

Shirking the Briggs Plan: Civilian Obstruction of ‘Hearts and Minds’ and the Army’s Struggle for Control in Malaya, 1950-1952

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Civil-military tensions played a central role shaping the evolution of the British campaign during the Malayan Emergency. While the Briggs Plan has often been described as focusing exclusively on population control, Briggs actually developed a strategy combining coercive and security measures with wide-reaching political reforms. However, civilian political opposition to investment or the extension of political rights to the Chinese squatters, notably among top members of the Malayan Civil Service and ethnic Malay elite, led them to resist political approaches during Briggs’ tenure as director of operations (June 1950-November 1951). Briggs’ lack of executive authority over the civil service, combined with conservative political preferences among key civilians, led to the manifestation of the Briggs Plan as a programme of coercive population control. From mid-1951, the civil-military struggle over campaign strategy transformed into a struggle for control of the Malayan government. The new Conservative government’s decision to appoint General Templer high commissioner in late 1951 represented a victory for the officers, supporting the Briggs Plan’s political thrust, over civilian resistance. The implementation of political reforms associated with “hearts and minds” were Briggs’ initiatives, not Templer’s. By gaining control over the civil administration, Templer was able to implement those reforms.

Keywords: Malaya; Malayan Emergency; civil-military relations; Harold Briggs; Gerald Templer; counterinsurgency; hearts and minds

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Introduction

The Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) has been the subject of extensive scholarly treatment, but the civil-military dynamics that shaped the British campaign, notably the relations between the Colonial Office and Ministry of Defence in London and between the army and the Malayan Civil Service (MCS), have received little attention. While

Malaya is often cited as a paradigmatic case of civil-military cooperation as a key to the campaign's success,¹ the reality is that civil-military relations were fraught with tension caused by conflicting goals for Malaya's future and beliefs about the best way to defeat the insurgency of the Malayan Communist Party (MCP). The tendency to ignore the ways in which civil-military dynamics impacted strategic planning has hindered an understanding of the evolution of the British campaign, notably the emergence of the political reforms associated with the so-called 'hearts and minds' approach, which were largely absent during General Briggs' tenure as director of operations (May 1950 – November 1951).

The absence of political initiatives during Briggs' tenure has generated an assumption that the Briggs Plan, the strategy he developed to suppress the insurgency, focused solely on coercive population control while 'hearts and minds' was developed only after Templer's arrival in February 1952.² That assumption is wrong. Briggs' initial proposals contained a significant political component; while 'hearts and minds' has often been attributed to Templer, it was Briggs' plan all along. However, in the opening phase of the plan's implementation, these political measures were not carried out according to Briggs' direction.

The failure to implement the political elements of the Briggs Plan before Templer's appointment as high commissioner, including infrastructure development and service provision in the New Villages as well as the granting of land ownership and political rights to the Chinese squatters, was due to civilian political opposition combined with the chain of command in Malaya. The Briggs Plan envisioned a combined operation delegating distinct tasks to the military, police, and civil authorities. During Briggs' tenure, the military faithfully carried out their responsibilities. However, civilians in Malaya, including top civil servants and ethnic Malay elites, resisted the

political approach and began pushing a more aggressive military strategy that the army opposed, citing the limits of military power. But as director of operations, Briggs lacked the executive authority to force civilian personnel to comply with his directives. That prerogative lay with the high commissioner, Sir Henry Gurney, who declined to pursue the political initiatives delegated to the civil service. While Briggs and the army leadership believed these reforms would facilitate the defeat of the insurgency and strengthen state capacity, top civilian officials, including Gurney and Commissioner General Malcolm MacDonald, worried that measures taken to win the hearts and minds of the Chinese would alienate the nationalist ethnic Malays whose support was seen as vital to the long-run success of Britain's Malaya project. Civilian shirking resulted in the Briggs Plan's manifestation as a program focused almost exclusively on coercive population control.

Civilian obstruction of Briggs' political measures is especially significant given the general belief, grounded in organizational theory, that military officers prefer military solutions to insurgencies while civilians are more concerned with political solutions.³ The Malayan Emergency challenges these assumptions, as it was the officers who consistently emphasized the political dimensions of the campaign over civilian opposition. Given the centrality of the Malayan Emergency to contemporary counterinsurgency theory, this article constitutes an important corrective to both the historical literature, by highlighting hitherto neglected dynamics of civil-military conflict in a case lauded for close civil-military cooperation, and organizational approaches to counterinsurgency, by challenging the tendency to hold military organizations responsible for the 'over-militarisation' of campaigns.⁴ The following analysis reveals a different explanation: the political preferences of conservative

civilians, supporting the status-quo, led them to oppose political reform while civilian primacy in the chain of command enabled them to ignore Briggs' direction.

In this, Malaya was actually fairly typical of the wider British imperial experience. Military actors recognized the potential contributions of political reform in a number of conflicts across the twentieth century. During the Anglo-Boer War, High Commissioner Milner and General Kitchener clashed over the strategic direction of the campaign. Kitchener favoured generous political concessions to the Boers designed to 'win the peace' while Milner pushed for an unconditional surrender that would have led to the marginalisation of the Boers from the political and economic life of South Africa.⁵ In Ireland in 1920-21, General Macready was among the strongest proponents of political concessions opposed by conservatives in the Cabinet, arguing 'Martial Law not only offers no permanent solution, but if it is forced on the country can only accentuate the present spirit of defiance', concluding, 'I am convinced that nothing short of a bold, dramatic, political stroke will solve this matter'.⁶ Similarly, in 1936 during the Palestinian Rebellion, when considering the available options, RAF officers concluded, 'First alternative is drastic repression ... This policy would sow seeds of hatred in all arab countries which would bear bitter fruit ... Second alternative is concession. This exposes us to taunt of surrendering to violence, but surely Britain is strong enough to laugh at this. The combined wisdom of Whitehall should surely be able to devise a suitable plan'.⁷ In these cases, resistance to political solutions came from civilian officials against the advice of the military.

This article traces the genesis and evolution of the Briggs Plan from General Briggs' appointment as director of operations in March 1950 through Templer's arrival in February 1952. Focusing on the preferences of civilian and military actors and the civil-military tensions that resulted, three obstacles to the implementation of the

political elements of the Briggs Plan can be identified: civilian opposition to the political elements of Briggs' strategy, Briggs' lack of executive authority, and the Labour Government's reluctance to pressure civilians to comply with Briggs' directives. Due to the structural barriers that the chain of command presented for the army, the struggle over the strategic direction of the campaign transformed into a struggle for control of the Malayan government, culminating in General Templer's appointment as high commissioner.

Finally, this analysis suggests a new explanation for Templer's contribution in Malaya, which has been subject to wide debate.⁸ Templer's appointment as high commissioner gave the army the authority to implement the administrative and political aspects of the Briggs Plan that Gurney had resisted, finally enabling the British army to overcome civilian obstruction of Briggs' reform programme. While Hack is almost certainly correct that the population and food control measures were the key factors that broke the insurgency rather than Templer's implementation of 'hearts and minds', it undoubtedly helped the British to lay the foundation for a more centralised and effective state following Malayan independence.⁹

The Briggs Plan: Genesis and Analysis

Background to the Briggs Plan

When Lt. General Sir Harold Briggs was appointed director of operations in March 1950, he was tasked with developing a strategy to defeat the communist insurgency that had broken out almost two years earlier. The resulting plan focused on separating insurgents from their supply base, the rural Chinese 'squatters', and integrating them into the state through wholesale resettlement into government-controlled 'New

Villages', administrative capacity building, and political reform. The army's task was to enforce a cordon between settled areas and insurgent bases in the jungle, as well as harry insurgents through jungle operations. The rest of the strategy, notably infrastructure development, service provision, and political reform, was delegated to the Malayan government.

The opening phase of the Malayan Emergency, lasting from June 1948 through the end of 1949, was largely a strategic victory for the British army, which was able to beat back a large-scale military challenge from the MCP. This period, known colloquially as the 'counterterror' phase, resulted in a major setback for the communist campaign. By the end of 1949, the MCP had rethought its strategy, shifting its focus to subversion and population control, which led the British to a stalemate by the end of 1949.¹⁰

On February 23, 1950, High Commissioner Gurney wrote to Colonial Secretary Arthur Creech Jones:

I have been considering for some time the desirability of appointing one officer to plan, coordinate, and generally direct the anti-bandit operations *of the police and fighting services*.¹¹

Gurney concluded that due to their defeats over the previous year, the insurgents had adopted a strategy of 'protracted guerrilla warfare' with a large push to mobilize the squatter population. He had recognized in December 1949 that the pace of 'anti-bandit operations' had stalled and that current military approaches had reached the limit of their potential.¹² Gurney concluded that this shift necessitated more coherent direction for the combined effort, but that the existing machinery was insufficient; there did not exist an individual in Malaya who could assume this role in addition to their normal duties.

While Gurney might have filled this position himself, he expressed no inclination to assume the burden. It is generally agreed that he had little interest in the counterinsurgency and preferred to separate security operations from day-to-day functions of the Malayan Civil Service:

I therefore recommend that immediate steps should be taken to second to this Government an experienced military officer for appointment to a new civil post with the following functions. He would be responsible for the preparation for *offensive action* and the allocation of tasks to the *various components of the security forces*. ...

He would work directly under myself and within the framework of the policy laid down by this government. He will be in close touch with civil authorities responsible for essential features of the campaign, such as settlement and control of squatters, propaganda, immigration control and settlement of labour disputes, and would have *right to make representation to me* in such matters affecting the conduct of anti-communist campaign as a whole.¹³

Gurney's comments reveal a preoccupation with the coercive and control-oriented aspects of the counterinsurgency, such as squatter resettlement and offensive action, and almost complete silence on the campaign's deeper political aspects beyond reaffirming existing government policy. Throughout the conflict, Gurney would pay lip service to the importance of political and administrative reform, but he would not put any pressure on the administration or the autonomous state governments to carry it out.

The army's position on proper strategy in Malaya was unequivocal at every level of the chain of command: 'the suppression of the communist bandits is much more a matter for civil rather than military action'.¹⁴ The chief of the imperial general staff (CIGS), Field Marshal Sir William Slim, concurred with Gurney's view that the army operations conducted between the summer of 1948 and the end of 1949 had succeeded in driving back a large-scale communist offensive and had even succeeded in regaining the initiative.¹⁵ However, they had reached a new equilibrium where the military was

only succeeding in chasing the guerrillas in circles through the jungle. Slim stated in no uncertain terms that military action was useless as long as the civil administration did not have the capacity to consolidate its gains.¹⁶

General John Harding, commander-in-chief of Far East Land Forces, believed that the greatest problem facing British forces was a lack of actionable intelligence. This rendered military operations highly inefficient: ‘an enormous amount of military effort is being necessarily absorbed on prophylactic and will o’ the wisp patrolling and jungle bashing’.¹⁷ Harding concluded:

I cannot over emphasise the fact that the effective administration of the whole country is the only decisive answer to the elimination of the bandits ... From the military point of view quicker decisions and more rapid action in the *civil administrative* field are essential.¹⁸

While the army’s job was deep jungle penetration and support for the civil authorities, the officers were clear in their belief that the central tasks of the counterinsurgency, including controlling and protecting the population and gathering intelligence, were jobs for the police and the civil authorities. This suggested that Gurney and the army had quite different ideas about where the primary responsibility for prosecuting the counterinsurgency lay.

The Briggs Plan

Given the civil-military consensus in both Malaya and London about the desirability of a director of operations, Gurney’s request was fast-tracked, and Slim was tasked with recommending a suitable officer for the job.¹⁹ Slim’s choice was Lt. General (retired) Briggs, who had been his subordinate in Burma during WWII and served as general officer commanding for Burma from 1946 until its independence in 1948.²⁰ Briggs assumed his duties in early May 1950, and his plan came together in the period of about

a week, drawing on and integrating a range of pre-existing measures, including population resettlement, while adding a number of his own.²¹ Briggs' efforts resulted in a coordinated strategy that combined three distinct elements: military, political, and organisational.²²

In Briggs' initial assessment, he saw the MCP's reliance on the population as their weak point, and the campaign's objective became the simultaneous defeat of the Malayan National Liberation Army (MNLA), and its support organization, the Min Yuen, which operated among the population. His strategy aimed to break the link between the population and the Min Yuen on one hand and the MCP and the MNLA on the other.²³ This disruption was to serve two strategic purposes. First, it would cut off insurgents from their source of supplies including food, materiel, and intelligence. Second, British officials believed that gaining control over the population and ensuring their security would encourage the people to provide necessary intelligence on insurgents, although Briggs recognized that such cooperation might have to be compelled through a system of carrots and sticks.²⁴

The plan contained two distinct but related operational components. First, the squatter population needed to be brought under effective government control and the country needed to be systematically cleared of insurgents. Briggs recognized that past military operations had been ineffective because once the security forces departed an area, insurgents would return. Keeping the insurgents out was a problem for the civil administration and the police force, responsible for resettling the squatters into the 'New Villages' and maintaining government authority in these settled areas. The army's presence aimed to support these primary activities and maintain the 'Framework,' a cordon between settled areas and insurgent hideouts in the jungle. The task of the

framework and its affiliated striking forces was to dominate the paths in and out of the jungle so insurgents could not re-enter settled areas once they had been cleared.²⁵

The second element of Briggs' plan contained important political measures. Briggs began with the idea of granting cooperative squatters formal ownership of the land they worked while threatening to withhold or deprive land from noncooperative squatters. While later, food restrictions and curfews would constitute the key sticks of Briggs' proposed system, these were not (and indeed could not be) implemented until squatter resettlement was complete.²⁶ As the plan developed in the spring and summer of 1950, land ownership would be supplemented with citizenship rights as well as improved infrastructure and services for the New Villages to raise the squatters' standard of living and extend effective state control over them. While absent from Briggs' initial memo, these aspects were explicitly included in the high commissioner's appeal to the Malay sultans ruling the state governments:

Will your Highnesses please excuse me if I do some plain speaking? You are progressing towards self-Government. No Government can be successful unless all sections of the population are fully represented in the Administration of the country and of the State. I know how difficult it is for you to decide on such drastic changes but it is vital to realise that the Chinese are here to stay and that such land as they occupy, unless re-settled, they will have to keep whether one likes it or not. Secondly, I know that much of your revenue has had to be spent on the Chinese portion of your population. To bring these Chinese under full administrative control and to give them the necessary social services is essential but will cost a further large sum. ... I beg of you to accept these facts whole-heartedly now, as they must be faced.²⁷

While the granting of land ownership and citizenship rights (which most rural Chinese did not enjoy despite having been born in Malaya²⁸) were conceived as means to the military end, they obviously carried important political implications for future of the Malayan state, which Gurney had not envisioned in his original proposal. Given the

hostility of the Malay population to the Chinese (see below), Briggs anticipated pushback from the state governments:

The time has come when the Malays should realise that the Chinese are here for good and will increase and that the land they occupy they will keep, unless resettled. The promise of this land or the deprivation of it according to their behaviour would knock the main plank from under the feet of Communist propaganda and deprivation of land might be as effective as the fear of the bandits. Could not the Sultans be persuaded that, if they don't act 'gracefully' now, they will lose more in the long run?²⁹

Finally, General Briggs reworked the system for coordinating and directing counterinsurgency operations, imposing a committee system on Malaya at three levels.³⁰ At the top, there was a Federal War Council (FWC), chaired by the director of operations, which included the chief secretary, the police commissioner, the general officer commanding, the air officer commanding, and the Federation secretary of defence.³¹ The responsibility of the FWC was to 'produce policy and to provide the State and Settlement Executive Committees with all the resources they require'.³² But while Briggs was the chairman of the FWC, he lacked executive authority to translate his directions into orders, especially when it came to the civil administration. The only one with this authority was the high commissioner, but the disinterested Gurney did not sit on the FWC until spring 1951. Even after he began chairing FWC meetings, he continued to resist the political elements of Briggs' plan because he feared opposition from Malay elites.³³

Below the FWC, the system was reproduced at the state and district levels as War Executive Committees (WECs). At both the state and district levels, these committees included four primary officials: the chief civil political authority (at the state level, this was the Mentari Besar, the sultan's Malay deputy), the British resident

advisor to the sultan, the senior military and police officers at the state and district levels. The responsibility of the SWECs was 'to wage the "war" in their own territories', creating a decentralised system where each state developed and prosecuted its own campaign.³⁴ This system made information sharing and discussion easier, creating opportunities for coordination. However, it would not guarantee coordination, as there was no overarching commander empowered to make binding decisions at any level to ensure coordinated action. The unintegrated nature of the civil and military chains of command would handicap campaign coordination and progress throughout Briggs' tenure.

An Evaluation of the Briggs Plan

The Briggs Plan is, perhaps, the most detailed articulation of counterinsurgency strategy and its underlying logic in the history of the British empire. It establishes objectives, considers the organisation of the insurgency and the opportunities for success, and then articulates an integrated civil-military plan to achieve it. The Briggs Plan was uniquely adapted to conditions in Malaya, taking advantage of three important opportunities. First, Malaya was a food-deficit region; it could not produce enough food to satisfy its population. And the further from the coast, i.e. the deeper in the jungle, the more difficult it was to produce one's own supplies.³⁵ Second, patterns of settlement and the distribution of mountains and jungle made population control a relatively simple task. Malaya's population was concentrated along its coastal strip, and the mountainous jungle of the interior was all but uninhabitable, significantly shrinking the area the government had to effectively administer. Finally, given that Malaya was a peninsula with practically no land access, the infiltration of supplies from the outside would be extremely difficult. Even if it was feasible, because the insurgents were concentrated in the interior, supplies would still have to pass through the framework, meaning the

MNLA was effectively cut off from outside resupply.

In retrospect, the second element of the Briggs Plan, the expectation that population control and security would mobilize the Chinese in support of the government and lead to intelligence cooperation, was less strategically sound. Briggs never answered the question, if the Chinese population and the Min Yuen were cut off from the insurgents, how would they be able to inform the British on the whereabouts of the insurgents hiding in the jungle? Villagers could inform on communist agents in the villages (although historical evidence raises questions about whether they actually did³⁶), however, given that those agents were also cut off from the insurgents, the physical aspects of resettlement and population control effectively eliminated the Min Yuen's *raison d'être*. Struggling to feed themselves and short on supplies, the insurgents would be able to devote less time and energy to the insurgency, which eventually encouraged many to surrender to the Malayan authorities, joining the ranks of the SEPs (Surrendering Enemy Personnel) who were the real source of operational intelligence for British forces.³⁷ Population control alone, then, was probably sufficient to defeat the insurgency.³⁸

Civilian Preferences and the Obstacles to Implementing the Briggs Plan

The political elements of the Briggs Plan were always going to be a challenge to implement for two reasons: civilian political preferences and the distribution of political power in Malaya. Briggs' initiatives struck against the preferences of two key groups of civilians. First, the conservative Malay elites, as well as many middle class Malays, were strongly ethnonationalist and deeply opposed to policies that would benefit the Chinese.³⁹ Second, top civilian administrators, notably Malayan High Commissioner Gurney and Commissioner General MacDonald, the chairman of the British Defence

Coordinating Committee (BDCC) tasked with coordinating political and military policy for the entire Far East, were reluctant to confront the Malay elites. The second problem was the distribution of political power in Malaya, which was a decentralized polity granting wide authority and autonomy to the states, ruled by Malay sultans. In turn, the lack of authority enjoyed by Briggs as director of operations meant that the army was largely powerless to enact the political measures contained in the Briggs Plan.

One of Briggs' core objectives was to extend effective administration over the Chinese population, which meant large-scale investment in infrastructure and services. However, this generated deep resentment among the Malays, who believed that government expenditure should go to the Malay population rather than the Chinese:

There is no doubt that, although the Malays themselves are strongly anti-communist, the suspicion and distrust of the Malays regarding British intentions was at one time such that State Governments were most resentful of any attempt by the FedGov to intervene in State matters, particularly where this intervention took the form of pressure to devote resources to the resettlement of the Chinese rural population, resources that in the Malay view should be more properly devoted to the betterment of Malay conditions.⁴⁰

This created a reciprocal danger, that by forcing political reforms on the Malay population, it might alienate them and lead to a more aggressive anti-British movement on the part of the Malay nationalists.⁴¹ The British were forced to tread a fine line between winning the hearts and minds of the Chinese and losing the hearts and minds of the Malays.

This clash between liberal and ethnocentric visions for the future Malayan state, alongside the clash between federal and state authority, reflected the conflict over Malaya's constitution that occurred between 1946 and 1948, which had pitted the British government against the Malay elite. Following the war, the British advanced a

plan for constitutional development known as the Malayan Union, which reflected a liberal vision for post-war Malaya in two respects. First, it intended to extend equal civil and political rights to all members of Malaya's three main ethnic groups, Malay, Chinese, and Indian. Second, the Malayan Union was to be a strong, centralized state rather than the previously decentralized conglomeration of distinct political entities that included the nominally sovereign Federated and Unfederated Malay States, a group of nine sultanates under a British protectorate, and the Straits Settlements: the crown colonies of Malacca, Penang, and Singapore.

However rising Malay ethnonationalism and the sultans' desire to preserve their power fuelled opposition to the liberal vision of the Union.⁴² Strong Malay resistance, expressed through mounting protests and acts of civil disobedience, coupled with Britain's reluctance to lose Malay support, led to the collapse of the Union and its replacement by the Malayan Federation in January 1948, reversing plans for centralization and equal rights.⁴³ While the British retained the prerogatives of a protectorate, including control of defence and foreign affairs, the states and sultans regained their internal sovereignty:

Malay political pressure forced us to abandon plans for a strong central Government with wide executive powers which were embodied by the Malayan Union and a measure of legislative and an even greater measure of executive authority were restored to the Malay States by the 1948 Federation Agreement. The Malay States, in combination, are a powerful force, and the Federal machine can only work with their confidence and goodwill.⁴⁴

Under the constitution of the Malayan Federation, the British, as the colonial power, controlled the obvious instruments of counterinsurgency, including defence and security policy, as well as (national) economic and fiscal policy. However, the state governments controlled key instruments of Briggs' plan including local economic

investment, infrastructure development, education and health policy, and land policy.⁴⁵

While the high commissioner held wide reserve powers, allowing him to override the decisions of the state governments or the federal legislature, Gurney was reluctant to use those powers because such action was 'politically undesirable'.⁴⁶ However, without the invocation of those powers, 'the Government is powerless to enforce its decisions, as it is in a considerable minority in the [federal] legislature'.⁴⁷ Ethnic Malay preferences generated significant obstacles to the implementation of the political aspects of the Briggs' plan due to the decentralised structure of the Federation.

Compounding the problem were the attitudes of the British members of the Malayan Civil Service. Following a visit to Malaya, CIGS Slim concluded, 'a number of pre-war British Malayan civil and police officers are, I think, still obsessed with the idea that Malaya is a country for Malays'.⁴⁸ The colonial secretary held similar feelings:

I am of course aware that a sympathetic approach to the administration of the Chinese does not come naturally to senior officers of the M.C.S. [Malayan Civil Service] who (as also some of the older members of the Police Force) find it difficult to adjust themselves to post-war conditions and policies.⁴⁹

Slim continued, 'There is also a tendency to regard the war effort against the Communist bandits as something that should be left to the army'.⁵⁰

In London, the new colonial secretary, James Griffiths, recognizing the weakness of the civil administration, placed great emphasis on administrative reform, the importance of squatter resettlement, and the improvement of the police force.⁵¹ He also clearly indicated his support for the political reform aspects of the Briggs plan, including the plan to raise standards of living for the Chinese as well as the recommendation for the expansion of citizenship rights.⁵² However, he did not push the high commissioner. He supported Gurney's personal style and believed it was dangerous to push the Malay states too far too quickly.⁵³ Consequently, while Griffiths

endorsed Briggs' political proposals and lamented the administration's lack of progress, he was unwilling to do anything about it.

Shirking the Briggs Plan

Briggs' report was received with enthusiasm in London and formally accepted by the Cabinet Committee on Malaya on May 18, 1950.⁵⁴ Framework operations and resettlement commenced in the southern state of Johore on June 1. While Briggs' initial timetable urged patience, even he was disappointed. Resettlement quickly fell behind schedule, the British did not receive the expected flow of information from the resettled population, and insurgent violence persisted, and even increased, through the end of the year.

As frustration mounted, questions emerged about the source of the problem. Stemming from the belief that civil consolidation had to precede effective military operations, there was general agreement in London that the main problems were the slow pace of civil and police reform and resistance to the political elements of the Briggs Plan. However, while military officials urged the civilians to speed progress on the administrative front, top civilian officials, especially the high commissioner, often expressed reluctance to do so, especially in areas that would be politically problematic.

As early as mid-June, the war secretary expressed concern that, while the civil role was top priority, 'quite often it is the soldier who really has to push the job along'.⁵⁵ Additionally, he criticized the civil administration's reluctance to make use of their powers under the emergency regulations:

in this [reluctance to invoke the emergency regulations] I thought it was being too liberal and weak. On the other hand, politically the Government and the administration seem to me not liberal enough in that they are not nearly active

enough in forging ahead with the political development of the country ... Democratic development has been complicated by the business of Chinese citizenship and I feel that the Government should press on with that, even at some risk, pretty rapidly.⁵⁶

While acknowledging the problem, the Colonial and Foreign Offices tended to present excuses rather than solutions. Colonial Secretary Griffiths responded that the problem lay in the constitutional framework of the Malayan Federation, which reserved a great deal of civil power for state governments. These governments controlled the pace of resettlement, and it was not possible to make any changes without altering the constitution ‘without consent of the rulers, and *we must not take any risk of alienating the Malays*’.⁵⁷ As early as July 14, Griffiths was indicating that resettlement had run into political difficulties: ‘the Malays, who naturally regard the Chinese as the community responsible for the present trouble, did not react favourably to the considerable programme of government expenditure for the benefit of the Chinese Squatters’.⁵⁸

General Briggs Threatens to Resign: November 1950

In October 1950, Johore was gripped by a fresh outbreak of insurgent violence and Briggs’ frustration began to mount, generating the first civil-military confrontation in November. Internally, military criticism of the capabilities of the civilian leadership in Malaya was growing. General Harding held firm to the army’s initial position, ‘whatever we are able to do by the way of increased [military] efficacy will not increase the overall rate of progress unless and until there is a faster improvement on the police and civil side’.⁵⁹ He continued:

I don’t believe that the civil and police authorities on the state and district level have really got the personality, ability or drive to see this business through. They

are mostly inclined to accept difficulties and delays instead of going all out to overcome them.⁶⁰

Harding believed that the solution to the problem lay in greater military control over the higher direction of the campaign.

Defence Minister Emanuel Shinwell's apprehensions about the campaign's progress led the government to recall Gurney to London for consultations in late October. On November 2, Briggs indicated his desire to also return to London to present his side of the story and 'impress upon him [the colonial secretary] the growing urgency and seriousness of the position here'.⁶¹ Briggs even threatened to step down as director of operations and conditioned his willingness to remain in Malaya on the immediate implementation of a number of measures he had requested but which Gurney had ignored. The primary demand was that Gurney begin chairing the meetings of the Federal War Council. The second demand was to put the civil administration on a 'war footing', eliminating 'non-essential activities': aspects of civil administration that were not directly connected to the counterinsurgency.⁶²

Briggs returned to London in late November for joint consultations with Gurney. Briggs reported to the prime minister that the decision to invest the FWC with executive authority, by virtue of the high commissioner's chairmanship, had been decided (in fact it had been conceded by the Colonial Office on Gurney's behalf), and he also reported his intention to place the Malayan civil administration on the war footing he had demanded in his telegram.⁶³ Briggs expressed his belief that the government possessed all the powers necessary to 'take ruthless action against the Malayan Communists'.⁶⁴ While the committee system received a power boost when Gurney began chairing FWC meetings, questions remained regarding whether he would be willing to use his powers to implement Briggs' directives due to his reluctance to confront the Malay elites.

Civilians Attempt a Strategic Pivot

Owing to a renewed deterioration of the situation, a second round of consultations occurred in late February 1951 at the request of Prime Minister Attlee, who, along with Defence Minister Shinwell, was growing increasingly concerned at the pace of resettlement and its apparent lack of results.⁶⁵ Slim responded that the main task was not military, the killing of insurgents, but rather the re-establishment of law and order and the dismantling of the insurgents' support structures in the settled areas.⁶⁶ Griffiths, while agreeing that progress was disappointing, argued that the FWC had all of the power it required. However, and once again, the authority to act did not imply action, which constituted the crux of the army's criticism: 'The powers of the Malayan Government were now admittedly adequate, but were they being fully used and was there any real leadership?'⁶⁷

The Foreign Office representative on the Malaya Committee made a different sort of proposal. He suggested that, given the state of affairs in the Far East, time was of the essence and that the solution was 'more ruthless action' against villagers who refused to cooperate with the British. Griffiths revealed that an additional outcome of the November consultations was the passing of a collective punishment ordinance at the army's request (modelled on the harsh collective punishments ordinances passed in Palestine during the Arab Rebellion of 1936-39⁶⁸), indicating the beginnings of a civilian pivot towards greater support for coercive measures against villagers. While collective punishments had been an important element of the Briggs Plan, the army was clear that they needed to be combined with strong security and the provision of rights and services; collective punishment was not a substitute for the reforms advocated by Briggs, it could only be a complement.⁶⁹

A number of operational changes in the first half of 1951 further demonstrated the civil administration's desire to substitute ruthless measures for reform. In late January and early February 1951, the collective punishments began to be imposed on uncooperative villages, including the destruction of the village of Jenderam following the mass detention of all of its inhabitants.⁷⁰ Additionally, food denial operations, entailing the tight regulation of rice rations and the limitation of caloric intake in the New Villages, began in October 1950. Restrictions on food reached their peak in June 1951 with a renewed push as resettlement in Johore neared completion.⁷¹ However, while the British effort escalated military pressure on the population, reforms and investment continued to stall.

Gurney's resistance to political reform led him to advocate a different strategic approach in the summer of 1951:

By the end of the year, we shall have finished squatter resettlement, so that the role of the civil administration in carrying out the plan of operations will become less prominent. Operations will then become more largely police and military.⁷²

While Gurney's phrasing seems inconspicuous, a shift towards more active military and police operations was not part of the Briggs Plan; Briggs did not foresee a shift away from civil efforts. Undoubtedly, population resettlement required a massive effort by the civil administration, but their role was not simply to resettle and leave, but to control the population and integrate it into a more effective Malayan state. The military framework and its striking forces were intended to maintain the cordon between the insurgents in the jungle and the population in settled areas, undertake targeted offensive operations based on the intelligence gained from the population, and progressively hand over responsibility for security to the police as their capacity improved. As the civil and

police gained strength, Briggs had foreseen a smaller military commitment, not a larger one.

The BDCC articulated a vision similar to Gurney's:

We feel that the distinction should be drawn between the intensive fight against armed terrorists and the eradication of the Min Yuen which will be a long-term process. In our view the elimination of armed terrorists in Malaya is of first priority.⁷³

This, too, represented a significant departure from the Briggs Plan, which clearly prioritized the elimination of the Min Yuen rather than large-scale military operations to eliminate 'armed terrorists'. Given that the claim contradicted the position of the FARELF chiefs of staff, who also sat on the BDCC, it is highly probable that this was Commissioner General MacDonald's personal position authored in the name of the BDCC.

Despite the Cabinet's apprehension regarding the counterinsurgency's progress and civilian attempts to pivot towards greater militarisation, the army held fast to its support for the Briggs Plan.⁷⁴ Slim was cautiously optimistic; he believed that a recent increase in insurgent attacks was actually a sign that the insurgents were concerned with the implications of resettlement, and he pointed to evidence of increasing (but still underwhelming) cooperation from the Chinese and an increasing number of surrendering insurgents.⁷⁵ This led him to reaffirm his commitment to the Briggs Plan:

The real enemy are not the bandits in the jungle but the Min Yuen, in the towns, who finance, supply and direct them. It is against this side of the Communist organization that the greatest efforts should be directed and the most lasting results achieved. This is a matter for intelligence, CID [Criminal Investigation Division] and the police, and is largely a civil responsibility ... I suggest that pressure should be brought to bear on all concerned to solve these problems, and to attack the Min Yuen with the utmost vigour and with every resource.⁷⁶

The chiefs of staff held a similar view:

Sir Nevil Brownjohn [vice chief of the imperial general staff] said that he did not agree with the view of the B.D.C.C ... the elimination of armed terrorists in Malaya was a first priority. He agreed that the job of the armed forces was to kill bandits, but he was quite confident that the only way of rendering the bandits incapable of effective action was by destroying their organization. ... In discussion there was general agreement with the views of the Vice Chief of the Imperial General Staff as given above.⁷⁷

Throughout 1951, the army would retain this position. What began to change were some officers' attitudes towards the chain of command. Harding expressed concerns about the efficacy of the civilians in Malaya as early as October 1950. His comments received an indirect response in the form of a minute authored by Brownjohn:

There is no doubt, in my opinion, that General Briggs has satisfactorily co-ordinated the actions of military and civil and has done as much as any man, *with the powers given to him*, to re-organize the civil agencies and to stimulate real, energetic action on their part. The fact remains that progress is extremely slow. I personally begin to doubt whether the Briggs Plan will ever be completely successful, unless more drive and energy is shown by the civil administration and the police.

It can be argued that if Gurney had been a man of drive in addition to being an able administrator, things would have gone much faster. I am, however, inclined to think that the dilatoriness of the civil administration and the failure to overcome quickly financial obstacles and local administrative difficulties is due to the fact that there is no-one on the highest level with powers of leadership, a real sense of urgency and the authority to take decisions.⁷⁸

Against this backdrop, the impending struggle over the position of high commissioner represented a deeper struggle between civilian and military actors over the strategic direction of the campaign.

Templer: The Last King of Malaya

As the civil-military confrontation over the direction of strategy in Malaya was coming to a head, two events combined to create an opening for a drastic change in the machinery and direction of the counterinsurgency campaign. On October 6, 1951, High Commissioner Gurney was assassinated in an MNLA ambush. Coinciding with Briggs' impending retirement, Gurney's murder created a power vacuum in the Malayan administration and the opportunity to choose new leadership. Later that month, the Labour government was defeated by the Conservatives in a snap election, returning Winston Churchill to Downing St. The new government held very different attitudes regarding the proper conduct of the counterinsurgency and, like the army, held the top civilians in Malaya in low regard, giving the officers the opening they desired.⁷⁹ The selection of Templer to replace Gurney and Briggs represented a victory for the army, in support of the Briggs Plan, over the status-quo preferences of the civilians in Malaya. In this way, Templer's selection represented a de facto transfer of control in Malaya to military officers, despite the measures taken to assure the public that this was not the case. Templer's apparent adoption of what became known as the 'hearts and minds' approach was the result of the army gaining control of the machinery that controlled the political elements of the Briggs Plan, removing the obstacles to their implementation.

The civilians opposed a transfer of control to the army despite their support for a more militarized approach to the campaign. Commissioner General MacDonald's position was unequivocal:

I am averse to the appointment of any of the soldiers you mentioned. None of them would be likely to understand adequately *the need to continue Gurney's political and social policy*.⁸⁰

At the same time, the Malay sultans demanded a say in the selection of the new high

commissioner, believing that they could blackmail the British government by threatening to ‘flatly refuse to cooperate with appointee unless they thought he was the right man’.⁸¹ The sultans did not want to give up their power and they did not want a high commissioner who would pressure them to conform to Briggs’ political programme. Malaya had reached an important turning point, and everyone appeared to recognize it.

On October 17, less than two weeks after Gurney’s murder and less than two weeks until his retirement, Briggs finally publicized his feelings about his authority (or lack thereof). In a farewell address, Briggs responded to a question as to whether he possessed all the powers he required to direct the campaign. He admitted that he felt he did not and proposed that ‘full executive authority (subject only to the high commissioner’s overriding power of control) should be given by the high commissioner to the director of operations in all emergency matters falling within the sphere of the Federal government’.⁸² Briggs argued that it was vital to place the director of operations in the chain of command while giving him a significant measure of policy control, another major departure from Gurney’s original proposal. This would allow the director of operations to issue direct orders to members of the Federal War Council rather than rely on action from the high commissioner.

A month later, General Sir Rob Lockhart, former C-in-C of the Indian Army who had initially been selected to replace Briggs, reflected on the challenges he faced upon his arrival.⁸³ Almost all of the obstacles he identified targeted the administrative structure and attitudes of civilian officials:

- The number of independent administrative units with which he had to deal
- Disinterest of the government in the Emergency
- Adherence to peace-time standards

- Racial divisions between Malays and Chinese, the need to enlist Chinese cooperation, the hostility of the Malays to the idea of a united Malayan nation.

Lockhart praised Briggs' efforts, concluding, 'All informed critics with whom I have discussed the situation have stated that the Briggs Plan was, and is, fundamentally sound'.⁸⁴ He recommended a complete change in the machinery of strategic control in order to give the military greater power to implement the Briggs Plan:

The time has arrived when the man who has full executive control of whole organisation of Government must run the Emergency.

He must have wider experience of the capabilities of both the Services and Administration and should therefore be a Military Officer.⁸⁵

The first major decision taken by the new Conservative government was to send the new colonial secretary, Sir Oliver Lyttelton, to Malaya in late November 1951.

Lyttelton's attitude toward the organization of the counterinsurgency hardened quite early in his visit. On December 8, he wrote to Churchill:

I have subjected the subject of the chain of command and responsibility to intense and careful study and I have definitely reached the conclusion that the place where a personage of the caliber we discussed is required must be the (Headquarters of the) High Commission of the Federation. My advisers agree.

This High Commissioner would assume entire responsibility for both military operations and civil administration.⁸⁶

Lyttelton's formal recommendations, and even their wording, reflected Lockhart's November 23 memo, revealing that Lockhart and Briggs, who had remained in Malaya following the end of his term for precisely this reason, had succeeded in convincing Lyttelton to support the army's position.⁸⁷ Lyttelton further recommended side-lining Commissioner General MacDonald by removing as many of his powers and responsibilities vis-à-vis Malaya as possible. Moving forward, the officers would be in

firm control of the campaign.

Lyttelton's proposals were accepted by the Cabinet, and the War Office was asked to present a suitable list of candidates. Templer, a rising star in the army, was the unequivocal choice. Rather than being offered the position, Templer, who in fact did not want the job due to its potential to interfere with his career, was ordered to Malaya by his superiors and seconded to the Colonial Office on special assignment, a significant departure from normal procedure.⁸⁸ While Templer was not the first, or last, officer to serve as a high commissioner, these postings were almost always retirement positions, and Templer may be the only officer to have returned to active duty. Arriving in February 1952, Templer enjoyed an unprecedented level of power through the combined roles of high commissioner and director of operations, backed by the unwavering support of the colonial secretary and the prime minister. Supported from above, Templer's arrival led to sweeping changes to the counterinsurgency on the civil side the army had advocated since 1950.

The first test of the new system, involving the appointment of a deputy high commissioner to assist with the civil administration, came even before Templer's arrival.⁸⁹ Lyttelton's goal was to find an effective administrator to whom Templer could delegate the day-to-day of civil administration. His choice was the chief secretary of Jamaica, Sir Donald MacGillivray, who had previously served as a member of the Palestine Civil Service during the Arab and Jewish Rebellions of the 1930s and 40s.⁹⁰

Opposition to the decision to appoint an outsider came from a number of sources. First, members of the Executive Council, the high commissioner's advisory body, expressed their dissatisfaction with the choice of an outsider. More importantly, the Malay sultans, with MacDonald's support, were adamant that the deputy high commissioner should be promoted from within the Malayan Civil Service. Additionally,

the Malayan Legislative Council, which contained significant Malay representation, threatened to vote against the proposal.⁹¹ Given resistance from Malaya to the appointment, it became a battle of wills (or rather formal power) between Lyttelton and local opinion. Under the previous regime, there was little question that Gurney would have deferred to Malay opinion. As it was, MacDonald expressed strong opposition to the use of Britain's reserve powers to override a vote rejecting MacGillivray, arguing that the British could not possibly risk alienating the Malays.⁹² However, Lyttelton insisted that if the legislative council tried to block the appointment, the acting high commissioner was to invoke those reserve powers and override the legislature.⁹³ MacGillivray was to be appointed, regardless of the political fallout.

In the end, the British were not required to invoke their reserve powers. While the announcement of MacGillivray was met with widespread criticism in Malaya,⁹⁴ the death of King George VI on February 2, 1951 led everyone to put their disagreements aside.⁹⁵ Consequently, while Lyttelton's intentions were not carried through to their logical conclusion, this episode demonstrates that the British were no longer willing to acquiesce to Malay sentiment. All that was needed to bring this change about was for proponents of the Briggs Plan to gain control of the powers of the high commissioner.

By side-lining MacDonald and subordinating the civil service to Templer's authority, the obstacles to political reform in Malaya were overcome. The federal government began distributing land to residents in the New Villages and passed an amendment to the citizenship ordinances of the Federation agreement.⁹⁶ Both of these initiatives, which constituted key elements of the British government's directive to Templer, had been the main political features of the Briggs Plan which Gurney and MacDonald had resisted in 1950 and 1951.⁹⁷ Archival evidence regarding the confrontation with the Malay elites is unfortunately lacking, however the timing is

extremely suggestive and the evidence indicates continued Malay opposition to reforms benefitting the Chinese.⁹⁸ The federal government began distributing land in December 1951, following Lyttelton's visit. At the state level, land distribution coincided with the citizenship ordinance, coming in the summer of 1952 once Templer had completed the organizational changes that gave the central government greater control over the states.⁹⁹ The citizenship amendment is especially interesting because Colonial Office records reveal that the government had produced a draft citizenship amendment in July 1950, but it was not openly presented until after Templer's arrival.¹⁰⁰ Finally, Templer implemented a detailed investment plan for developing the New Villages along lines previously resisted by the Malay rulers and Gurney.¹⁰¹

In addition to his willingness to confront Malay resistance, Templer's conduct as high commissioner departed from Gurney's in three important respects. First, Templer completely retooled the machinery of governance, intelligence, and police administration, notably by merging the Federal War Council with the Federal Executive Council, in effect creating a war cabinet to make the counterinsurgency the primary order of business.¹⁰² Second, he became more aggressive in his management of personnel. Using his power of appointment, Templer did not hesitate to dismiss any official whose cooperation was suspect; a number of sources refer to 'spies' throughout the administration who reported back to Templer on the disposition and conduct of state and district administration.¹⁰³ Finally, while it is true that the term of Templer's appointment saw the accelerating pace of reform, it also saw a significant increase in the use of collective punishments against the population, especially in the New Villages, in order to coerce information regarding the insurgents, demonstrating the army's commitment to adopt a combined carrot and stick approach.¹⁰⁴

But Templer's behaviour was not the product of his own strategic thinking, nor was it based on a novel approach to the campaign. The major strategic initiatives implemented during Templer's tenure largely originated with Briggs and were transmitted to Templer through Lyttelton's acceptance of Briggs' and Lockhart's conclusions. While the previous Labour government had also accepted those conclusions, Gurney and MacDonald's unwillingness to push them on reluctant Malay elites proved an insurmountable obstacle in the years 1950 and 1951 given the Labour government's disinclination to confront their agents in Malaya. The decision to appoint Templer represented a decision to remove these obstacles by side-lining the civilians in favour of the officers. In this sense, Templer was sent to Malaya to ensure that the initiatives contained in the Briggs Plan and endorsed by Churchill's government would not be impeded by the civil administration in Malaya. While Briggs' plans were constantly frustrated by Gurney's reluctance to confront sources of resistance and inefficiency, Templer was not reliant on the goodwill and cooperation of the civil service as Briggs had been. Templer's drive and his personal experiences made him an ideal candidate to oversee the campaign in Malaya, but these attributes could not have made a difference if he had faced the same barriers as Briggs.

Conclusion:

Between its inauguration and General Templer's arrival, the Briggs Plan suffered from a number of challenges stemming from the political will and organization of the Malayan government. The political interests of the ethnic Malay population, notably their opposition to investment in the Chinese community and the extension of political rights, ran counter to the Briggs Plan's political initiatives. Exacerbating the problem, the Malayan state's decentralized structure and the relative weakness of the federal

government created constitutional challenges to unified higher direction of the campaign, handicapping Briggs ability to direct the campaign.

These challenges constituted serious obstacles to Briggs' program, but they were not fatal alone. It was a third challenge, the disinclination of the high commissioner or Colonial Office officials in London to take political risks to overcome these obstacles, which ultimately blocked the implementation of Briggs' political programme.

Throughout the course of the first phase of the plan, stretching from June 1950 to October 1951, the Colonial Office repeatedly criticized the constitutional machinery, blamed Malay political preferences, and acknowledged the problems within the civil administration. However, officials in London did not pressure Gurney to address these problems. Instead, as criticism of government inaction mounted, Gurney and MacDonald attempted to escalate the coercive response through the use of collective punishments and food denial operations, which did not require the expenditure of political capital.

While the civilians obstructed attempts at political reform and administrative capacity-building, the army officers proved to be the driving force behind the political thrust of the British response. The officers recognized both the limits of military force and the potential contribution of political and administrative reform to defeating the insurgency and consolidating an effective state. However, given the reality of civilian primacy, the officers had no authority to implement these initiatives. As it became clear to these officers, notably Generals Slim, Harding, Briggs, and Lockhart, that the existing administrative setup would not lead to meaningful change on the political and administrative side, the civil-military conflict in Malaya transformed into a struggle for control of the civil service itself. The decision to appoint General Templer as high commissioner reflected the new British government's decision to endorse the army's

position and allow the them to take the lead by placing an officer in overall command of the campaign.

This study carries a number of implications for both scholarship and policy. First, an analysis of the Briggs Plan and its implementation provide further insight into the Templer debate. Simply put, Templer's success was the result of the authority he was given. But this does not entirely clarify the nature of the changes that coincided with Templer's appointment.¹⁰⁵ Did Templer's arrival coincide with a new strategy (a shift from population control to 'hearts and minds')? Or, as some have argued, was Templer the beneficiary of Briggs' success, receiving credit that he did not entirely deserve? The answer to both of these questions is a qualified yes; while the Briggs Plan had been the official strategy endorsed by the British government, key elements of that plan were not implemented during Briggs' tenure due to civilian obstruction. Templer's appointment removed those interests from positions of power by vesting formal executive authority in an army officer. In this sense, it is both true that Templer's arrival led to a meaningful change in strategy and that his success was, in fact, due to the Briggs Plan. That having been said, British counterinsurgency under Templer remained highly coercive; the so-called 'hearts and minds' initiatives were simply layered on top of the existing (and even intensifying) system of population control and collective punishment by spurring the civilian administration to carry out its functions alongside the security services.

The historical conclusion leads to an implication regarding the broader analysis of counterinsurgent behaviour: it is a mistake to assume that military preferences will necessarily push for military solutions. So much of the wider literature on counterinsurgency carries this assumption, either implicitly or explicitly, but the historical record reveals a much higher level of nuance on the part of military actors,

who in this case demonstrated a clear understanding of the limits of military power's ability to bring about a successful, long-term resolution to the conflict. The equally important corollary is that civilians may not always support political solutions to insurgencies, and this largely depends on their political preferences.¹⁰⁶ Conservative elites may oppose any change in the political status quo, instead preferring military solutions. Many counterinsurgency lessons taken from the Malayan Emergency focus on the importance of civil-military cooperation; however, to this point, very little work on British imperial policing and counterinsurgency has actually examined the nature of civil-military relations and the process of strategic planning. Such a focus challenges many of the assumptions built into theories of counterinsurgency. Future research in this area should pay closer attention to the preferences of civilian and military actors, the interaction between them, and how these dynamics impact the strategic direction of counterinsurgency campaigns.

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Notes

1. Thompson, *Defeating Communist Insurgency*; Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect*; Sunderland, *Army Operations in Malaya*; Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*; Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency*; Egnell, "Explaining US and British Performance." Cf. Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*, 100, who refers to the committee system under Briggs as sometimes "farcical."
2. Short, *Communist Insurrection in Malaya*; Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya*; Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*; Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency*. See also Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya"; and Smith, "General Templer and Counterinsurgency in Malaya." See also the literature in political science including Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*; Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons*; Jackson, *Organizational Dysfunction*; Nolan, *Military Leadership and Counterinsurgency*.
3. Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change*; Strachan, *Politics of the British Army*; Cassidy, "Why Great Powers"; Nagl, *Counterinsurgency Lessons*; Jackson, *Organizational Dysfunction*; Egnell, "Explaining US and British Performance." Also Paget, *Counter-insurgency Operations*, 158.
4. Also Caverley, "The Myth of Military Myopia."
5. Surridge, *Managing the South African War*, especially Chs 7 and 8.
6. First quote: Memorandum by General Macready, May 24, 1920. P 1. Multiple locations including BL 102/5/21. Bonar Law Papers, PA; Second quote: Letter from Macready to Greenwood, July 17, 1920. LG/F/19/2/12. Lloyd George Papers, PA.
7. Letter to Air Ministry from Brooke Popham, July 20, 1936, in Brooke Popham Papers, 4/6, LHCMA.
8. Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*; Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya*; Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya"; Ramakrishna, "'Transmogrifying' Malaya"; Smith, "General Templer and Counterinsurgency in Malaya."
9. Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya." See also Komer, *The Malayan Emergency in Retrospect*, 19; Dixon, "'Hearts and Minds'"; French, "Nasty, not Nice"; Gentile, *Wrong Turn*, 6; Etzioni, "COIN: A Study of Strategic Illusion"; Hazelton, "The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy," for variations. See also Opper, *People's War*, 293-295.
10. See Telegram No. 1350 from HC to Colonial Secretary, December 17, 1949. PRO DEFE 11/34, Doc 465.
11. Telegram No. 151 from HC to Colonial Secretary. February 23, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/34. Doc 523 (My emphasis).

12. Telegram No. 1358 from HC to Colonial Secretary. December 20, 1949. PRO DEFE 11/34. Doc 467.
13. Telegram No. 151 from HC to Colonial Secretary. February 23, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/34. Doc 523 (My emphasis).
14. Report of CIGS visit to Malaya, Part II. P 2. No Date, the visit itself came in November 1949. PRO CO 537/4374.
15. See "Appreciation by General Briggs," October 25, 1950, as COS(50)468, Chiefs of Staff Committee. PRO CAB 21/1682, Doc 8.
16. Minutes of the First Meeting of the Malaya Committee, MAL.C(50)1. PRO CAB 134/497. P 3.
17. "British Defence Coordinating Committee, Far East. The Military Situation in Malaya on 9 April, 1950. Appreciation by Commander-in-Chief, FARELF." Memorandum by General Harding, SEC(50)7. Received by CoS Committee as COS(50)132, April 19, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/35. Doc 622. P 2.
18. Ibid. (My emphasis).
19. Memorandum COS 294/9/3/50 by C.R. Price to Chiefs of Staff. March 9, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/34. Doc 548.
20. Mockaitis, "Briggs, Sir Harold Rawdon," Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.
21. While the resettlement scheme is often attributed to Briggs in 1950, it was actually Gurney's initiative, developed in December 1948. Annex to "The Squatter Problem in the Federation of Malaya." Summary of Federation of Malaya White Paper. P 5. MAL.C(50)5. April 22, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/35. Doc 641a. Due to the deterioration in the security situation, resettlement had to be put on hold and the British began deporting Chinese detainees. Once the Communists defeated the Nationalists, it was no longer advisable – the British were concerned that this would lead to the Chinese government providing training to the deportees and sending them back to Malaya. Consequently, in late 1949, deportation ended, and resettlement recommenced. See Despatch No. 3 from High Commissioner, January 12, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/34. Doc 493a. P 4; Cabinet Conclusions CM(50)37, PRO CAB 12817/37. While Thompson (*Defeating Communist Insurgency*, 53) argued this was done for ethical reasons, there is no evidence that the British were motivated by moral concerns. Moreover, deportations resumed in the spring of 1951, made available to the Malayan government as a coercive tool in their fight for information. See Telegram SEACOS 213 for Chiefs of Staff from BDCC (FE), June 16, 1951. P 2. PRO CAB 21/2884. Unnumbered Doc; see also Hack, "Detention, Deportation, and Resettlement."
22. This, according to a comment by the colonial secretary on May 18. See Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Malaya Committee, MAL.C(50)5. PRO CAB 134/497. P 1. For an early

articulation of the Briggs' Plan, see notes on a special meeting of the BDCC with General Briggs on May 5, 1950. (document dated May 9, 1950). PRO DEFE 11/36. Doc 693a. For a more developed version, see "Future Anti-Bandit Policy in Malaya," Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, MAL.C(50)14. May 12, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/36. Doc 700. Yet another version, likely the most developed, comes in the form of a memorandum presented to the Malaya Committee on July 7, 1950: "General Briggs' Plan for the Elimination of Communists in Malaya." Memorandum by the Minister of Defence. MAL.C(50)23. PRO CAB 134/497.

23. See "Future Anti-Bandit Policy in Malaya," Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, MAL.C(50)14. May 12, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/36. Doc 700.
24. "Future Anti-Bandit Policy in Malaya," Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, MAL.C(50)14. May 12, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/36. Doc 700. P 3.
25. "General Briggs' Plan for the Elimination of Communists in Malaya." Memorandum by the Minister of Defence. MAL.C(50)23. July 7, 1950. PRO CAB 134/497. P 2.
26. 1st meeting of the Malaya Committee in 1950, MAL.C(51)1. July 26, 1951. PRO CAB 134/497.
27. Message to state governments from the high commissioner. Annex to "Future Anti-Bandit Policy in Malaya," Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, MAL.C(50)14. May 12, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/36. Doc 700.
28. See Carnell, "Malayan Citizenship Legislation."
29. Ibid., 7.
30. Directive No. 1. Director of Operations, Malaya. April 16, 1950. PRO CAB 21/1681. Doc 1.
31. 6th Meeting of the Malaya Committee, MAL.C(50)6. June 19, 1950. PRO CAB 134/497. P 2.
32. Directive No. 1. Director of Operations, Malaya. April 16, 1950. PRO CAB 21/1681. Doc 1. P 2.
33. British business interests do not seem to have played a significant role. See White, "Capitalism and Counter-insurgency?"
34. Ibid.
35. This point was raised in the 4th meeting of the Malaya Committee, May 8, 1950. PRO CAB 134/497. P 3.
36. See Oppen, *People's War*, 298-300.
37. The British Army's psychological warfare division conducted studies of the surrender behavior of insurgents. While food shortages were not the primary reason given for surrendering, it constituted an important response that grew in significance over time. See PRO WO 291/1763 – A Study of Surrender Behavior among Chinese Communist Terrorists in Malaya; and PRO WO 291/1783 – A Study of Surrenders in Malaya.

38. See Hack, "Iron Claws on Malaya."
39. See "The Squatter Problem in Malaya," Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, MAL.C.50(5), April 22, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/35. Doc 641a. For long-standing opposition to Chinese rights among the sultans, see "Pro-Malay Policy," *Malaya Tribune*, December 13, 1947. For comments about middle class opposition, see Telegram 400 from HC to CO, May 3, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/36. Doc 678.
40. "Political and Economic background to the situation in Malaya." P 1. Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, DO 50(94). November 15, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/42. Doc 995, Folio 285. See Rudner, "The Draft Development Plan," for a detailed discussion of the development of Malayan economic plans during the Emergency, and White, "Capitalism and Counterinsurgency?" for a discussion of British relations with business in Malaya during the Emergency. While Stubbs, *Hearts and Minds*, 107-111, argued that the Korean War, which broke out in June 1950, led to a budgetary windfall due to a spike in commodity prices, that argument comes with important caveats. The state of Malayan finances was a constant preoccupation for the British in 1950-1951. PRO CAB 21/1682. See, for example, Doc 8: "An Appreciation of the Military and Political Situation in Malaya on 25 October 1950." Report by the Director of Operations. Received by Chiefs of Staff Committee as COS(50)468, November 16, 1950; See also Doc 11a, a report to the prime minister of a meeting between the chiefs of staff and General Briggs, no date; Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the Malaya Committee, MAL.C(50)5. PRO CAB 134/497. P 3; Cabinet Conclusions, June 19, 1950. CM(50)37. PRO CAB 128/17/37. Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya*, 277, argues that by the time large-scale investment began, prices had begun to drop and Templer was deeply worried about Malayan finances.
41. This was a concern of Gurneys since 1949. Secret Despatch No. 3 from HC. January 12, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/34, Doc 493A. It also reflected the consequences of Britain's conciliatory policy towards the Palestinian Arabs after 1939 in the Palestine Mandate, which triggered a Jewish insurgency in the 1940s; Gurney had previously been the last chief secretary for Palestine.
42. Coates (1992), 14.
43. See also "United Malays Oppose Union," *Malaya Tribune*, March 6, 1946; "The Sultans' Protest," *The Straits Times*, April 3, 1946.
44. "Political and Economic background to the situation in Malaya." Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary DO 50(94). November 15, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/42; Doc 995, Folio 285. This was written two and a half years after the promulgation of the Federation constitution, and so must be viewed as a retrospective that is not isolated from the challenges the British perceived that the constitution generated.
45. *Ibid.*

46. "Memorandum by the Officer Administering the Government, Federation of Malaya, in Connection with General Brigg's 'Appreciation of the Military and Political Situation in Malaya as on 25th October, 1950.'" , submitted to CoS Committee as COS(50)473. November 18th, 1950. P 3. PRO CAB 21/1682. Doc 10.
47. Ibid.
48. Report of CIGS visit to Malaya, Part II. P 2. No Date. PRO CO 537/4374.
49. Letter from Colonial Secretary to High Commissioner. December 5, 1949. PRO CO 537/4374. Doc 8, p 2.
50. Report of CIGS visit to Malaya, Part II. P 2. No Date. PRO CO 537/4374.
51. Minutes of the First Meeting of the Malaya Committee, MAL.C(50)1. April 19, 1950. PRO CAB 134/497. P 1.
52. Ibid., P 2.
53. "Political and Economic background to the situation in Malaya." P 1. Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary to Defence Committee, DO(50)94. November 15, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/42. Doc 995, Folio 285.
54. Minutes of the 5th meeting of the Malaya Committee, MAL.C(50)5. May 18, 1950. P 1. PRO CAB 134/497.
55. "The Military Situation in Malaya." Memorandum by the War Secretary, MAL.C(50)21, June 17, 1950. PRO CAB21/1681. Doc 14. P 4.
56. Ibid., P 4-5.
57. 6th Meeting of the Malaya Committee, MAL.C(50)6, June 19, 1950. PRO CAB 134/497. P 1-2 (My emphasis).
58. "Various Matters Discussed with the Authorities in Malaya." Memorandum by the Colonial Secretary, MAL.C(50)25. July 14, 1950. PRO CAB 21/1681. Doc 31.
59. Personal letter DO/CIC/65 from General Harding, GHQ FARELF, to CIGS. October 24, 1950. PRO WO 216/835. Doc 1.
60. Ibid.
61. Telegram No. 1052 from OAG to Gurney. November 2, 1950. PRO CO 537/6004. Doc 1.
62. Ibid.
63. Meeting with the Director of Operations, Federation of Malaya. GEN 345/1, November 27, 1950. PRO CAB 130/65.
64. Ibid., P 2.
65. GEN 345/5, Meeting at No. 10 Downing St, February 26, 1951. PRO CAB 130/65.
66. Ibid. P 1.
67. Ibid., P 2.
68. Notes of a meeting held at the Attorney General's Office, November 10, 1950. CO 537/6007.

69. See Discussion and Papers presented during the 5th meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Malaya, May 18, 1950. PRO CAB 134/497.
70. See Report on Malaya No. 104, January 19-25, 1951. DEFE 11/43. Doc 1104; See also Report on Malaya No. 107, February 9-19, 1951. PRO DEFE 11/43. Doc 1142; See also "The Present Situation in Malaya," Note by the Colonial Secretary. Undated. PRO DEFE 11/43. Doc 1159; Parliamentary Debates, House of Commons, vol 485, 7 March 1951, 78 (Emrys Hughes) <https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/1951-03-07/debates/e9c45e96-4935-47b8-8246-ba1fa7f3667e/CollectiveDetentionJenderam>
71. There is not much discussion of these food denial operations in the official records. However, there are a number of illuminating accounts of these operations, and their consequences, in the personal records of General Sir Rob Lockhart. See File 9501-165 in the Papers of Sir Rob Lockhart, Deputy DO Malaya, especially Doc 1, a report dated November 3, 1950 detailing food denial operations, as well as Doc 33, a report on Operation Warbler, a large-scale food denial operation. For measures taken in June, 1951, see Doc 22, which is a copy of the food regulations signed by Briggs. NAM.
72. Personal letter from Gurney to Field Marshal Slim, June 14, 1951. PRO WO 216/394. Doc 2a.
73. Telegram SEACOS 213 for Chiefs of Staff from BDCC (FE), June 16, 1951. P 2. PRO CAB 21/2884. Unnumbered Doc.
74. Letter from Shinwell to CIGS, May 3, 1951. PRO DEFE 11/44. Doc 1252b.
75. Figures for the first half of 1951 are given in the Annex to "Combined Appreciation of the Emergency Situation by the High Commissioner and the Director of Operations." June 4, 1951. PRO CAB 21/2884. Unnumbered Doc.
76. Letter from CIGS to MoD Shinwell, May 4, 1951. PRO DEFE 11/44. Doc 1252g.
77. Extract from Chiefs of Staff meeting COS(51)107, June 29, 1951. PRO DEFE 11/45
78. Minute for CIGS on "Appointment of a 'Supremo' for Malaya." Minute Sheet #5, February 24, 1951. PRO WO 216/835. (My emphasis).
79. For an explicit evaluation of the civilians in Malaya, see Montgomery's note "Success in Malaya," January 2, 1952. PRO WO 216/806. Doc 9a; David Lloyd Owen, Templer's military assistance, referred to MacDonald as a "socialist slug" in his diary. March 22, 1952. 1998-06-176-2, Lloyd Owen Papers, NAM; In 1949, Lyttelton accused the Labour government of weakening the UK's ability to resist communism and accused Shinwell and Strachey (the Labour minister of defence and war secretary) of having communist sympathies. Letter from Lyttelton to Churchill, March 4, 1949. CHAN II 4/5, CCA.
80. Telegram No. 285 from Commissioner General SE Asia to Lloyd. November 5, 1951. PRO CO 850/254/10. Doc 26. (My emphasis).

81. Telegram No. 1018 from OAG Malaya to Colonial Office. October 22, 1951. PRO CO 850/254/10. Doc 23.
82. Telegram No. 1052 from OAG to Colonial Secretary. November 1, 1951. PRO CO 1022/7. Doc 1.
83. "The Situation in the Federation of Malaya from the View of the Director of Operations." Report by Lockhart, November 26, 1951. File 9501-165, Doc 28. Lockhart Papers, NAM.
84. Ibid., P 9.
85. "Executive Powers of the High Commissioner and the Director of Operations, 2nd Edition." Memorandum by General Sir Rob Lockhart. November 29, 1951. P 1. File 9501-165, Doc 32. Lockhart Papers, NAM.
86. Telegram No. 1214 from Lyttelton (via OAG) to Prime Minister (via Colonial Office). December 8, 1951. PRO PREM 11/639. Doc 2.
87. See also letter from Lockhart to Slim, January 14, 1952. PRO WO 216/806. Doc 12a.
88. See PRO WO 216/806 – Gen. Templer, especially draft Telegram 693 to WO.
89. See PRO CO 1022/101 – appointment of High Commissioner and Deputy High Commissioner.
90. Gullick, "MacGillivray, Sir Donald Charles," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*. He had previously served in Tanganyika and came to Palestine as part of Harold MacMichael's entourage.
91. Telegram No. 128 from OAG (Malaya) to CO, January 30, 1952. PRO CO 1022/101. Doc 138. Abdul Rahman would go on to serve as the first prime minister of independent Malaya/Malaysia from 1957 until 1970.
92. Telegram No. 37 from Commissioner General to Colonial Secretary, January 25, 1952. PRO CO 1022/101. Doc 117; See also Telegram No. 46 from Commissioner General to Colonial Secretary, January 29, 1952. PRO CO 1022/101. Doc 132.
93. Telegram No. 33 from CO to MacDonald, January 17, 1952. PRO CO 1022/101. Doc 80; See also Telegram No. 20 from CO to OAG (Malaya), January 17, 1952. PRO CO 1022/101. Doc 83/84.
94. See also "'Slap in Face for Malaya' New Deputy HC creates stir in KL," *The Singapore Free Press*, February 4, 1952.
95. Telegram No. 57 from Commissioner General to CO, February 9, 1952. PRO CO 1022/101. Doc 171.
96. Carnell, "Malayan Citizenship Legislation."
97. "An Appreciation of the Situation in Malaya on September 22, 1952." PRO WO 216/561, Doc 1B; Directive to Templer. PRO CO 1022/103. Folio 9.
98. Opper, "Fighting the People," 378-379; following Short, *In Pursuit of Mountain Rats*, 271, 341-342.

99. Opper, "Fighting the People."
100. See Colonial Office intelligence document: 14-20 July, 1950. PRO DEFE 11/38. Doc 830a.
101. Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya*, 275.
102. "An Appreciation of the Situation in Malaya on September 22, 1952." PRO WO 216/561. Doc 1B; Colonial Office Intelligence Report, February 22-28, 1952. PRO DEFE 11/47. Doc 1563; "Templer Streamlines 'Cabinet': Changes to Get Rid of 'Split Personality,'" *The Straits Times*, March 3, 1952.
103. See, for example, Note on planning and organization committees, July 12, 1952. File 7/4/1, Stockwell Papers, LHCMA. It is possible the genesis of this program predated Templer's arrival: see "Note of a Visit by Mr. Brett to TC Jerome," October 26, 1951. Doc 26, Lockhart Papers, NAM.
104. For an early use of collective punishments by Templer, see records on the March 1952 punishment of Tanjong Malim village in PRO CO 1022/54; See especially the documents in PRO CO 1022/56 – Imposition of Curfew and Other Restrictions In the Federation of Malaya; Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya*, 274.
105. See note 9.
106. Shafer, *Deadly Paradigms*, 120.

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