



Myths and Realities of Minimum Force in British Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Practice (Terrorism)

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Counterinsurgency scholars and notable counterinsurgents often credit minimum force doctrine, among other factors, for British success in Malaya, Kenya, and Cyprus. Minimum Force has become a prescriptive element for counterinsurgency warfare as a result, often with the understanding that gaining and retaining the population's "hearts and minds" is crucial to achieving victory. Also, minimum force proponents claim excessive force is anathema to that goal, insofar as it alienates the population and delegitimizes the government's efforts. Minimum force, however, was never a central component of British counterinsurgencies during the decolonialization era following World War II, and its continued inclusion among counterinsurgency formulas is unwarranted based on British experiences. The British relied primarily on coercion, reprisals, exemplary force, and forced relocations—tactics learned during the Irish War of Independence (1919–1921) and subsequent limited wars to starve the insurgents of the population's support.

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