

LOWY INSTITUTE PERSPECTIVES

**GETTING THE JOB DONE:
IRAQ AND THE MALAYAN EMERGENCY**

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Milton Osborne

Iraq and the Shadow of Vietnam

At various times critics of the United States-led invasion of Iraq, including commentators in Australia, have claimed that the insurgency which has developed following the successful completion of main-force battles and the capture of Baghdad is reminiscent of Vietnam. The United States and its allies, these critics argue, have become trapped in a 'quagmire' similar to that which engulfed them in Southeast Asia. In the United States, Senator Edward Kennedy has been a vocal exponent of this view, which has been forcefully rebutted by the distinguished British historian, Niall Ferguson, who is now resident in New York. In an article in the *New York Times*, Ferguson does not deny the great difficulties facing the United States in Iraq but rejects the Vietnam parallel. If there is a parallel to be drawn between the contemporary insurgency in Iraq and the past, he argues tellingly, it is not with events in Vietnam but with the Iraqi uprising against British rule in 1920. In Vietnam, the United States and its allies were fighting in support of an established government — whatever arguments there were about its post-Geneva Accords legitimacy. And they fought an enemy clearly linked to a state, the then Democratic Republic of Vietnam. Where current American thinking has been so strikingly awry has been its failure to recognise it is perceived as an occupying force, seen by Iraqis as, in effect, a colonial power.¹

Despite arguments of the sort advanced by Ferguson, comparisons with Vietnam continue to be raised by various commentators. So, for example, John F. Burns writing in the *New York Times* of 29 November 2004, headed his article about river patrols with the lead, 'Shadow of Vietnam falls over Iraqi river raids', while in Australia the *Australian Financial Review's* Washington correspondent, Tony Walker, summarised his views of Washington's errors in an article of 29 December 2004 - 3 January 2005 under the heading 'Spectre of Vietnam haunts Bush in Iraq debacle'.

Largely forgotten, and in the light of continuing suggestions that Iraq is President Bush's Vietnam, it is worth noting, that during the Vietnam conflict there was considerable interest in the possibility of profiting from the strategies and tactics successfully used in an earlier insurgency, the Malayan Emergency (1948-60). For in Vietnam the Strategic Hamlets Program developed in the early 1960s was promoted with conscious reference to the successful New Villages program instituted during the Emergency. For a broad range of reasons the Hamlets Program failed. This was so not least because of the great differences of scale between the two insurgencies and the sharp contrasts between the efficiencies of the counter-insurgency forces in Malaya and the weaknesses and ineptitudes of those forces, both South Vietnamese and American, in Vietnam.²

Looking to Malaya

Given the impact of the 'loss' of Vietnam on political and military thinking in the United States, it may not be surprising that critics of American actions in Iraq, and journalists looking for a striking 'lead', should suggest that there are contemporary parallels with that earlier conflict. What is surprising is the manner in which commentators hoping for the success of the United States in Iraq should be suggesting that answers to the problems of the Iraqi insurgency might be found in the strategies and tactics developed in the Malayan Emergency. In what follows I am not concerned to debate the issue of whether or not the United States-led 'Coalition of the Willing' should have invaded Iraq. Neither do I seek to make predictions about the likely outcome of current efforts to contain the ongoing insurgency in Iraq. Instead, and in the light of the suggestions that what worked in Malaya might work in Iraq, I seek to describe, in broad terms, what happened in the Malayan Emergency and how the insurgents in that conflict were overcome. I then briefly contrast the Malayan experience with the nature of the insurgency against the Coalition's and interim Iraqi government's forces to conclude that the events of the Malayan Emergency offer little useful guidance for the challenges posed by the insurgency in Iraq.

The worth of such an analysis stems from the fact that, away from Australia, a range of observers has suggested that what happened in Malaya offers lessons for dealing with the insurgent challenge in Iraq. It is my contention that the contrasts between what occurred in Malaya during the Emergency and what is taking place in Iraq are so great that the successful counter-insurgency strategies followed in Malaya have little contemporary relevance.

Reference to the Malayan Emergency as a possible guide to action in Iraq has been almost totally absent in the Australian media.³ By contrast, in both the United Kingdom and in the United States opinion pieces in both mainstream and more specialist publications have cited the Malayan experience as an example of the successful defeat of an insurgency that offers 'lessons' for Iraq. Most of these references to Malaya have been surprisingly lacking in any effort to take account of the differences between the Malayan experience and the situation confronting Coalition forces in Iraq. A few examples, from writers with very different backgrounds, indicate the character of the appeals made to what happened in Malaya.

- Colonel Tim Collins, 'Iraqi veteran' in the *Sunday Times* - Review of 24 October 2004, and referring to the British forces in southern Iraq and their relative success by contrast with the American forces. This success, Colonel Collins wrote, reflected 'the traditional British approach to peace enforcement based on 60 years of experience since the Second World War and the application of sound principles espoused during the Malay emergency in the 1950s.'

- John O'Sullivan, Editor-in-Chief, United Press International, in the *National Review* online, 31 July 2004 [nationalreview.com/jos/jos073103.asp] contrasting concern for American deaths in Iraq with what happened in Malaya, wrote, 'Will the American people think this cost worth paying? . . . For comparison's sake consider the Malayan 'Emergency' that lasted 12 years from 1948 to 1960. In that struggle with communist guerrillas the British lost more than 900 soldiers. What they gained was a stable independent democratic Malaya (later Malaysia) that was a strong Western ally in the Cold War and is now one of the most successful free-enterprise economies in Asia.'

- Mark Steyn writing in the *London Telegraph* of 26 November 2004 under the lead 'All the good things they never tell you about Iraq', argued that British Foreign and Commonwealth Office officials were failing to understand that, as was the case in Malaya, insurgencies are defeated on a long-term basis: 'The Malayan 'emergency', to take one example, lasted from 1948 to 1960, and at the end of it Britain midwived what can reasonably be claimed to be one of the least worst Islam states in the world.'⁴

A perusal of these extracts leaves a reader largely uncertain as to just what it was about the way in which the Malayan Emergency was handled that the commentators believe should be taken into account in relation to Iraq. The long-term approach to the problems the British colonial authorities faced in Malaya is certainly part of what the writers quoted above appear to have had in mind, but it is important to note that this was only one factor in the defeat of the communist insurgents. The other 'sound principles' to which Colonel Collins refers are inferred but not spelt out, yet as detailed below these were vital to what happened and very much related to the particular circumstances that existed in Malaya.

What actually happened in Malaya?

Given the forty-four years that have passed since the Emergency ended, it is not surprising that there is a lack of general awareness of just what did happen in Malaya. What follows is a necessarily brief account of the main features of the period.⁵

Although the British colonial government reasserted its control over Malaya following the defeat of the Japanese without a shot being fired, the period 1945 to 1948 in the colony was marked by considerable uncertainty and tension as it had become clear that Britain would be granting the colony independence

in the relatively near future. Fundamental to the sense of uncertainty was the recognition that, essentially for the first time, the colonial authorities had to address the fact that future political arrangements needed to take account of Malaya's ethnically divided society. In broad percentage terms at this time, ethnic Malays were 52 percent of the population, ethnic Chinese 38 percent, and ethnic Indians 9 percent — the remaining 1 per cent were mostly European expatriates.

The British government initially proposed granting a form of independence that would have given equal rights of citizenship to all who were born in the country, regardless of ethnic identity. At the same time, plans were put forward for an independent Malaya to be a unitary state that would have deprived the various sultans — the traditional rulers of the country's states — of their long-established privileges. Not surprisingly, these plans were opposed both by politically active Malays, including the sultans, and, very importantly, by a vigorous pro-Malay lobby of retired colonial officials in the United Kingdom.⁶

While debate over Malaya's future constitutional status continued, labour unions dominated by ethnic Chinese members of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) engaged in repeated strikes and general industrial agitation and disruption. At this stage, the members of the MCP had considerable prestige within sections of the ethnic Chinese community as a result of their having played an active guerrilla role against the Japanese occupiers of Malaya during the war. At the head of the Malayan Peoples Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA) and assisted by the British commando unit, Force 136, the MCP had represented the only organised resistance to the occupiers. One of their most talented guerrilla leaders, Chin Peng, had particular prestige and, in a notable irony of history, he was invited to march — and did so — in the Victory Parade held in London at the end of the war.

By February 1948 the British succeeded in gaining support from the leading Malays and non-Communist Chinese for the implementation of a new political system that would lead to independence. To be termed the Federation of Malaya, the new political arrangements united the existing Malay states in a unitary political system but, most importantly, did not give equal political rights to all citizens irrespective of ethnic identity and preserved many of the privileges of the sultans. It was made clear that Malays would be the dominant political group when Malaya became independent, and this political predominance was accepted by the non-Communist political leadership of the major minority ethnic group, the ethnic Chinese. For this latter group, the preservation of their dominant economic position appeared to be an acceptable trade-off for the political dominance of the Malays. The projected constitutional arrangements were also accepted by the much less politically important leadership of Malaya's Indian minority, most of whom worked in low status labouring jobs, particularly as plantation rubber tappers. The compromise involved in these arrangements, as events in May 1969 later showed, ultimately proved unacceptable to both Malays and Chinese.

The MCP opts for armed struggle

In March 1948, the Central Executive Committee of the MCP opted to begin armed struggle against the colonial power, and by June elements of the party had embarked on a program of violence directed initially against European estate managers. Whether this decision was part of a more general plan for regional insurrections orchestrated by the Cominform and decided upon at a conference held in February 1948 in Calcutta was, for a period, a matter of controversy. Some analysts saw this as a possibility in the light of communist uprisings that took place around the same time in both Burma and the Philippines. This view of an orchestrated series of uprisings is now generally discounted. Despite apparent synchronicity, it appears that the MCP's decision was, in fact, taken on its leadership's own assessment that the colonial administration could be defeated.⁷ In turning to armed struggle, the MCP formed the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA) and embarked on a campaign of assassinations and sabotage in rural areas claiming to act on behalf of all of the races of Malaya. Government officials and plantation managers were particular targets at this early stage of the insurgency, but from the start the insurgents sought to advance their cause by killing plantation workers, Chinese and Indians alike, if they failed to assist them. In response, the British colonial authorities declared an 'Emergency' on 18 June 1948 to deal with the challenge posed by the MRLA.

From the start, and of vital importance for the final outcome of the Emergency, was the fact that the MRLA was overwhelmingly ethnic Chinese in character. There were a small number of insurgents who were not ethnic Chinese, but their contribution to the insurrection was negligible. In short, the MRLA's membership of ethnic Chinese represented a minority of a minority in terms of its place in Malaya's ethnically divided community. This vital point should never be forgotten. The fact that members of the MCP and MRLA retained some kudos from the period of the Second World War in part explains why its insurgency was able to persist for as long as it did. But, ultimately, its character as a minority of an ethnic minority worked to its great disadvantage.

Nevertheless, and linked to its ethnic character, part of the explanation for the MRLA's early successes against the security forces was the existence within the Malayan ethnic Chinese community of a large group of persons described as 'squatters.' These squatters, numbering upwards of 500,000, lived on the periphery of, and in some cases quite separately from, established settlements, whether urban or rural, such as plantations. They had developed as a sizeable element in the population both as a result of the sharp growth in unemployment in the 1930s during the Great Depression, and as a consequence of the Japanese occupation. During the occupation, and in the light of Japanese discrimination against them, many ethnic Chinese simply moved into jungle areas to live by subsistence agriculture. Once the MCP embarked on its armed struggle strategy the squatters became prime targets for the insurgents as suppliers of recruits and food as members of what the MCP termed the *Min Yuen*, or 'Masses Organisation'. Some squatters co-operated, including by joining the insurgent forces, through conviction. Many more did so in the face of intimidation.⁸

The MCP's disadvantages

Against the advantages the MCP insurgents enjoyed, they faced many more disadvantages. The most important of these has already been mentioned — their position as a minority of a minority, both in political and ethnic terms. Of great importance, too, was the fact that the identity of the MCP's leadership was well known to the colonial authorities, who benefited by the existence within their administration of a highly competent intelligence apparatus. This apparatus had as one of its most vital members a very capable senior ethnic Chinese officer, C.C. Too. More broadly, there were key Chinese-speaking British officials, some of whom had experience dating back to before the Second World War, and all of whom had been at the forefront of efforts to deal with the industrial agitation that had characterised the period leading up to the insurgency.

Further aiding the authorities as they began to develop a coherent strategy to contend with the guerrilla challenge was the fact that Malaya's geography meant that it was difficult for the insurgents to gain supplies other than from within the country's territory. Some supplies did slip over the border between Malaya and Thailand, and the insurgents were able to use some heavily jungled sections of the border with Thailand as sanctuaries from attack by the security forces. But the northernmost regions of Malaya were the most heavily Malay in character, in terms of the ethnic identity of the population, and so had little if any sympathy for the Chinese guerrillas. Overall, the administration's control over the sea coast meant that, for the most part, there was no prospect for the insurgents' benefiting in any major fashion from porous borders. Additionally, and very importantly, the insurgents were never able to establish an effective presence in Malaya's urban areas. Throughout the Emergency the cities and towns remained the exclusive domain of the administration. At no stage was there a comparable lack of urban security such as was characteristic of Saigon and Hanoi during the First Indochina War, when hit-and-run grenade attacks against soft targets such as cafes were part of the Viet Minh's stock in trade.

Towards the Briggs' Plan

The fact that the armed insurgency was confined to rural areas was essential to the way in which the colonial administration developed and implemented its response. The strategic response was known as the Briggs' Plan, from the surname of General Sir Harold Briggs, the Director of Operations against the insurgents. Perhaps surprisingly, the Plan was not implemented until May 1950 — nearly a year after the Emergency was declared. This was a reflection of the fact that the administration took time to formulate its strategy, despite its knowledge of the insurgents' leadership. There was need for a rapid increase in the size of military forces available to the administration and a requirement to expand the size of the police. At the same time there was disagreement at the highest level of the colonial administration over the nature of the MCP's challenge, with some early failure to appreciate the nature of the threat they posed by fighting as a guerrilla organisation. Nevertheless, the fact that the colonial

authorities were able to hold the MRLA at bay during this period underlines the fact that the insurgents were not able to achieve successes endangering the overall control of the administration. The Briggs' Plan had four essential points:

- To dominate the populated areas and to build a feeling of complete security which would in time result in a steady and increasing flow of information coming from all sources
- To break up the Communist organisations within populated areas
- To isolate the bandits from their food and their supply organisations in the populated areas [The term 'bandit' used when the Briggs' Plan was issued was later abandoned in favour of 'communist terrorist' since 'bandit' was thought to have a glamorous appeal to sections of the ethnic Chinese community]
- To destroy the bandits by forcing them to attack the security forces on their own ground

Essential to the ultimate success of the administration's strategy and tactics was the steady implementation of each of the four points of the Briggs' Plan by way of a co-ordinated combination of aggressive resettlement of squatters in 'new villages' and the carefully developed actions of the security forces, including reliance on gathering intelligence. Starting from the southern state of Johore and progressing north, the administration moved squatters, by force if necessary, into protected villages. There were considerable variations in the different Malay states in the way in which these protected villages were set up. While the policy called for the new villages to be established, where possible, in locations already settled by squatter communities, this was not always the case. More important than the particular location of individual villages was the application of standard procedures to ensure that the inhabitants of the villages were protected from the insurgents and brought within the administrative 'net' of the government. Villages were surrounded by double perimeter fences that were floodlit at night; they were protected by a combination of police and home guards on a twenty-four hour basis; and they received adequate government services, including the provision of schools and medical clinics.

At the same time the combined security forces, numbering upwards of 300,000 in total, steadily pursued the insurgents, who probably never totalled more than 9,000, and more usually comprised half that number in terms of those actively engaged in guerrilla operations.⁹ Although the bulk of the regular military forces committed against the guerrillas were British, there was an important contribution from the Commonwealth, including from Australia. Fijian military forces later played their part and were particularly adept at jungle patrolling.

Because Malaya remained under colonial control for most of the Emergency period this permitted the administration to use coercive measures, such as forced resettlement, that could have been difficult, if not impossible, in a fully independent country. Similarly, and with its knowledge of many of the ethnic Chinese who had played a prominent part in the industrial agitation in the 1946-48 period, the colonial administration had the necessary powers that enabled them to identify and deport no less than 10,000 persons suspected of links to the MCP and MRLA to China in the course of the first year of the Emergency.

By 1952 the insurgency had been contained, but certainly not overcome. From the beginning the colonial administration had shown its readiness to resort to collective punishment — curfews and food restrictions applied to resettled squatters — but it was with the arrival of General Sir Gerald Templer as High Commissioner and Commander in Chief in February 1952 that the campaign against the insurgents took on a new momentum. By the time Templer departed, in mid-1954, the back of the insurgency had been broken and, concurrently, the basic terms of the political settlement that was to accompany independence had been set in place. A feature of the counter-insurgency operations was the extent to which the intelligence services were successful in ‘turning’ Surrendered Enemy Personnel (SEPs) both to gain information and for use in propaganda activities aimed at causing guerrillas to defect. There is little doubt that some of the intelligence successes were achieved as the result of very rough handling of captured guerrillas. At a time when the media was effectively controlled by the colonial administration little of this was revealed to the public.

Reasons for the MCP's defeat

In reviewing the whole of the Emergency period the following features stand out as vital to the success of the British colonial administration in containing and overcoming the challenge posed by the insurgency:

- The insurgents never overcame their identity as a minority of an ethnic minority

- From the beginning of the insurgency the colonial administration had an overwhelming superiority in terms of the ratio of the number of its forces to those of the insurgents

- After a faltering start between 1946 and 1948 the colonial administration, working closely with the main local political parties, and in particular the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), found a formula for the independence that was achieved in 1957

- Recognition of the security problem presented by the large squatter community and the response to it through the establishment of 'new villages' enabled the administration to quarantine that section of the population that offered a possibility of support and assistance to the insurgents, in terms of both recruits and logistical support

- The administration was successful in preventing any significant cross-border support to the insurgents

- At no stage did the colonial administration have to contend with a major insurgent challenge in the urban areas (the fact of industrial unrest and student riots in Singapore does not invalidate this judgment)

- When harsh measures of collective punishment were instituted it was important for the emerging Malayan leadership to be able to sheet home responsibility for these actions to the colonial administration

- The colonial administration's intelligence apparatus was highly effective so that by the latter stages of the Emergency it knew the names of almost all the guerrillas hidden in their jungle retreats

All this noted, it would be wrong to leave the impression that the challenge to the colonial administration posed during the Emergency involved only small or minor costs, both human and material. The costs in terms of effects on the Malayan economy, particularly at the beginning of the Emergency, were considerable. So, too, were the costs of maintaining the security forces directed against the insurgents. In terms of lives lost, the manner in which figures for casualties have been cited by different authorities makes for difficulty in giving exact figures for casualties. A figure of 900 British and British Commonwealth troops killed is often cited, but the figures provided by Anthony Short are fewer, at 519 for the entire period of the Emergency. For the Emergency period as a whole, Short cites a figure for overall security force casualties — killed, wounded and missing — of 4,425. While his figures for overall civilian casualties — again, killed, wounded or missing — is 4,671.¹⁰ Even at the height of the Emergency in 1951 the total of all casualties — military, police and civilians — was 2,215, of whom 1,020 were wounded. This was a daily casualty rate of seven persons a day, with an average of just over three killed, a striking contrast with casualty figures from Iraq.¹¹

The non-lessons of the Malayan Emergency

It is self-evident that many, if not all, of the factors that were important in leading to the defeat of the insurgency mounted by the MCP are not of a character to be translated to Iraq. Indeed, perhaps the only

clear 'lesson' that might be said to have relevance for on-going events in Iraq was the determination of the British administration in association with the emerging Malayan political establishment to maintain their fight against the communist insurgents over a protracted period. In this regard, it is worth noting that retired General Tommy Franks, who had overall command of the initial campaign against Saddam Hussein's Iraq, has recently commented in the *New York Times* of 10 January 2005 that 'I think we will be engaged with our military in Iraq for, perhaps, three, five, perhaps ten years.'

The minority of a minority

Of the many non-lessons of Malaya for Iraq, none is more important than the character of the MCP/MRLA as a minority of an ethnic minority. It claimed to be fighting for a nationalist goal, but its claim was rejected by both the Malays and by the established leaders of the Chinese community. While it is true that the Sunni in Iraq, at 20-25 percent of the overall population, are a religious minority within the country and form the backbone of the current insurgency, they are at the same time Arabs operating in an Arab state. Moreover, as the Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's Mahdi Army's defiance of coalition forces showed during 2004, it would be most unwise to think of insurgency and resistance to the coalition as solely a Sunni affair. Despite the existence of undoubted sympathy for the insurgents among some ethnic Chinese in Malaya who did not themselves join the insurgency, the leaders of the Chinese community were steadfast in their opposition to the insurgents and carried the majority of their community with them.

Force ratios

In considering the non-lessons of the Emergency in relation to Iraq, the issue of force ratios is important, but in another sense it is a misleading diversion. In Malaya the total of security forces ranged against the insurgents, at their maximum strength, was 300,000 to 9,000 — with at most half of the latter committed operationally against the colonial authorities at any time. Most importantly, of the total of 300,000 no fewer than 70,000 were members of the local (essentially ethnic Malay) police. This emphasises the great difference between the current situation in Iraq, where the total of Coalition forces of some 150,000 are ranged against insurgents numbering at least 20,000, and possibly considerably more, with supporters sometimes numbered as high as 200,000. And this situation exists without the back-up of reliable Iraqi para-military or police forces.

In short, and while it is patently obvious that the Coalition has an inadequate number of troops to deploy against the insurgents, what is more important is less the issue of force ratios than the fact that the war in Iraq is qualitatively different to the counter-insurgency war that was fought in Malaya. Not least because of the successful resettlement of squatters in new villages and the control the colonial administration maintained over urban centres, the military could pursue the insurgents while the police were able successfully to control the civilian population. In contrast, much of the insurgency in Iraq is urban in character. Moreover, it is patently obvious that most, if not all, of the American forces active

in Iraq are not trained for counter-insurgency operations. This has been made apparent by a wide range of reporting, including the recent devastating article by *The Economist's* 'embedded' correspondent in the newspaper's issue of 1 January 2005, 'When deadly force bumps into hearts and minds.'

Discussion of force ratios, of the desirability of a 10:1 advantage of security forces to insurgents, as is often suggested is necessary when guerrilla conflicts are discussed, misses the point in the case of Iraq. It may well be that the commitment of a greater number of American troops in Iraq could lead to more success against the insurgents. And, as Middle Eastern expert Anthony Cordesman suggests, the use of such increased forces following a much more aggressive strategy could lead to the United States achieving its political goals. But it will not do so by seeking to replicate the strategies of the Malayan Emergency.¹²

Intelligence

When the Malayan Emergency was declared in June 1948 the colonial administration already had a well-established intelligence apparatus that knew the identities of most, if not all, of the key insurgent leaders. It is painfully apparent that there is no such equivalent intelligence available to the coalition forces in Iraq.

Prevention of cross-border assistance

As already noted, the colonial administration and its successor as the independent Federation of Malaya were largely successful in preventing assistance of any kind, personnel and matériel, reaching the guerrillas fighting against the government. Although the actual size of non-Iraqi forces fighting against the Coalition in Iraq is not known with any certainty, it is clear that foreign insurgents play a part in the current conflict as sealing Iraq's porous borders is an almost impossible aim to achieve.

Nature of the insurgency

While it may be disturbing for policy makers in Washington to contemplate, there is abundant evidence that nationalism, broadly defined, plays an important part in the current insurgency in Iraq. The rapidity with which a wide range of Iraqi opinion shifted from welcoming the coalition forces to resenting their presence was/is reflective of nationalist feeling as well as resentment by the ousted Baathists at the fact of their having lost power. To note this is not to deny the Islamist elements that are present, including the part played by an uncertain number of foreign Arabs who see their role as being part of a broader *jihad*. In contrast, and despite the appeals the communist insurgents made to their view of nationalism in Malaya they never succeed in convincing the majority of the population of their nationalist credentials. From 1952 onwards the claim to nationalist leadership was firmly in the hands of the Malay political leadership, with the backing of the most important leaders of the ethnic Chinese

community. At the same time, and again in contrast to the situation in Iraq, the administration in Malaya was confronting a single, clearly identifiable enemy.

The unique character of the Malayan Emergency

The success of the British colonial administration in Malaya in defeating the MCP/MRLA provides one of the few examples of outright military victory over a guerrilla insurgency in the post-Second World War period, a victory that went hand in hand with the amicable transfer of political power. The closer one examines how this victory was achieved the clearer it becomes that it came about in circumstances that were particular, indeed unique, to Malaya. In very great contrast, the policies followed at much the same time in another British colony, Kenya, in response to the Mau Mau rebellion, were marked by a lack of strategic sensitivity and what is now recognised as self-defeating brutality on the part of the colonial power.¹³ Beyond a readiness on the part of the colonial administration to pursue its goals over the long haul, there is little to suggest that the way in which the Malayan Emergency was managed offers any lessons for Iraq.

ENDNOTES

1. Niall Ferguson, 'The last Iraqi insurgency', *New York Times*, 18 April 2004.
2. I analysed this issue in my research monograph, *Strategic Hamlets in South Vietnam: A Survey and a Comparison*, Cornell Southeast Asia Program Data Paper No. 45, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University, April 1965. Little attention is now given to the fact that during the Vietnam War there was a British Advisory Mission based in Saigon providing advice on ways to contain the communist insurgency. It was led by Sir Robert Thompson, who had held the position of Secretary of Defence within the Malayan colonial administration during the Emergency, and was active in efforts to apply the strategies that had worked in Malaya — particularly in terms of protected villages—to Vietnam. Thompson published his views on counter-insurgency strategies in a well-known book, *Defeating Communist Insurgency: the Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam*, London, Praeger, 1966. I met Thompson in 1963 in Saigon and — admittedly on the basis of a conversation at a social function — formed the opinion that he did not fully recognise the profound differences between Malaya and Vietnam. In the opinion of one of Thompson's senior colleagues in Malaya — expressed to me in a personal communication — the success he claimed for the government side, and for his own role, in combating the communist insurgency failed to give proper recognition to the work of others and, in particular, to the achievements of General Templer. This dissenting view reflects the fact that despite the final success of the colonial administration in defeating the MCP/MRLA insurgency, there were widely differing views held within the administration of the desirability of particular strategies and the roles played by particular individuals. The distinguished Chinese scholar/administrator, Victor Purcell, author of *Malaya: Communist or Free*, London, Gollancz, 1954, for instance, was a vehement critic of Templer's policies.
3. Without claiming to have made an exhaustive search of all Australian media sources, I have only noticed one reference to the Malayan Emergency as being seen as a possible guide to current action in Iraq. This was in an article by Patrick Walters in *The Australian*, which reported references to the Malayan Emergency in overseas media. The *Sydney Morning Herald* commentator, Gerard Henderson, Executive Director of the Sydney Institute, referred to the Emergency in an article on 21 October 2004, but not as a possible guide to actions that should be followed in Iraq.
4. Other examples of references to the strategies of the Malayan Emergency as a possible basis for defeating the insurgency in Iraq include, Ann Scott Tyson in *The Christian Science Monitor*, 13 November 2003, which contrasted the lack of in-country training given to American troops fighting against insurgents in Iraq with such training given to British forces in Malaya. Of related interest is the suggestion that the Emergency offers answers to the current situation in Afghanistan. See, Anthony Paul, 'Malayan emergency a lesson for Afghan war,' *Straits Times Interactive*, 9 December 2004. I thank Malcolm Cook of the Lowy Institute for bring this reference to my attention.
5. The most comprehensive account of the Malayan Emergency is provided by Anthony Short, *The Communist Insurrection in Malaya, 1948-1960*, London, Muller, 1975. Originally commissioned by the Government of Malaya to be an official history of the Emergency, the later Malaysian Government in 1968 withdrew its permission for Short to publish what he had written on the alleged basis that it breached security concerns. Subsequently, and acting as a private scholar, he published the work in 1975. For what follows I draw on Short's work, but also on Sections II and V of my *Strategic Hamlets*. A popular account of the defeat of the communist insurgents in Malaya is found in Noel Barber, *The War of the Running Dogs: How Malaya Defeated the Communist Guerillas, 1948-1960*, London, Collins, 1970. The Australian military role in the Emergency is described in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, *Emergency and Confrontation: Australian Military Operations in Malaya and Borneo 1950-66*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 1996. Richard Stubbs in his *Hearts and Minds in Guerrilla Warfare: The Malayan Emergency 1948-1960*, Singapore, Oxford University Press, 1989, deals effectively with 'the broader context of the social, political, and economic aspects of life in Malaya' during the Emergency.
6. The complex political history of this period is admirably dealt with by Virginia Hooker in her *A Short History of Malaysia: Linking East and West*, St Leonards, Allen & Unwin, 2003.

7. The issue is examined and well-summarised, in the negative, by J.M. Pluvier in *South-East Asia from Colonialism to Independence*, Kuala Lumpur, Oxford University Press, 1974, 457-59.
8. Although written with sympathy for the squatters and a degree of bias in favour of the communist insurgents, Han Suyin's novel, *And the Rain My Drink*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1956, provides useful insights for the period of the Emergency.
9. Different sources give varied figures for the breakdown of the various arms of the colonial administration forces at various times during the Malayan Emergency. A reliable breakdown of those forces at the height of the Emergency is provided by G.Z. Hanrahan, *The Communist Struggle in Malaya*, New York, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1954, 75, where he records 40,000 regular British and British Commonwealth troops, 70,000 Police and 200,000 Home Guards.
10. Short, op.cit., Appendix. 'Casualties, Incidents, Contacts', 507-08.
11. These figures are drawn from *Federation of Malaya, Annual Report, 1952*, Kuala Lumpur, 13. According to *The Economist*, 1-7 January 2005. quoting figures compiled by the Brookings Institution, 1,500 Iraqi security forces personnel — separate from American casualties — were killed in the first ten months of 2004, with at least another 200 killed during early November.
12. Anthony Cordesman, 'Managing risks in Iraq: winning the war after the war,' *International Herald Tribune*, 28 December 2004.
13. The conduct of the counter-insurgency policies has recently and usefully been discussed in a review in *The Economist*, 1-7 January 2005, 'Mau Mau and the bodysnatchers – British colonial history'.

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