

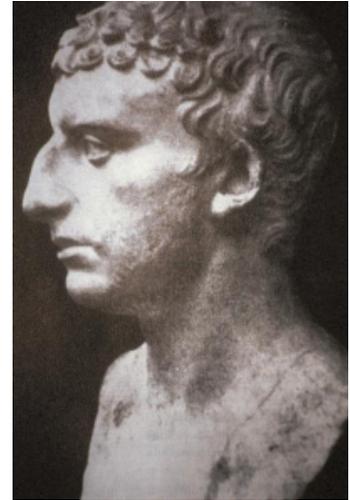
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Modern approaches to an occupying power's loss of control – Rome and Judea

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Insurgencies and the fight against them have been known ever since the first establishment of civil or military rule. The only thing new is that today an attempt is being made to take a comprehensive view, in a social, economic and religious context. In the context of the situation in Iraq or Afghanistan, the term *counterinsurgency* has increasingly been used in specialist literature as a technical term descriptive of the western way of combating insurgencies in the twenty-first century. Because of changing circumstances, the question has been asked whether counterinsurgency should be so clearly set apart from other approaches. A change of emphasis is to be expected as the currently most important rulebook, the *Field Manual 3-24 Counterinsurgency* (FM 3-24) is being revised. The fact that this manual dates from 2006 reveals that it relies in large part on older, historic examples of counterinsurgency, rather than on lessons learned from more recent events. In an attempt to create a reliable model, these historic insurgencies were condensed into their basic elements, with the aim of identifying structural regularities on the basis of commonalities and differences.



A result of this is that the application of one model to another insurgency indirectly refers to historic examples. One problem to be considered when comparing modern concepts with *The Great Revolt* of the first century A.D. is that they put less emphasis on liberation movements against a foreign occupying power than on insurgencies against an ideologically different, but autochthonous government. Here we can see the contrast to a 'more unselfconscious' time, in which C. E. Caldwell could speak of the "pacification of territories conquered or annexed". Quite understandably, such wars are no longer covered by Western regulations.

Occasional criticism of the Field Manual's perceived simplification of complex phenomena is certainly justified, as such a restriction of perspective may reduce its benefit for those who have to use it in their operations. For the topic under discussion here, a model's simplified structure is less of a problem, as its purpose is to raise new questions. Its task is not to explain the *Revolt* or to interpolate non-historical knowledge into the sources, but to clarify individual aspects. On the one hand, the complexity of the insurgency can be readily gauged from the historical sources, and where the sources do not offer enough facts, it can be assumed; it may not, however, be a-historically surmised. A clearer understanding of counterinsurgency and of the insurgency itself can be achieved through recent models; not, however, a precise analysis and appraisal of the complex situation, as would be necessitated by an operation.

Aim

On the one hand, this paper will focus on the insurgency against Roman rule in Judea and on Roman counterinsurgency measures, taking modern concepts into account. On the other hand, an attempt will be made to produce general deductions based on the Roman counterinsurgency measures. In this, the reasons for the insurgency will be enlarged upon, which – despite being a core field of research – have so far only been dealt with unsatisfactorily, due to the insufficient clarification of the (inter)dependencies between the individual factors. An analysis of the Roman occupying power's behaviour is to be used to underpin general findings which have also proven to be sound during current operations. The limitations effected by the sources mean that the findings will, by necessity, only be fragmentary. Individual aspects of Roman counterinsurgency measures, however, can be pinpointed in sufficient detail so as to avoid any charges of triviality.

Timeframe

In general, the terms *The Great Revolt* of 66 to 70 A.D. or sometimes also the *Jewish-Roman War* are used. The insurgency, however, goes back much further, as can be gleaned from a comparison with insurgencies of today. This is why the term *Great Revolt* is used in this text for the time from 6 A.D. to 66 A.D., which this paper will focus on.

This is the early phase of the insurgency, which is essential for any attempt to gain an understanding of its causes and supporters. Rome's behaviour at this time can be referred to as *counterinsurgency*; after 66 A.D. Vespasian led a war of conquest under altogether different auspices.

Differences and commonalities

Before modern counterinsurgency concepts can be compared with an example from antiquity, the question to be asked is which general differences are to be addressed.

A central difference with regard to today was the global political situation. In the first century A.D. the Romans viewed the known world as being under Roman control. Only a few regions, such as *Germania libera*, Parthia, and a few border regions were not part of the *Imperium Romanum* in the widest sense. In the west and north there were some islands shrouded in legends (Ireland), which, due to their mythical character, however, did not trigger any compulsion to conquer them. All insurgencies, therefore, were domestic affairs. This means that hardly any sanctuaries can be identified, i.e. external regions which serve insurgents as places for regeneration, for training purposes etc. The Jewish Diaspora (in the Roman domain, as well as Mesopotamia) tried to keep out of the conflict in Judea as much as possible. Possible reasons were a lack of mobilisation power, as well as the perception of Roman might and the futility of any resistance. This is why it is appropriate in this case to speak of a self-contained, autarkic insurgency. There were no alliances with external forces or other groups.

A further important difference was that Rome had to take far less account of internal public opinion or legal requirements. The crucial point is that, in principle, events outside of Rome did not influence Roman public opinion to the same extent as they would today, and that Judea, the case in point, was not interesting enough. Therefore, war weariness could not develop. 'Ethical' asymmetry was far less developed than today – there were only few checks on the actions of either side. Despite its ruthlessness, Rome's approach *vis-à-vis* the Jews was nevertheless characterised by the fact that the latter were not regarded as *Barbarians*, and therefore as being on a similar cultural level.

A similarity to today's situations is the figure of the *strategic corporal*, a term coined by General Charles C. Krulak. In Roman counterinsurgency he appeared in his negative form, where spurious actions of individual soldiers (deliberate provocations, the destruction of a Torah) were highly damaging. Cumanus, the governor responsible, was later replaced, possibly also because of his inability to control his soldiers effectively.

Insurgency/counterinsurgency

Counterinsurgency may be a straightforward term – but the concepts behind it are not. As mentioned above, when concepts were first developed, an attempt was made to put insurgencies and the fight against them on a sound theoretical footing, as well as to systematise them. The experience gained during the early phases of the conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq was mostly compared with insurgencies between 1945 and 1989.

Those insurgencies were influenced by anticolonial and Marxist-Leninist ideologies (Malaysia, Vietnam, Cuba, etc.). They were characterised by a unifying leadership, a clear ideology and strict hierarchical structures. It might be assumed that the *Great Revolt*, due to its relatively strong group identity generated by religion (see below), was much more homogenous than contemporary insurgencies (post 1991/2001). Although it was more homogenous as far as ethnicity and ideology/religion were concerned, conflicting factions are discernible in the time after 66 A.D., which can also be assumed for the time before, even though they are not explicitly mentioned in the sources. For this reason, they are comparable to insurgencies post 1991/2001. These increasingly employ means of terrorism and sabotage also against civilian targets. Often different groups join forces in short-term, combined operations. Increasingly, there is a *mélange* of religious motives. Religion already played a role in the insurgencies of Darul Islam in Indonesia in the 1950s; which suggests that these different manifestations have frequently overlapped. Structural similarities with the *Great Revolt* can also be found in the modern insurgency model. In parts, however, the insurgency also manifests itself as an anti-colonial movement, and therefore can also be classified as a liberation movement. Hence, a clear dividing line is not expedient here.

The Field Manual definitions still serve as most helpful initial guidelines. They clearly lay out which basic elements should be focused on, irrespective of the wide range of insurgencies. According to the *Field Manual Counterinsurgency*: "[...] an insurgency is an organized, protracted politico-military struggle designed to weaken the control and legitimacy of an established government, occupying power, or other political authority, while increasing insurgent control." (FM 3-24 1-2) Its definition of 'counterinsurgency' is: "Counterinsurgency is military, paramilitary, political, economic, psychological, and civic actions taken by a government to defeat insurgency." (FM 3-24 1-2).

If the definition of counterinsurgency is applied to the *Great Revolt*, analogies can be found in the areas of organisation, duration, and the political-military sphere. Any increase in control and reduction in state legitimacy, however, has to be looked at in greater detail, as it was rather the inner-Jewish conflict (Jewish elite against insurgents) and the Roman prefects' reaction to it which, in the public perception, led to a temporary collapse of Rome's immediate control. Only very late and to a limited extent did the insurgents manage to control an area. Activities specifically geared to this end can only be surmised. A fundamental problem is posed by the question of legitimacy. From the beginning, Rome enjoyed only limited legitimacy as an occupying power. A somewhat different definition of counterinsurgency can be found in the British *Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40*: "Those military, law enforcement, political, economic, psychological and civil actions taken to defeat or contain insurgency, while addressing the root causes." As will be seen, the addition of the term "contain" as the goal of counterinsurgency is significant, and most likely also reflects Britain's historical experience as a former colonial power.

Sources

The Jewish insurgency is rather well documented. What is especially remarkable is that the literary sources not only cover the Roman point of view, but that particularly ample room is given to the losers' side. This, however, creates the problem that the Roman point of view is not always discernible in sufficient detail.

The most valuable source is the work of Flavius Josephus. Born in 37 A.D. as Joseph ben Matityahu ha Kohen into a family of Hasmonean ancestry, which included both priests and kings, he was not yet thirty years old when the insurgency proper began. By his own account, he was involved in Judea's political intrigues on the side of the insurgents in the years before 66 A.D. In the events after 66 A.D. he proved a moderately successful commander of the insurgents in Galilee. The siege of Jotapata ended with him surrendering to the Romans, upon which he remained a part of the Roman generals' entourage for the rest of the war. The *Great Revolt* over, he became a *protégé* of the Flavian imperial dynasty in Rome. In his writings he attempted to explain the Jewish insurgency to an educated, mainly Roman reading public, which also spoke Greek. The Roman side of events was given rather short shrift, as it was assumed to be well known anyway. The Romans' reaction to the insurgency is described in too superficial a manner, making it impossible to assess the counterinsurgency measures in sufficient detail.

A comparison of his two main works *The Jewish War* and *The Antiquities of the Jews* as well as of his autobiography (*Vita*) shows that he edited events. These changes can, for the most part, be eliminated, as his tendency to justify his own actions can be clearly determined through a comparison of his works, or verified by means of other, secondary sources. Many details are reported only by Flavius Josephus, which explains his reputation as the most important source. It is important to establish what he left unmentioned. He wrote, for example, that Roman *imperium* was based on power and skill. He never mentions Roman moral supremacy, as was common in the literature of his day.

Compared with Flavius Josephus, the texts of early Christian times (*Acts of the Apostles*, *Gospels*, and to a lesser degree the *Pauline Epistles*) count as secondary sources. Apart from these texts' focus on the early conflicts between the first Christians and the Prefect of Judea, it is their theological motivation which limits their value as a source even more. In parts, they were already written from a Gentile, external point of view, and can only support single facts given by Flavius Josephus. By themselves, however, these documents constitute rather weak evidence. They often lack a perspective of the entire Jewish situation.

What is obvious is that Roman authors depict the conflict from a Roman point of view. From this perspective, the early insurgency was but a side show of Roman politics. Tacitus as well as Cassius Dio deal with the *Great Revolt* following its escalation in 66 A.D., both because it lasted a long time and because it was important for Roman domestic policy due its significance for the further development of the Flavian Dynasty. Beyond that, conflicts between the occupying power and the population, which Flavius Josephus describes in great detail, are hardly dealt with. In Tacitus, for example, there is a brief mention that there was peace under Tiberius (Hist. 5,9 *sub Tiberio quies*), which includes the entire time of Pontius Pilate (26-36 A.D.), whom Flavius Josephus repeatedly mentions negatively. Only exceptional events, such as the relief of a prefect, are noted (Tac. Ann. 12,54). An assessment of the possible causes of the insurgency can only be found in a speculation about the prefect's greed (Tac. Hist. 5,12: *avaritia*) and in a remark about the Jews' religious sensitivities (Tac. Ann. 12,54). Thus, the Roman sources cannot offset any deficiencies in Flavius Josephus' writings.

Totally different problems arise when dealing with the Talmud. The Mishnah and Gemara are made up of various layers of text. Fundamentally, however, they all date back to the time following the destruction of the Temple. References to the insurgency are few and far between; especially the leaders of the insurgency are rarely mentioned. For the most part, there are allusions to the relationship between the Jews and the Roman authorities following the destruction of the Temple.

The best-known relic of the Jewish insurgency is the Arch of Titus, a reminder of the Roman triumph over the Jews. It cannot contribute anything, however, to the present topic, just as the *Judea Capta* coins cannot, which were the best-known coinage under Emperor Vespasian.

There are, however, coins extant from pre-insurgency prefects and from the insurgents themselves. These make it possible to elucidate the ideological background of both sides. The coins of the prefects show palm trees, ears of wheat and wreaths, and thus attempt to comply with Jewish aniconism. The insurgents' coins, however, allude to the religious background of the insurgency, which can also be ascertained from Flavius Josephus' descriptions.

Brief outline of Judea's history

Up to the events discussed here, Judeahad, during many centuries, only enjoyed statehood for a short period of time. In the beginning, it was ruled by the Ptolemaic dynasty, then by the Seleucid Empire, against which there was a rebellion under the Maccabees. These established the Hasmonean Dynasty, which ruled autonomously until the Romans entered the picture. In 63 B.C., Pompey established the indirect rule of Rome, which employed the Hasmoneans as intermediaries. In 40/37 B.C. Herod took power as a Roman client king. He was descended from the Edomites, a group which the Hasmoneans had Judaized, and which was therefore regarded as only half-Jewish. Politically motivated religious conflicts already began under his rule, especially within Judea. After his death in 4 B.C. the domestic political situation became so explosive that Publius Quinctilius Varus, the Governor of Syria, saw himself forced to employ his legions to put down the insurgency in Judea. There were pitched battles in the streets of Jerusalem, with the Romans setting fire to the columned halls surrounding the Temple. The insurgency also spread to the environs, where a rural population, resentful of high taxes as well as unclear rule and expecting the Messiah, was prepared to take up the eschatological battle for the New Jerusalem. Additional troops were deployed and 2,000 people crucified. The combination of a religiously fomented atmosphere and determined action by the Romans, which later was to be repeated numerous times, is already discernible here. Long-term pacification could not be achieved in this way.

Archelaos, Herod's son, ruled until 6 A.D. when Augustus took direct control. Judea was incorporated into Syria and governed by equestrian prefects. They were appointed directly by Rome, but were subordinate to the governor of Syria, who, as a former consul, outranked them. This explains why the prefects focused more on fighting the symptoms than on tackling the problem: they primarily tried to keep the situation under control to such a degree that the governor of Syria would not intervene. The prefects were responsible for securing and administering the territory, with the exception of levying taxes. Three thousand of Archelaos' men were taken on as security forces, organised in five cohorts and one *ala*. One cohort was deployed to the Antonia Fortress in Jerusalem. All these troops were recruited from the Gentile part of the population, which was to lead to massive conflicts with the Jewish community. Later on, cohorts from other parts of the Roman Empire were also deployed to Judea. The Jewish population, however, was never recruited.

As a first measure, and in order to calculate taxes, a census of the whole of Syria was carried out under Publius Sulpicius Quirinius, which features in the *Gospel According to St. Luke* in the context of the birth of Jesus. The memory of this administrative measure remained so powerful that it was connected with an event that had taken place approximately one decade previously. This census was the object of religiously motivated resistance, which cited the Old Testament. This laid down that a census was only allowed during times of war and that the land was God's. The brains behind this movement were Judas the Galilean and Zadok, who founded the so-called fourth philosophy, in addition to the Pharisees, the Sadducees and the Essenes.

For a short time, another client king was installed under Emperor Claudius, Agrippa I (37/41-44 A.D.), who, however, died soon after his accession to the throne. After a few years of calm, the situation began again to deteriorate markedly in 47 A.D. The prefects attempted to rid the *hinterland* of the insurgents whose gangs were terrorising the country. In this, they also cracked down on any potential supporters of the insurgents. Some of the latter moved to the cities where they became active especially against the elite, which cooperated with Rome (Flav. Jos. BJ 2,13,3). They were named Sicarii, after their weapon, the *sica* (dagger), and are regarded as the first terrorists in history. In the countryside, the estates of the elite were ransacked. The prefects finally attempted to play off the various groups against each other. The last prefects before the insurgency's final escalation were also accused of corruption and avarice. During Rome's direct rule, mass movements connected with gang violence and isolated terrorist attacks were no rarity. For a long time the security situation was brittle. Especially the large religious festivals in Jerusalem were wont to give the prefects a headache. They allowed assassins to flee unrecognised and forced the hand of the occupying power, which, being overtaxed, often reacted with excessive force. The Jewish elite sometimes reacted to the volatile security situation by marshalling groups of thugs, which, however, only contributed to a worsening of the situation.

The escalation finally came to a head in Caesarea in 66 A.D. when open conflict broke out between the Jewish and the Gentile parts of the population. The prefect Gessius Florus failed to support the (arguably legitimate) demands of the Jews, although sources intimate that they had bribed him. Subsequently, in May 66, riots broke out in Jerusalem, which drew attention to Florus' venality. The Romans attempted to quell these by force. Gessius Florus wanted to teach the people of Jerusalem a lesson and forced them to welcome two Roman cohorts with full honours. The public, under pressure of the Jewish elite, acquiesced. When the troops entered the city, however, they were met with resentment, which prompted the Romans to draw their swords in order to disperse the crowds. In the ensuing struggle the Romans were pushed back into the Antonia Fortress.

Gessius Florus left Jerusalem with one cohort and withdrew to Caesarea, while one cohort remained in Jerusalem. Now the insurgency took on a life of its own. There were clashes between the insurgents and the forces of the Jewish elite. Finally, the Romans were besieged in the Antonia Fortress. They surrendered, having been given a guarantee of safe conduct, but were killed during their withdrawal. This made a peaceful resolution of the insurgency impossible.

In September 66, Cestius, the governor of Syria, arrived with one Legion and a further 2,000 legionaries, as well as numerous auxiliary troops. After a futile attempt at storming the Temple Mount, he retreated north with his troops and suffered severe losses in an ambush. The insurgents then proceeded to prepare against a Roman invasion from Syria.

These preparations proved ineffective when, in spring 67, Titus Flavius Vespasianus, appointed commander by Nero, invaded with his forces. At the beginning, the core of his army was formed of three legions. Soon Galilee was under Roman control and slowly the towns around Jerusalem were taken. Following a delay triggered by the death of Nero, Titus, Vespasian's son, began the siege of Jerusalem in the spring of 70 A.D. After numerous unsuccessful attempts at storming the city, the Romans decided upon a blockade. Finally, on 26 September 70 A.D., the whole city was in Roman hands. The temple was burnt down, the population either enslaved or killed. By 74 A.D., any remaining pockets of resistance, including Masada, had been taken.

The Temple State became the property of the Emperor. 800 veterans were settled in Emmaus, and every Jew had to pay poll tax. The tributes all the Jews previously had to pay to the Temple in Jerusalem now had to be paid to Jupiter Capitolinus. Judea became a *propraetorian* province; one legion was stationed in Jerusalem. Despite this, the province remained in turmoil. Two generations later, under Hadrian, the so-called Bar-Kochba Revolt erupted and was also put down.

Religion

Religion is of crucial importance in the assessment of the Jewish insurgency. Outsiders defined and judged the Jews through their religion. The Jewish religion was the ideological basis for Jewish statehood and also the reason for the desire for statehood. The observance of religious commandments ensured the conservation of the state, which was founded on the pledge of a Promised Land. Foreign rule, which broke religious taboos, carried within the double danger of separating the Jewish people from God, as they were no longer living by the laws, which meant that any liberation from foreign rule would become a very distant prospect. This made it very easy to mobilise the population through religion. This basis of Jewish identity also influenced the Jews' reaction to the Hellenic-Roman culture. A phase of *rapprochement* was followed by a phase of increased resistance. Foreign rule also endowed the foreign culture with a political quality. This function of Judaism - conferring autonomy - was unacceptable to Rome. A foreign religion was only to be practised if it was de-politicised and did not stand in the way of integration into Roman rule. By interacting with other oriental religions (e.g. the Mithraic religion) this worked without too many hitches; with the Jews' monotheistic book-based religion resistance was greater; failure, however, was not a foregone conclusion.

This special function of conferring identity and autonomy also explains why hardly any Romanisation or integration of the Jewish elite into the Roman imperial aristocracy took place in the areas of Jewish settlement (including the Diaspora). The Jewish elite was also profoundly shaped by priestly offices. The elite's control over the Temple State formed the basis of its influence, together with its authority by reason of priestly descent and office. There are only isolated examples of integration; a broad movement, as in other areas of Roman rule, did not develop and was made obsolete by the events of 66/70 A.D. A representative of this Romanised elite was Tiberius Julius Alexander, Prefect of Judea (46-48 A.D.) and later Prefect of Egypt, who was instrumental in the rise of Vespasian. Tiberius Julius Alexander had abandoned the religion of his ancestors; he could, however, fall back on a Jewish religious upbringing.

The political mobilisation of the population was facilitated by the absence of any consensus even on fundamental religious questions, which meant that - depending on the situation - there were numerous opportunities to choose from in accordance with the situation. This is why not even Philo of Alexandria was able to explain why a certain measure by Pontius Pilate (placing signs with the Emperor's name in Jerusalem) breached religious commandments. Religious mobilisation was effective, however. Roman endeavours to respect religious taboos - or what they deemed these to be - did not really help calm the situation, as a new conflict could break out at any time and in any place. Explosive religious issues were, among others, the appointment of High Priests - from the Roman perspective a highly political question - where to store their vestments, the sanctity of the Temple, and many other areas.

In Judea, religion and society could not be separated from each other. The Roman prefects depended on the Jewish elite when it came to interpreting religious and social norms, so as to keep their rule as free from complications as possible. This could only work if the local population granted the elite the prerogative of religious interpretation. If this was no longer the case, the population could judge Roman behaviour in a manner which ran counter to the elite's intentions. A prefect such as Tiberius Julius Alexander, who was himself qualified to offer religious interpretations, was less exposed to this danger. Other prefects tried to counter this dilemma by relentlessly fighting any forms of deviance. However, this was a futile endeavour as regards tackling the hard core of the insurgents, as has already been mentioned.

Apart from religious taboos there was also religious belief that at *the end of days*, salvation would come in the greatest suffering. In various situations, also brought on by the Romans (e.g. the conflagration of the columned halls), this point in time was deemed to have arrived. There were numerous instances of messianic movements which succeeded in mobilising multitudes of people. The prefects cracked down mercilessly on these. The attempt by the Jewish elite to restrict religious troublemakers in their activities can also be observed in the case of Jesus of Nazareth.

The Roman view

The Roman perception of the conflict is crucial when looking for an explanation why they failed to counter effectively the early stages of the insurgency thereby making possible the escalation in 66 A.D..

The Romans made a fundamental distinction between enemy (*hostis*) and robber (*latro*). "*Hostes hi sunt, qui nobis aut quibus nos publice bellum decrevimus; ceteri latrones aut praedones sunt*" (Pomponius Dig. 50,16,118pr.). The question of whether a conflict was a war decided whether there could be prisoners of war with all concomitant legal implications. Only Germania and Parthia were possible areas for regular wars.

For the Romans, once their rule had been established, it was legitimate. There was never any question as to whether Roman rule over non-Roman areas was legitimate. This meant that no insurgency against Roman rule could be regarded as a legitimate struggle for freedom. Those that rebelled against Rome could only be *latrones* - troublemakers.

Latrocinium furthermore was an issue of criminal, and not of international law. The criminal attributes of *latrocinium* were the use of armed force (*vis armata*), *dolus malus* and the formation of gangs. Possible punishments were the *furca* (a machine which broke the neck), which replaced crucifixion, and the *damnatio ad bestias* (being sentenced "to the animals").

The Romans were not always consistent in the use of these terms, as only a war warranted a triumphal procession. The triumph over the Jews in 71 A.D. is a good example of this. The insurgency was portrayed as a regular war *ex post*, so it could be used for the propaganda purposes of the Flavian Dynasty.

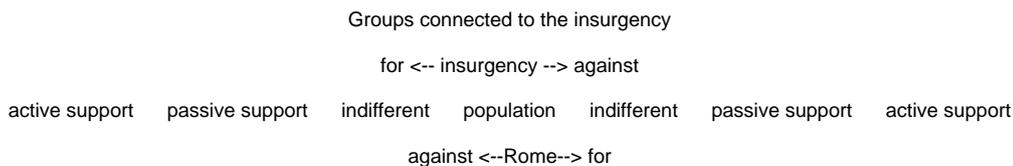
The Romans regarded the insurgents as robbers, which precluded any enquiry into possible, deep-seated reasons for the insurgency. Any assessment there may have been of the *latrones* as resistance fighters was lost in the historical records. Flavius Josephus, a resistance fighter from day one, had changed sides and supported his opponents in his writings, throughout which he referred to the insurgents of 66 A.D. as *leistes*, the Greek word for *latrones*.

This assessment also becomes plausible because the phenomenon of gangs was widespread in Roman antiquity and well known to the elite and the administration. These gangs were continuously replenished with deserters, fugitive slaves and absconded debtors. Gang nuisance was first and foremost a part of the crime statistics, before it could become a problem of counterinsurgency. Boundaries were blurred. The tax burden may have necessitated a retreat to border regions, where gang raids were carried out to ensure survival. These could be directed against the occupying power as well as collaborators who were on a higher social level, and thus achieved a political dimension which may have been intended or just a matter of accident. This phenomenon is also attested to in other areas of the Roman Empire. The term used was *anachoresis*, rural flight due to failed harvests or tax debts, with gangs as possible concomitant phenomenon.

Prerequisites for a root cause analysis

Today it is a matter of course that counterinsurgency should focus on the community as a whole and not on the insurgents, as for the latter their relationship with the people and their ability to mobilise them are critical. Even though the Romans lacked this awareness, a description of the various groups involved in, or affected by, an insurgency must precede an analysis of the root causes of the *Great Revolt*.

In Judea, at that time, there were not only groups either hostile or friendly to Rome or the insurgency, but also some which only tended more to one side than the other. A chart taken from JP 3-24 (with some modifications) places groups giving active support at the two ends of the spectrum, followed by those which offer passive support, and finally the large group adopting a neutral position. The aim of both sides involved in the conflict was to maintain the numbers of their respective supporters while reducing those of their opponents.



There is evidence that the population was indifferent even after the conflict had started in earnest. Flavius Josephus states that the peasants in Gischala (Galilee) did not want to become involved in the war, since their harvest demanded more attention than political shenanigans. One example of passive support offered by the population is the release of Barabbas following public pressure. He was freed instead of Jesus and, according to Mark, was one of the rebels who had killed Romans during the insurgency.

Active support for the Romans lost its lustre when the Sicarii began taking action against collaborators, for whom the Romans could not provide enough protection. Additionally, the Jewish elite, who primarily collaborated with Rome, did not enjoy either the trust of Rome or that of the mass of the people, which they would have needed to calm the situation. This reduced the number of active supporters as well as their influence on an indifferent public.

The so-called *hearts & minds concept* can be used in order to better understand the motivation of the public. Today, it is used only as a catchphrase. It basically states:

1. 1. *"hearts means persuading the people their best interests are served by your [i.e. the counterinsurgent's] success."*
2. 2. *"minds means convincing them that you [i.e. the counterinsurgent] can protect them, and that resisting you is pointless."*

In the *hearts* area the Romans were at a disadvantage right from the start, since a permanent defeat of Rome was generally regarded as desirable. Only stable, relatively just rule devoid of any excesses might possibly have ensured success and strengthened the group of Rome's passive supporters. The *minds* part appeals to a person's self-interest, especially if an insurgency has only limited chances of success. The hard core did not respond to this in any way, since even minimal chances of success would not deter them from their enterprise, which became evident in Masada, where mass suicides and killings upon request were carried out by the insurgents prior to the Romans taking the fortress.

A root cause analysis must also differentiate between the various groups and their approaches. The insurgency broke out when the *active /passive support* line moved so far to the right in favour of the insurgency that critical mass was finally achieved. This is clearly in evidence in Flavius Josephus' description. It must be assumed, however, that the majority of the population was not interested in a violent escalation of the situation. Despite this, the subsequent battles directly or indirectly affected the whole population. In her counterinsurgency efforts, Rome should have focused on the group composed of the indifferent public and pointed it in the direction of her passive supporters. On the other hand, the group of active supporters should also have been able to rely on Rome's protection. Rome clearly failed in both respects.

Possible reasons for the insurgency

In light of what has been stated, a root cause analysis can now be attempted. From the main source, Flavius Josephus, research has condensed five sets of causes and used different combinations of these to explain the insurgency. These are: 1. the incompetence of Roman Prefects; 2. the severity of Roman repression; 3. religious sensitivities; 4. social tensions; 5. tensions with gentiles in the Prefects' administrative ambit. According to the present analysis, which used lessons learned in modern counterinsurgency - as checks and balances - and revisited the principal source, the main reasons are - put simply - twofold. There was a *culture clash* already before Roman rule, namely under Herod. As stated previously, this was exploited politically and was not the logical result of general religious beliefs, since at that time there was something like a Hellenistic Judaism. The dynamic that was to appear again and again can already be seen in the first episode reported in Flavius Josephus' *The Jewish War*. Two religious leaders interpreted the mounting of an eagle above the Temple Gate as a violation of religious norms, with the negative view of Herodianic-Hellenistic culture playing an additional role. Their adherents tried to remove the eagle by force. The matter ended in religious turmoil, executions, mass riots and general frenzy. The fact that the eagle was also politically associated with Rome was an additional aspect. Later, under Roman rule, there were further instances which serve as proof of this causal loop.

Reasons for the insurgency

repression

resistance against Hellenistic culture/conflicts with Gentile population

insurgencies, rural flight

debt, economic pressure

direct Roman rule

culture clash

taxes, tributes
taboos or laws

soldiers, instruments of power

violations of concrete religious

religious insurgencies

religiously motivated rejection

religiously apocalyptic mood

In the left circle, *direct Roman rule*, the necessity of keeping the country under control required the deployment of thousands of soldiers. In order to finance their upkeep, it was necessary to maintain the tax revenues, which, especially in times of crop failure, could lead to debt, and eventually rural flight and concomitant gang formation. This, in turn, required the employment of Roman instruments of power, which in itself justified the necessity of their use. An uncertain security situation in the countryside led to further shortfalls in agricultural production. The decisive factor was the precarious economic situation. This is made obvious by the fact that one of the first actions of the insurgents after seizing control of Jerusalem was the destruction of the municipal archive where the debt certificates were held. The religiously motivated refusal to pay taxes to the Romans reinforced a messianic doomsday mood, which led to religious unrest, whose suppression again fuelled the apocalyptic mood.

Rome's counterinsurgency – a quandary

This leads us to the core of counterinsurgency. As already mentioned, certain fields can be clearly discerned from the sources. There were military actions (employment of an auxiliary cohort in Jerusalem, anti-gang measures); there are also examples of psychological-propagandistic activities (special coins minted by governors, respect for taboos, especially in Jerusalem). A visible political measure was the recall of the Prefect Cumanus.

In order to facilitate a comparison with modern approaches to counterinsurgency, this paper now attempts to compare and contrast the various aspects. In this, certain modern parameters will already be implemented in response to specific conditions, e.g. moderate taxes as an attempt at strengthening the legitimacy of rule.

To start with, it has to be said that the Romans would certainly have agreed with C. E. Caldwell's statement: "*Since tactics favour the regular troops while strategy favours the enemy, the object to be sought is to fight, not to manoeuvre, to meet the hostile forces in open battle, not to compel them to give way by having recourse to strategy.*" This is why they focused on the insurgents, and not on the population as a whole. As a result, the Romans more often than not were mired in step one of counterinsurgency, i.e. the attempt to clear an area of armed and aggressive gangs and to regain control.

For counterinsurgency, the Romans would have had both political and military ways and means. The employment of military means very possibly led to an attempt at finding a military solution to a political problem. The governor may have been influenced both by politics as well and the military; his subordinates, however, were soldiers and as such tended towards military solutions.

The Romans had five options to counter the insurgency:

1. *Cultural obliteration*: Here, Rome would have focused on the active insurgents and would have accompanied this with coercive measures aimed at re-educating the entire population. Judaism would have had to be completely divested of its function of providing autonomy as well as identity. There would have been no way for the Jewish elite to be a conscious part of such an approach. A large contingent of troops would have been necessary to ensure success. Any decision on this option would have had to be taken centrally, in Rome. This approach was chosen after the outbreak of the insurgency in 66 A.D. and the renewed conquest; it was, however, only successful after the crushing of the Bar-Kochba Revolt.
2. *Cultural incorporation*: This option would have had to effect a long-term transfer of Roman culture as an influential factor. High investments on cultural, social and economic levels, targeted at the root causes of support, would have had to accompany counterinsurgency measures. This would have necessitated getting the Jewish elite on board. The decision to opt for this approach would also have had to be taken in Rome. The success of this option can only be surmised, not proved.
3. *(Partial) autonomy*: The (already attempted) way of indirect rule (Herod) could have been tried again. A client king's freedom of action would have been clearly demarcated by Rome's 'wishes'. An example of (partial) autonomy can be seen in Agrippa I, whose attempts at developing an independent political position were suppressed by Rome (Flav. Jos. Ant. 19,8,1). This decision would also have been taken centrally.
4. *Cultural infiltration*: This option either involves the formation of a puppet regime or protectionism *vis-à-vis* the elite. Protectionism was tried, but was not successful enough on its own. It also came within the purview of the governor; a puppet regime required a decision by Rome.
5. *Playing for time*: this option served to prepare a different option with a focus on limiting the insurgency geographically. This was the decision of the local commander.

Options 4 and 5 were pursued for years, without any success. The reasons for Rome's failure were political. A detailed comparison supports this impression.

The assessment is conducted by means of a three-tier scale, from *yes* (i.e. used in counter-insurgency) via *neutral* (i.e. rudimentary evidence of use) to *no* (i.e. not used). In this endeavour, intermediate steps sometimes had to be used. The implementation by Rome could possibly be assessed in different ways, the present assessment, however, can provide some orientation.

<i>population-centric vs. enemy-centric</i>		
enemy-centric (focus on the insurgents = active/passive supporters)	yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-gang measures • execution of leaders of the insurgency
population-centric (focus on the large group made up of the indifferent public)	no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no sympathy for the population's problems
<i>insight into the insurgency as such</i>		
insight into the insurgency as a prerequisite for fighting it successfully (JP 3-24 p. XIV; FM 3-24 1-22)	no - neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • due to their disposition the prefects were incapable of doing it • local elite would have been capable of doing so/it, the Romans, however, were constricted by a lack of trust and the challenge of understanding the insurgency as being more than gang violence • no analysis of the underlying reasons • no demand for autonomy or independence recognised as legitimate
<i>use of force</i>		
use of legitimate and proportional force only (JP 3-24 p. XVI and III-17f.; FM 3-24 I-25)	no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ruthlessness <i>vis-à-vis</i> the/any insurgency • mass crucifixions
<i>concrete counterinsurgency: steps (JP 3-24 p. XXC and X-2-11; FM 3-24 5-18-23)</i>		
clear (create a secure political and psychological environment)	neutral	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anti-gang measures • only occasionally and regionally, insurgents move to different areas, Jerusalem fear
hold (establish firm government control of the populace and area)	neutral - no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • presence of forces required, not possible on a sustained basis in the open country • total number of forces (3,000) insufficient • intermittent loss of control
build (gain the populace's support)	no	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no legitimacy as occupying force, neutrality of a majority of the population realistic; however, even passive support difficult to achieve • religion as a common ground between the insurgents and the rest of the Jewish population comes between the latter and the occupiers

If Seth Jones' three prerequisites for successful counterinsurgency are also included, the Romans' dilemma becomes clear. These prerequisites were: 1. creation of domestic security forces, 2. local administration, and 3. obstructing external support for the insurgents. The first two prerequisites could not be achieved. The auxiliary forces, which were recruited from the Gentile population (local or external), cannot be regarded as domestic security forces. They were perceived as Roman, even if they were not of this extraction. The local administration, which existed in embryonic form, also failed in this respect.

It becomes clear that a fundamental problem was the prefects' low position and qualifications. Prefects such as Tiberius Julius Alexander tended to be the exception. His political skill is reflected by the fact that he was later made *Praefectus Aegypti*, the highest prefect position. Following their time in this troublesome yet rather modest position, most incumbents were not destined for an especially successful career, which was proof of their rather limited aptitude. It must be said, however, that even Alexander, in his term of office, faced trouble in the shape of the resurgent Zealot movement. This just shows that the activities of the other prefects should have been monitored much more closely. Their voices did not carry enough weight to bring about a radical change in Roman policy.

Concerning the question of legitimacy, which is very much focused on today, the massive anomalies in counterinsurgency can be deduced from Rome's role as an occupying power. This problem meant that Roman counterinsurgency should have primarily focused on containment, also by means of removing some of the conflict's causes. The fact that an escalation occurred shows that Rome itself generated the prerequisites for its failure by the manner in which it assessed the insurgency and set priorities, as was made clear by the prefects' low rank.

The kind of stability the prefects aimed for in their attempts to play for time and to survive their term of office relatively unscathed, could also be referred to as "a brittle form of stability", which could also be maintained through force and corruption. Beyond this, containing the insurgency would have been possible beyond this low level (which in the final analysis was not sufficient) if Rome had decided on a radical change of her policies.

Conclusion

Rome was an occupying power. The Jewish elite may to a large extent have come to an arrangement; the majority of the population, however, could not see any benefits resulting from Roman occupation. Liberation movements triggered by the experience of occupation are generally difficult to confront. Modifying a few conditions does not change the fact of the country being occupied. In the case of Malaysia, the British Empire was successful in its counterinsurgency, mainly because it held out the promise of independence. This meant that legitimacy no longer was an issue. This was not an option for Rome, which means that containment of the insurgency by other means should have been attempted.

This containment would have necessitated that the underlying reasons of the insurgency be identified as political, social and economic problems which caused parts of the population to support the insurgents. The Romans completely failed in this. They may have attempted to influence certain factors on an event-driven basis; as they did not, however, change the fundamental aspect of the occupation, they could contain the insurgency only up to the point that it would not erupt. At this stage, a stable situation can be assumed. The psychological strain on large parts of the population was not yet strong enough for them to attempt open rebellion. The Romans' focus on the active elements of the insurgency and their indifference towards the underlying reasons for its support created a precarious security situation.

The system finally reached its tipping point because of prefects who were regarded as corrupt and volatile in their behaviour. This meant that the assumption that it is possible to draw long-term benefit from Roman occupation, rather than from a bloody insurrection against it, was shattered in so many parts of the population that open revolt became possible. The principle of containment was not pursued. A more comprehensive political solution would have required much greater involvement of Rome as the central power. For Rome, however, it was apparently unthinkable to make an attempt at finding a political solution to a problem which was regarded merely as an instance of insubordination by subjects.

The problem of applying modern concepts to examples from history also becomes obvious in the present example. Only a thorough analysis of the historic preconditions as well as of the assumed validity of modern concepts, and a clear exposition of the difference in conditions will ensure a correct, and therefore effective, application of such concepts to epochs long past.

