identification and isolation of communist sympathisers to literally starve the insurgents into ‘defeat’, its operational effectiveness was dependent on the following conditions—demographically, the British did not have to deal with complex racial or religious dynamics and only had to separate an organised and ‘ethnically homogenous insurgency’ from the population.<sup>16</sup> In the same vein, ‘population control’ worked well because the ethnically Chinese-based insurgency were already physically separated from the larger population as they attempted to emulate the Maoist ‘blueprint’ of a rural-based revolution in Malaya. In fact, they could only depend on a relatively small material support base since only 30% of Malayan Chinese lived in the rural squatters.<sup>17</sup>

*However, given a different set of demographic, socioeconomic, geographical and political contexts during the Vietnam war, the ‘lesson’ of ‘population control’ did not work when the US ‘templated’ it through the ‘Strategic Hamlet resettlement programme’.*

*Moreover, the non-Chinese had also thought that the Malayan Communist Party was “too foreign in nature to even offer a sense of security, while the initiation*

*of widespread terrorist acts in 1949 had rapidly eroded whatever base of support the Communist Malays had hoped for.*"<sup>18</sup> Not only was the insurgency limited in its appeal to the Malaya population along racial lines, its anti-religion communist ideals also presented a cultural divide to the Muslim majority of Malaya.

'Population control' also depended on the erosion of the basis of the populations' grievances. In this, the rural Malayan Chinese had less reason to support the communists once the basis of their marginalisation grievances were eroded by 1953, as they were given land ownership, citizenship, voting rights and a larger part in policing. Finally, whatever measure of anti-colonial nationalist appeal the insurgents had with the broader Malaya population was nullified when the British made it clear that Malaya would be granted independence by 1957.

*In terms of socioeconomics, 'population control' also worked in Malaya because of the limited appeal of the insurgency's class-based rural ideology. Not only did the insurgents not have the support of the wider working class of Malaya as they had "not courted enough of a united front with those below the wealthiest bourgeoisie, the Malayan Chinese also had a fundamental materialistic outlook that the British could exploit through what Hack sees as a complementary system of rewards and coercion aimed at 'persuading minds' in 'population control'."*<sup>19</sup>

The marginalised peasant Chinese population were already living from hand-to-mouth in the jungle fringe squatters of Malaya and being sojourners, had no particular rootedness to the land they lived on.<sup>20</sup> Coupled with collective punishments, curfews, food control and surveillance looming over the Chinese population during the Emergency, it would be reasonable to argue that it was an economically rational choice for the Chinese to be receptive to the

resettlement of the 'Briggs Plan'.<sup>21</sup> They had nothing more to lose and much to gain from the generally better amenities like town halls, basic schools and medical dispensaries offered by the 'New Villages'. As Miller notes, *"the Chinese were won... by way of their pockets... by offering them better economic prospects"*.<sup>22</sup> Given the 'materialistic' concern of the Chinese, Ramakrishna and Hack have also shown that offers of monetary rewards for intelligence, targeted propaganda with ex-insurgents, showing signs of socioeconomic improvements and more liberal amnesty terms were effective in 'persuading minds'.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, the introduction of 'White Areas' by 1953 also worked towards 'persuading minds' as Emergency restrictions were lifted to reward communities that had low levels of insurgent activity.

Operational effectiveness of 'population control' also depended on the fact that the communist insurgents had no alternatives to material support. The geographical isolation of the Malayan peninsula had a part in ensuring this.<sup>24</sup> First, with 75% of the Malaya jungle terrain uninhabitable, this Maoist 'blueprint' of a rural-based revolution in Malaya presented serious and unique problems for the insurgents since *"the further [they] retreated into the jungle to avoid capture, the further they ran from attainable supplies and munitions."*<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the peninsula geography made it difficult for the Malayan communist insurgency to receive external material support, especially since the British had the cooperation of the Thais to seal off the border.<sup>26</sup>

Overall, 'population control' was shown to be operationally effective by 1952 as the communist insurgent leader Chin Peng recalled later in his memoirs that *"[the communists] were really feeling the heat of the New Villages [and that although they had, at that time] a whole haversack of money... [they*





The US army evacuating the Khe Sanh Complex in Vietnam on 1<sup>st</sup> July, 1968.

couldn't] get a bit of food", since they could not establish a durable base of operations that was safe and could feed the large insurgent contingent.<sup>27</sup> He also lamented that they did not receive "a single bullet from outside Malaya" during the period.<sup>28</sup> However, given a different set of demographic, socioeconomic, geographical and political contexts during the Vietnam War, the 'lesson' of 'population control' did not work when the US 'templated' it through the 'Strategic Hamlet resettlement programme'.

Amongst the many reasons, top of which was the fact that the corrupt Diem government had little legitimacy with the masses in the first place, control was also not possible because the communist insurgency in Vietnam was not limited by ethnicity.<sup>29</sup>

Furthermore, "although more than four million Vietnamese peasants were relocated in the US Strategic Hamlet resettlement programme... most were forced to leave ancestral lands, which held personal and even religious implications for them; thus the programme was doomed to failure."<sup>30</sup>

*Finally, whatever measure of anti-colonial nationalist appeal the insurgents had with the broader Malaya population was nullified when the British made it clear that Malaya would be granted independence by 1957.*

If we were to look at the ongoing civil strife in Syria, we need not even undertake the complex task of comparing the intricate demographic socioeconomic and political contexts of Malaya with Syria to see that the COIN ‘lessons’ drawn from the Malayan Emergency era would be useless to Bashar al-Assad. At the simplest level, unlike the Malayan communist insurgency that was organised and could be targeted and affected by measures like ‘population control’, the ‘insurgency’ in Syria is as diffused as it is unorganised. Comprising ‘men with guns’ who are united by nothing more than the fact that they have guns and are firing them in the same direction, they cannot be targeted, much less addressed with any COIN ‘maxim’, even if it existed.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, unlike the communist insurgency in Malaya that was in part starved into ‘defeat’ because it had no material support from outside, the Syrian ‘insurgency’ is fuelled by the material support channeled from the “*meddling Saudis and Qataris*.”<sup>32</sup>

Beyond the fact that the ‘lessons’ of British ‘success’ is uniquely contextual to the confluence of demography, geography and socioeconomics of Malaya at that time and cannot be replicated in other COIN campaigns, I would also like to argue a wider point that the ‘lessons’ from the Malayan Emergency era cannot be reasonably seen as ‘universally enduring COIN maxims’ because there is no universal understanding of what is meant by the British ‘success’ and the ‘lessons’. In this, it remains debatable whether the many ‘lessons’ generated from the much-vaunted British ‘success’ during the Malayan Emergency, are indeed ‘universally enduring’ solutions to insurgency. *If war is a continuation of politics by other means, then it follows that insurgencies, being irregular wars in themselves, cannot be ended or ‘solved’ without a political solution.* In fact, the earlier review in this essay of the many ‘lessons’ drawn from the Malayan Emergency era, showed a one-sided operational-level

centric discourse on how to curb and incapacitate the Malayan insurgency but not solve it politically.<sup>33</sup>


Given that the actual political end to the communist insurgency in Malaya only materialised in 1989, as well as the idea that the declaration of the end of the Malayan Emergency in 1960 reflected more political rhetoric than an actual end to the insurgency, I will argue that the idea of a ‘British success’ against the Malayan communist insurgency becomes as problematic as the attempts to draw ‘lessons’ from such a ‘success’.<sup>34</sup> It is notable that the only attempt at a political solution during the Malayan Emergency was in late 1955 when Chin Peng unsuccessfully negotiated with the newly formed Malaya federal government under Tunku Abdul Rahman, for the legalisation of the Malayan Communist Party as a political party.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, short of a campaign of total annihilation akin to what the Sri Lankans did to the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam in 2006, COIN measures cannot possibly replace the political solution to an insurgency and hence cannot be touted as a true ‘success’ that is able to produce ‘lessons’. Indeed, the centrality of political solutions over COIN measures is also made in some ‘revisionist’ views of David Petraeus’ COIN achievements in Iraq—that contrary to popular belief, what ‘turned’ the Iraqi insurgency against US-led forces in 2007 was not Petraeus’ widely credited ‘population-centric’ COIN strategy and ‘troop surge’—both of which are highly reminiscent of British COIN measures in the Malayan Emergency.<sup>36</sup> Rather, it was ‘turned’ by changes to the political calculations of the Sunni Iraqi insurgents who had [politically] ‘cut a deal’ with the Americans.<sup>37</sup>

Furthermore, the Malayan Emergency COIN ‘lessons’ in themselves continue to be the subject of competing interpretations and can hardly be taken as ‘universal maxims or principles’. As seen in the ‘lesson’ of ‘winning

hearts and minds' which is frequently thought to have 'won' the Malayan Emergency for the British, there is no fixed understanding to what it actually means.<sup>38</sup> On the one hand, 'hearts and minds' and its modern incarnation of 'population-centric' COIN have been argued to be effective because it espouses *"distinctly liberal, humanistic values like protecting civilians, cultural sensitivity, and rigid adherence to ethical standards and the law"*.<sup>39</sup> This notion sets 'hearts and mind' up to be diametrically opposed to force and violence and implies that the 'limited use' of coercion coupled with 'propaganda of good deeds' 'won it' for the British against the communist insurgents in Malaya, which also became an oft-cited COIN 'lesson'. On the other hand, others have contended that the British use of 'minimum force' was a myth during the Malayan Emergency and that the modern discourse on 'hearts and mind' and 'population-centric' COIN is a misreading and misunderstanding of the coercive and violent history of COIN, replacing it with a *"story of warm and fuzzy war, of benevolent soldiers providing essential government services to grateful natives, of armed social work"* (with the military acting like a) *"gigantic peace corp"*.<sup>40</sup> Notably, Ampssler and Miller contest the effectiveness of 'hearts and minds' during the Malayan Emergency, while Hack argues that it was in fact 'persuading minds' rather than 'winning hearts'.<sup>41</sup> Overall, the problem at hand is perhaps best summed up in the terse words of Miller, *"Malaya as the exemplar for modern COIN is a dead letter. The casual use and misuse of the phrase 'hearts and minds' should be guarded against. The unique conditions of the Malayan Emergency are unlikely to be repeated."*<sup>42</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I have first showed through literature review, that the assumption that the Malayan Emergency is often viewed as a paradigm

from which 'lessons' can be drawn for present day COIN situations is indeed correct. I have also contended that this constitutes a propensity by COIN 'practitioners' and 'experts' to 'template' the British experiences in the Malayan Emergency and that 'templating' has shown to be ineffective for the US and British in subsequent COIN campaigns because the 'lessons' drawn from the British 'success' in the Malayan Emergency are fundamentally not universally enduring COIN maxims independent of time, place and situation. To support my argument, I have first used the 'lesson' of 'population control' to contend that its operational effectiveness was uniquely contextual to the confluence of demography, socioeconomics and geography of Malaya at that time and cannot be replicated in other COIN contexts like Vietnam or even Syria. I have also used the 'lesson' of 'hearts and minds' to argue a wider point that 'lessons' from the Malayan Emergency era cannot be reasonably seen as 'universally enduring COIN maxims' because there is no universal understanding of what is meant by the British 'success' and the 'lessons'. Significantly, COIN measures cannot possibly replace the political solution to an insurgency and hence cannot be touted as a true 'success' that is able to produce 'lessons'. Ironically, the fact that 'lessons' drawn from the Malayan Emergency era are not universally enduring COIN maxims independent of time, place and situation, is actually seen in Mao's explanation that in revolutionary warfare, *"the difference in circumstances determines the difference in guiding the laws of war; the difference of time, place, and character. The laws of war in each historical stage have their characteristics and cannot be mechanically applied to a different age... nothing remains changeless."*<sup>43</sup> 



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These are cited as: "1. the need to have a clear political aim; 2. to work within the law; 3. need to develop an overall plan; 4. need to defeat political subversion, and 5. need to secure base areas".

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He also concluded that the US involvement in Vietnam would have benefited if it had placed "earlier and greater emphasis on certain features crucial to UK success in Malaya (1) a more balanced civil/police/military effort, rather than one so overwhelmingly military; (2) unified conflict management at all levels; (3) far greater emphasis on the counterinsurgency type of intelligence and on efforts to root out the directing cadre of the insurgency; (4) more focus on breaking the links between the insurgents and the population, rather than so much on military operations against elusive enemy forces and (5) far greater stress on outbidding the insurgents for popular support – not so much by massive economic development as by effective equitable and responsive government operating under a rule of law." (p.87)

7. Nagl. John, A., *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005)

8. Ucko, David, Countering Insurgents through Distributed Operations: Insights from Malaya 1948–1960, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2007), 57

Ucko argues that Distributed Operations (DO) offers some advantages in irregular warfare, but must be complemented by five drivers of institutional adaptability, adequate training, an effective intelligence gathering system, fusing intelligence gathering with dissemination, and separation of insurgents from population. However, he is circumspect about the ability to reproduce the Malayan Emergency success in DO in other COIN.

9. (FM3-24, 2006; CEDF, 2010)
10. Hack, Karl, *Extracting counterinsurgency lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan*, (2009), 5 <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4B14E068758F1/>  
He explains that “1. [A good number of enforcers] are required to achieve population/spatial control and achieve population-centric security, 2. population and spatial control forms the necessary core of a matrix of policies, in which 'persuading minds' and 'winning hearts' are subordinate. The emphasis was on civilian hearts and minds measures in combination with achieving a degree of physical security through population and spatial control of disputed rural areas. 3. It was important to find a force or ethnic groups within a society, and work with their weight. 4. The geography of operations can differ within a single insurgency: different areas may be at different phases simultaneously. In addition, it is no good simply basing operations around government units of administration; they need to override government fissures through executive committee systems, and through tailoring operations to enemy geographical frameworks. 5. Propaganda and rewards must also be distributed effectively. In Malaya, the incorporation of ex-insurgent intelligentsia into propaganda roles was also vital. 6. Counterinsurgent forces must become learning organisations”
11. Hack, Karl, *Extracting counterinsurgency lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan*, (2009), 2, 20 <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4B14E068758F1/>  
These are described as “1. Counter terror and sweep (1948-49); 2. Clear and Hold characterised by population control, persuading minds, and massive concentration of resources, along with the declaratory aim of self-government (1950-52); and 3. Optimisation, characterised by winning hearts as well as minds, faster progress to independence, finessing operations, and becoming an efficient “learning organisation” (late 1952-60).”
12. Mockaitis, Thomas, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919-60*, (London: MacMillan, 1990)  
Hamilton, Donald W, *The Art of Insurgency :American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia*, (Wesport: Praegar. 1998)  
Thompson, Leroy. *The Counter-Insurgency Manual*, (London: Greenhill Books, 2002)  
Sepp, Kalev, I. Best Practices in Counterinsurgency. In: *Military Review*, (2005)  
Ladwig III, Walter, C., *Managing Counterinsurgency: Lessons from Malaya*, *Military Review*, (2007)
13. Hack, Karl, *Extracting counterinsurgency lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan*, (2009), .1
14. Hamilton, Donald W, *The Art of Insurgency :American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia*, (Wesport: Praegar. 1998)  
Higgins, James. M, *The Misapplication of the Malayan Counterinsurgency Model to the Strategic Hamlet Programme*, (Kansas: U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2001)  
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Ricks, Thomas. 2007. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, (Penguin 2003-2005)  
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Betson, Andrew.P. Slow Learners: How Iraq and Afghanistan Forced Britain to Rethink COIN, *Armed Forces Journal*. <http://www.armedforcesjournal.com/2011/11/6292362>  
Rigden, A. 2008. *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: Myths Realities and Strategic Challenges*. (U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA)  
Ledwidge, Frank, *Losing Small Wars*, (Yale University Press, 2012)
15. Eliot, David, Can ‘Lessons of Vietnam’ be Applied to Iraq? Llyod C Gardner and Marilyn B Young, *Iraq and the Lessons of Vietnam*, (New York, London: New Press Room, 2007)

On this issue, I would also like to make a side argument that, even if prominent COIN “theorists’ and “experts’ do not explicitly relate their theories and observations to the “lessons learnt’ from the Malayan Emergency, the larger body of COIN literature produced by them reflects the template-approach in which COIN experiences are treated as generalisable and reducible to “laws” (Galula, 1964), “principles” (Beckett, 1988; Hack, 2009a; 2009b; Petraeus, 2009), “pillars”, “frameworks” and “articles” (Kilcullen, 2006a; 2006b; 2010) and “premises” (Rigden, 2008) all of which implicitly claim some degree of universality in application across other COIN campaigns. While many of these authors have rather schizophrenically argued both sides of the coin (no pun intended) – that COIN experiences are contextually circumscribed and can neither be replicated nor “templated”; but at the same time “lessons’ and “principles’ can be drawn from the experiences – it begs the question of what one intends to do with such “lessons’ and “principles’. It is almost inevitable that such an epistemic enterprise ultimately seeks to inform decision-makers and commanders on how to handle future COIN campaigns. This in itself, contradicts renowned warfare philosophies propounded by the likes of Clausewitz, Von Seekt and Mao, who have all rejected the possibility of reducing the nature of war to a list of principles, rules or “schemas”. Furthermore, these “principles’ tend to get embedded into military and government COIN doctrines (as shown in Kilcullen, 2006; Rigden, 2008; Gentile, 2009) that eventually get acted upon in one way or another. This, I contend, fulfills the self-defeating vicious cycle of “theorising-templating’ and perpetuates a tendency amongst COIN “practitioners’ to implicitly favour “templating’. In fact, this bias is evident when COIN “practitioners’ and theorists lament that “old lessons” are “painfully relearned” in one COIN campaign or another. For example, Beckett (1988) argues that the Soviets had to “relearn” their “painful old lessons” of the suppression of the Basmachi revolt of the 1920s. More recently, Donovan (2012) commented in a BBC article that, “General Petraeus acknowledged that... those old lessons [learned in Vietnam and elsewhere] were still having to be relearned in Iraq and Afghanistan, he said... Lessons

and principles that should have been learned, partly from our own sweat and blood, had been discarded like a pair of old shoes. Gentile (2009, pp7 -8) puts this into perspective, as he rightly argues, “because the United States has “principilised’ population-centric COIN into the only way of doing any kind of counterinsurgency, it dictates strategy...population-centric COIN principles have been turned into immutable rules that are dictating strategy in Afghanistan and... If we accept that the principles are applicable, then we have already chosen the way ahead in Afghanistan”.

16. Ucko, David. 2007. Countering Insurgents through Distributed Operations: Insights from Malaya 1948–1960, In: *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 30/1 (Feb.2007), 47–72  
  
Hack, Karl, *Extracting counterinsurgency lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan*, (2009) <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4B14E068758F1/>  
  
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Cohen, Michael A., The Myth of Kinder Gentler War, *World Policy Journal*, (2010), v.\_27, n.\_1, 2010, 75–86
17. Ampssler, Noor, R., Hearts and Minds: Malayan Campaign UK Defence Forum, <http://www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk/articles-and-analysis/heart-and-minds-malayan-campaign-re-evaluated> (2010)
18. Hamilton, Donald W, *The Art of Insurgency :American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia*, citing Pye, 1956 (Wesport: Praegar. 1998), 54
19. Hack, Karl, *Extracting counterinsurgency lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan*, (2009) <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4B14E068758F1/>  
  
Hack, Karl, The Malayan Emergency as counter-insurgency paradigm, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2009) v.\_32, n.\_3, 383–414  
  
Ramakrishna, Kumar, ‘Bribing the Reds to Give Up’: Rewards Policy in the Malayan Emergency, *War In History*, (2002), v.\_9, n.\_3, 332–363
20. Reid argues that only 2 or every 10 Chinese who migrated to Malaya before WWII had stayed.



21. Introduced by Harold Briggs when he was appointed Director of Operations in 1950.
22. Miller, Sergio, *Malaya: The Myth of Hearts and Minds*, *Small Wars Journal*, (2012)
23. For example, Hack (2009b p. 19) notes, "There were many nuances, for instance radio broadcasts by ex-insurgents describing their first Chinese New Year outside of the jungle, with roast duck to eat and family around".  
Hack (2009b p. 16) explains that "Rewards were also increased from 1950, not only for civilians, but also for insurgents who brought in weapons or comrades. Thousands of 'Safe Conduct' passes were dropped, sometimes including a promise of a reward for members of the public who helped any 'Chinese Terrorist' with a pass".  
Ramakrishna, Kumar, 'Bribing the Reds to Give Up': Rewards Policy in the Malayan Emergency, *War In History*, (2002), v.\_9, n.\_3, 332-363
24. Black, Jeremy. *Introduction to Global Military History*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2005)
25. Hamilton, Donald W, *The Art of Insurgency :American Military Policy and the Failure of Strategy in Southeast Asia*, (Wesport: Praegar. 1998)
26. Ampssler, Noor, R., Hearts and Minds: Malayan Campaign UK Defence Forum, <http://www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk/articles-and-analysis/heart-and-minds-malayan-campaign-re-evaluated> (2010)
27. Hack, Karl, The Malayan Emergency as counter-insurgency paradigm, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2009), 10
28. Ampssler, Noor, R., Hearts and Minds: Malayan Campaign UK Defence Forum, <http://www.defenceviewpoints.co.uk/articles-and-analysis/heart-and-minds-malayan-campaign-re-evaluated> (2010)
29. Ibid.
30. Thompson, Leroy. *The Counter-Insurgency Manual*, (London: Greenhill Books, 2002), 88.
31. Unlike the class-based insurgency of Malaya that had a political goal and even an insurgency strategy, Danahar (2013) notes that the Syrian "rebels" are a motley crew of sectarian-based militias, Al-Qaeda-linked Islamists, armed gangs of criminals, and groups out for revenge killings.
32. Ibid.
33. Interestingly, Gentile (2009) describes this discursive fervor as a new "Zeitgeist for COIN" plaguing the US Army today, and that the "US military COIN strategy is really nothing more than a bunch of COIN principles, massaged into catchy commander's talking points for the media, emphasising winning the hearts and minds and shielding civilians. The result is a strategy of tactics and principles" (p.15).
34. According to Talib (2005, p. 22) "After a series of negotiations between the Malaysian Government and the MCP, with the Thai Government as the mediator, the MCP finally agreed to sign a Peace Accord in Haadyai, Thailand on the 2 December 1989. The peace accord did not require the MCP to surrender; it only required that the MCP cease their militant activities. With the signing of the Haadyai Peace Accord, the MCP agreed to disband their armed units and destroy all of their weapons. They also "pledged their loyalty" to His Majesty the Yang di Pertuan Agong of Malaysia. This date marked the end of the MCP insurgency in Malaysia."  
Talib (2005, pp. 14-15) cites the Malaysian Government White Paper Report: The Militant Communist Threat to Malaysia, and argued that "Despite declaring the end of emergency, the war against the communist insurgency never really ended. The declaration only ended the usage of emergency laws, but the fight against the MCP continued". He also cites British government sources that explain the end of the Emergency was declared, "... for two reasons. Economically, if the law of emergency dragged on for a long period, it would have jeopardised the Malayan economy. For a new nation like Malaya, such a situation would be detrimental to the development of the country. Furthermore, the British involvement in rehabilitation work during the emergency in Malaya was financially costly. Continuing the emergency would overly burden the new Malayan government".
35. The documents reveal that the Alliance Party was ready to grant amnesty to the communists to reduce the bloodshed and after it scored a huge victory in the country's first federal election in July 1955 under Tunku Abdul Rahman, he accepted Chin Peng's offer to negotiate in September. The actual talks between the two sides in Dec 1955, in Baling, Kedah, was inconclusive as Tunku wanted the communists to surrender while Chin Peng wanted the CPM to be legalised and allowed to contest in elections.

36. Ricks, Thomas. 2007. *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq, 2003-2005*, (Penguin, 2007)  
Casebeer, William D. and Russell, James A., *Strategic Insights, Storytelling and Terrorism: Towards a Comprehensive 'Counter- Narrative Strategy'*, (2005), v.\_4, n.\_3
37. Gentile (2009, pp 10-11) argues that "Quite possibly, the will of the Sunni insurgency broke long before the Surge went into full effect in the summer of 2007. A combination of brutal attacks by Shia militia in conjunction with the actions of the Iraqi Shia government and the continuing persecution by al Qaeda against the Sunni community convinced the insurgents that they could no longer counter all these forces and it was to their advantage to cut a deal with the Americans. To be sure, the reduction in violence that began in the summer of 2007 in Iraq had multiple causes, and the Surge did contribute. But to think that the reduction of violence was primarily the result of American military action is hubris run amuck".
38. Coined by Gerald Templer in 1952, as a priority, when he assumed the combined post of High Commissioner and Director of Operations. Miller (2012) notes that, "the phrase comes from a speech... it was an appeal: the answer lies not in pouring more soldiers into the jungle, but in the hearts and minds of the Malayan people'.
39. Short, Anthony, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya: 1948-1960*, (New York, Crane Russak & Company, 1975)  
Coates, John, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948-1954*, (Boulder Colorado: Westview Press, 1992)  
Yadi, Mohd Zakaria, *Malaysian Emergencies—The Anthropological Factors in the success of Malaysia's Counter-insurgencies*, (US Naval Post Graduate School, 2004) Black, Jeremy, *Introduction to Global Military History*, (London, New York: Routledge, 2005)  
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CEDF, 2010  
Cohen, Michael A., *The Myth of Kinder Gentler War, World Policy Journal*, citing Bowden (2010), v.\_27, n.\_1, 2010, 75-86
40. Bennett, Huw, 'A very salutary effect': The Counter-Terror Strategy in the Early Malayan Emergency, June 1948 to December 1949, *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2009), v.\_32, n.\_ 3, 415-444  
Bennett, Huw, Minimum force in British Counterinsurgency, *Small Wars & Insurgencies*, (2010), v.\_21, n.\_3, 459-475  
ohen, Ibid.  
West, Bing, *The Wrong War: Grit, Strategy, and the Way Out of Afghanistan*, (Random House, 2012)
41. In this Ampssler (2010) argues that, "A series of reports prepared by Sir Donald MacGillivray, Templer's successor as High Commissioner, on the position of the Chinese community stressed that gaining the hearts and minds of the Chinese remained an elusive goal and that the Chinese lacked, "any feeling of loyalty towards Malaya or her Governments". MacGillivray's observations reflect the general consensus amongst British administrators and officers who believed that the Chinese remained very much "on the fence." It is telling that these assessments were prepared in 1955, by which time the communists had been soundly defeated as a significant military force".  
Since it was primarily use of military force and "population and spatial control' complemented by a distribution of incentives that isolated the insurgents from the population.  
Miller, Sergio, *Malaya: The Myth of Hearts and Minds, Small Wars Journal*, (2012)  
Hack, Karl, *Extracting counterinsurgency lessons: The Malayan Emergency and Afghanistan*, (2009) <http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4B14E068758F1/>  
Hack, Karl, The Malayan Emergency as counter-insurgency paradigm, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, (2009), v.\_32, n.\_3, 383-414
42. Miller, Ibid.
43. Elliot-Bateman, Michael, *Defeat in the East: The Mark of Mao Tse-Tung on War*, (Oxford University Press, 1967)



**MAJ Lim Yu Sing** is an Air Warfare Officer (Ground Based Air Defence) and is currently a Branch Head at Air Force Information Centre. MAJ Lim graduated as a Distinguished Graduate from the 44<sup>th</sup> Command and Staff Course at the Goh Keng Swee Command and Staff College. He holds a Bachelors of Social Sciences (Honours) in Sociology from the National University of Singapore, and a Masters of Science in International Communications from Leeds University.