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THE ROLE OF THE ARMED FORCES IN COUNTERTERRORISM

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ABSTRACT: The armed forces are organized, trained and equipped to fight the external enemies of the state, and they have a role to play in maintaining internal security as well. However, such “military assistance to the civil power” missions are fraught with risks. This paper addresses three of those risks. The armed forces’ national defence capabilities are affected and their budget is burdened with non-military expenditures. Performing law enforcement duties (especially without adequate training beforehand) carries with it the risk of poisoning the civil-military relationship for a long time – and once it is lost, it is very difficult to regain the trust of the population. Employing the armed forces in the counterterrorist role may also turn a dangerous, but manageable terrorist threat into a deadly, no-holds-barred armed conflict. In spite of the many potential problems, the armed forces do have a role to play in counterterrorism.

KEYWORDS: Northern Ireland, The Troubles, occupied territories, West Bank, Gaza, military assistance to the civil power

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MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE CIVIL POWER

Every modern state has some legal mechanism to employ its armed forces within its own borders in certain emergencies. This makes a lot of sense because the armed forces generally have a large pool of trained and disciplined manpower, a command structure that can respond to most situations, and they usually have a can-do attitude – nothing is impossible, although it may take a little time to perform miracles. They also have special skills and equipment generally not available in the civilian worlds. Therefore, there is nothing controversial about mobilizing army units to assist in flood relief, decontaminate a major chemical spill, or ask the air force to fly supplies to communities that are isolated by a heavy snowfall.

A far more controversial issue is to call upon the armed forces to deploy their trained and disciplined manpower and specialized equipment for internal security missions. This has been happening with increasing frequency in Europe, and the threat of terrorism has generally been the primary reason for it. Deploying the armed forces on counterterrorist duties (or on any other internal security mission, for that matter) may improve the security situation temporarily: the soldiers’ training, mobility, firepower and discipline are likely to prevail even against the most dedicated anti-government activists or terrorists. However, it is a controversial decision, because the soldiers are expected to employ their professional

skills not against an external enemy, but against fellow citizens. Sending the soldiers into the streets generates unexpected – and certainly unintended – negative consequences.

The list of potential problems is long, from a scrambled chain of command to heavy collateral casualties.¹ Through the experiences of the United Kingdom and Israel this paper focuses on only three of them: the effect on military readiness, civil-military relations, and the terrorist organization.

WHY TURN TO THE MILITARY?

When a government suddenly faces a terrorist challenge, it must accomplish two broad categories of immediate and concurrent tasks in order to gain control of the situation. In the affected areas, it must maintain permanent and undiminished state power through enhanced and continuous presence of the security forces in support of a functioning public administration. It must also create a secure environment for the population by isolating the terrorists from the people, preventing terrorist operations (or at least making them more difficult to carry out), and commencing counterterrorist operations. The success or failure in these tasks will influence all other aspects of counterterrorism.

The two categories of tasks are closely interrelated. The obvious primary purpose of maintaining the persistent presence of state power is to serve as the guarantor of security of the population in the affected area, but the secondary purposes are scarcely less important. The constant presence of government authority serves as a reminder to the population that the state not only collects taxes and punishes wrongdoing but also provides protection and such essential services as education, health care and welfare. It also facilitates the collection of timely, accurate, and actionable intelligence that is essential for fighting the terrorists.

Police forces are generally organized for normal peacetime conditions. In a reasonably well-governed, modern society the ratio of the law enforcement organizations (police and gendarmerie) to the population is somewhere around 1:300, or even less. With this ratio, a moderately competent police force can maintain public order, enforce traffic rules, and catch criminals. However, this ratio is nowhere near adequate for generating the all-encompassing state power presence that is a necessary condition for success in a serious internal security crisis.

International experience gained in various counterinsurgency and counterterrorism campaigns going back 70 years or so, provides a rough guide to the force requirement. *Table 1* shows some internal conflicts that had a significant terrorism component. The figures suggest that the security forces will face grave difficulties and may fail entirely unless their personnel strength reaches a certain critical mass: they simply would not have the manpower to maintain territorial dominance. As a rule of thumb, a ratio approaching one security forces member to every 50-60 citizens offers a good chance that the state will prevail.

Some words of caution are in order, when examining the table. First of all, “success” is defined narrowly, in strictly military terms, as the defeat of the terrorist organization in the field. This is a good – often essential – foundation for terminating the conflict on the government’s terms: as Henry Kissinger put it, “...the guerrilla wins if he does not lose.

¹ Hughes, G. *The Military’s Role in Counterterrorism: Examples and Implications for Liberal Democracies*. The Letort Papers series. (Carlisle Barracks: Strategic Studies Institute, 2011)

The conventional army loses if it does not win.”² However, a military victory is not enough. A lasting political resolution requires a whole-of-government approach that is beyond the control of the military forces (and all too often military success is squandered away by short-sighted policies). In the Battle of Algiers, the French created an astonishingly high ratio of security forces to residents,³ destroyed the terrorist organizations in the city, and in subsequent operations achieved a similar success on a much larger scale in the rest of the country. In 1969 the Rhodesian security forces, and in 1998-1999 the Yugoslav security forces achieved similar sweeping results. Yet neither the French, nor the Rhodesian or the Yugoslav government could translate military victory into a political settlement.

NATO’s occupation of Kosovo (June 1999) shows that a high ratio and the capacity for escalation dominance do not guarantee the government’s success: there is much more at play than just the number of armed men. The ratio of NATO forces to the population of Kosovo was 1:50, yet they could not (or perhaps had no intention to) prevent Albanian vengeance and the mass expulsion of the Serbs and other minorities. Obviously, political will and clear guidance are also determining factors.

The Rhodesian government’s success during the first phase of the Bush War (late 1960s) in spite of the lopsided security forces to population ratio is an outlier. The insurgent organizations were operating from foreign soil, their contact with the local population was almost non-existent, and their fighters were poorly trained, poorly led and unmotivated. Also, they faced highly trained, well led, professional security forces, whose operations limited the affected area to a sparsely populated belt along the border, while the rest of the country was unaffected by the conflict.⁴ Clearly, these factors outweighed all others. When the insurgents changed their strategy (1971 and after), the unfavourable forces to population ratio led to the failure of the counterinsurgency campaign.

² Kissinger, H. A. “The Vietnam Negotiations.” *Foreign Affairs*, January 1969, reprinted in *Survival: Global Politics and Strategy*, 11(2) pp. 38–50. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396336908440951>

³ Hervé, P. *Gathering Human Intelligence in Counter-Insurgency Warfare: The French Experience during the Battle of Algiers (January-October 1957)*. (Quantico: US Marine Corps CSC, 2009) <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA519288.pdf>

⁴ Kiss, P. Á. *Winning Wars amongst the People: Case Studies in Asymmetric Warfare*. (Dulles: Potomac Books, 2014)

Table 1 *Security forces to population ratios in selected internal conflicts*⁵

Conflict	Forces to population ratio	Outcome for government
Algerian war – Battle of Algiers (1957 Jan-Oct)	1:33	success
Rhodesia Bush War (1969)	1:300	success
Rhodesia Bush War (1971)	1:273	failure
Rhodesia Bush War (1976)	1:144	failure
Rhodesia general elections (1979)	1:102	failure
N Ireland 1969-1971	1:250-1:150	failure
N Ireland 1972-1980	1:55	success
N Ireland 1980-1999	1:62	success
Punjab, 1984-91	1:270-1:186	stalemate
Punjab, 1994	1:69	success
Kosovo 1998-1999 Yugoslav counterinsurgency	1:48	success
Kosovo 1999 – NATO occupation	1:50	failure
Basra 2003-2007	1:300	failure
Baghdad 2007 Feb-Nov	1:50	success

Few police forces have the capability of increasing their personnel strength to the necessary 1:60 to 1:50 ratio at short notice. The problem may be solved temporarily by transferring police forces from unaffected regions to the trouble spots, but this is strictly a short term proposition, and may actually exacerbate the overall security situation. The transferred personnel will not be familiar with their new area of operations, and their transfer leaves a security vacuum in its wake. Crime will rise in the regions with reduced police coverage, and the terrorists may also expand their operations there. Unless the terrorist threat can be eliminated in a very short time, there is no alternative to increasing the personnel strength of the police. Until that augmentation takes place, the only way the government can maintain control of the situation is to rely on the armed forces.

Both the security for the population and the persistent state presence tasks require skills that police are not trained for, as well as equipment that is either not in the police inventory, or available only in small quantities. Not even the largest police organizations are likely to have tents, cots, sleeping bags, field kitchens, mess kits and the like in anything near adequate quantities, or helicopter lift and cross-country assets to move 50 or 100 armed men and their tactical equipment. When the requirement for these capacities arises, it is preferable to borrow them from the reserve stocks of the military forces, rather than purchase them outright. Once the counterterrorist campaign is over, borrowed equipment can be returned to the military, whereas purchased items must be warehoused or sold off at serious discount. When it comes to training, soldiers find little mystery in infantry tactics, patrolling in the mountains, bush and forests, long-range sniping, command and control of large-scale operations, secure communications, manning crew-served weapons, ambush,

⁵ Based on *Ibid*, Chapters 4–7 and pp. 170–173.

or land navigation. They are part of a soldier's daily routine, but not part of the usual police skill set, and it is best to rely on the military forces for the necessary training.

Defeating the terrorists in combat is usually far less a problem: the training, equipment and tactical mobility of the security forces – perhaps with the exception of those in a few failed states – are far superior to anything the terrorists would have. They can easily beat any terrorist group, once they find it. The immediate problem is to find the terrorists among the population, and fix them long enough to engage and neutralize them, all without causing collateral damage. This requires good, timely, and actionable intelligence on the terrorists' locations, movements, habits, and support networks. Most law enforcement organizations have some intelligence assets but these are usually quite limited. They may be adequate to keep track of a few members of the lunatic fringe, but inadequate to support a sustained counterterrorist campaign. Therefore, military intelligence personnel and equipment will likely be needed, until police capabilities improve.

TWO CASES

The British experience in Northern Ireland, and the Israeli experience in the occupied territories offer useful insights into military operations in an internal security/counterinsurgency/counterterrorism context. Discussion of the details of these complicated and long-running conflicts is beyond the scope of this paper, but a brief outline may be in order.

The United Kingdom and the “Troubles” in Northern Ireland

In the summer of 1969 inter-communal violence between republicans and loyalists (or Catholics and Protestants) reached such an intensity that the local police lost control of the situation, and several battalions of the British Army had to be deployed to separate the two sides and restore order. The Irish Republican Army (IRA) adjusted to the new situation, and transitioned from inciting public disorder to initiating an insurgency campaign (1969–1971). Early in the conflict the IRA's fragmentation commenced: factions broke away to form more radical and more violent organizations. The largest and most effective was the Provisional IRA. The fragmentation did not mean enmity: the factions often cooperated and supported one another.⁶

The government responded by significantly expanding the security forces. Regular army battalions were deployed, the police (Royal Ulster Constabulary – RUC) was expanded from 3,500 in 1969 to 7,000 by 1980. A local territorial defence force (Ulster Defence Regiment – UDR, later renamed Royal Irish Regiment (RIR) Home Service Force) was raised. Additional regular units were brought in from time to time, as the intensity of the conflict required. At the peak of the insurgency phase of the conflict (1973) the armed forces deployed over 25,000 servicemen (17,000 regulars and 8,400 territorials).

The insurgency was eventually suppressed in the mid-1970s by the overwhelming strength of the security forces. As a result of the insurgency's failure, the more radical IRA factions transitioned to a terrorist campaign. The operations of the security forces eventually persuaded them that they could not achieve their goals through violence. In 1994, all factions

⁶ Ó Faoleán, G. *A Broad Church: The Provisional IRA in the Republic of Ireland, 1969–1980*. (Newbridge: Merrion Press, 2019)

accepted a ceasefire, and a long period of negotiations followed. With the decommissioning of the IRA arsenals and the Army's gradual return to barracks an uneasy peace returned to Northern Ireland. Operation Banner, the British Army's longest campaign (nearly 40 years) came to an end on 31st July 2007.

Israel and the occupied territories

Israel has been the target of terrorist attacks since the declaration of the state in 1947. Until the late 1980s, the authorities – and Israeli society – considered the terrorist threat a dangerous nuisance, but not an existential threat. The IDF (Israel Defence Forces) conducted retaliatory strikes against the terrorist infrastructure in the neighbouring states, but its primary mission was to defend the country against peer and near-peer enemies – the armed forces of the Arab countries.⁷

The territories Israel occupied in the Six-Day War in 1967 did not pose a serious internal security problem for twenty years, either. Israeli occupation was seen as less repressive than the Jordanian and Egyptian had been. In spite of the occasional riots, bombings, or knife attacks, the Palestinians seemed to accommodate themselves to the occupation. Personal relations between Jews and Arabs were seldom friendly, but they were reasonably peaceful at least. The infrastructure projects the Israeli authorities undertook in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, as well as employment opportunities in Israel improved the quality of life of the local population, and the economic boom that followed the war benefited the Palestinians nearly as much as it did the Israelis.⁸

Israel's control of the territories faced the first serious challenge (the first intifada) in late 1987. Strikes and violent demonstrations followed each other all over the occupied territories, Israeli patrols and checkpoints were pelted with rocks, vehicles were overturned, individuals and small groups were attacked. Unlike such disturbances previously, the unrest did not die down after a few days, as the Israeli authorities had expected.⁹ The level of violence was fairly low, and disturbances were confined to the occupied territories. Although the IDF deployed a large force, it was unable to suppress the insurgency, and the intifada came to an end only when the Oslo peace process started.¹⁰

When the peace process failed in the fall of 2000, the second intifada broke out. It was a far more violent uprising than the first one: the Palestinian Security Services (raised as

⁷ Catignani, S. "Israeli Counterinsurgency: The never-ending 'whack-a-mole.'" in *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*. (Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn, eds. Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2012) pp. 263–275.

⁸ van Creveld, M. *The Sword and the Olive: A Critical History of the Israeli Defense Force*. (New York: Public Affairs, 1998) Ch. 20. and Martin van Creveld, *The Land of Blood and Honey: The Rise of Modern Israel*. (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2010) Ch. 4. This version of the reality in the occupied territories is disputed by many scholars (both Jewish and Arab). See for example Adams, M. "Israel's Treatment of the Arabs in the Occupied Territories." *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 6(2), pp. 19–40. and Shafir, G. *A Half Century of Occupation: Israel, Palestine, and the World's Most Intractable Conflict*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2017)

⁹ van Creveld, *The Sword and the Olive*. Ch. 20. and van Creveld, *The Land of Blood and Honey*. Ch. 4.

¹⁰ Karkar, S. "The first intifada 20 years later." *The Electronic Intifada*, 10 December 2007. <https://electronicintifada.net/content/first-intifada-20-years-later/7251> (Accessed on 6 July 2020) and Erbay, T. "The Role of the Military in Counterterrorism: Unintended Consequences." (Published Master's Thesis, Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School, 2012) p. 44. https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/27825/12Dec_Erbay_Tayfun.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y (Accessed on 6. July 2020)

part of the Oslo peace process) and the various terrorist organizations also joined the fray. Their gunmen fired on the Israeli soldiers from behind civilians, small teams infiltrated the Israeli settlements and murdered Jewish civilians, Israeli towns near the border of the occupied territories were attacked by rocket and mortar fire, and suicide bombers spread death and destruction in the Israeli heartland. In response, the IDF deployed heavy firepower, and carried out large-scale military operations to destroy the terrorist infrastructure. The intifada came to an end only in 2005, as a result of the interplay of several factors: kinetic operations of the security forces, construction of the separation fence, political developments within the Palestinian society, ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, and Israel's unilateral withdrawal from Gaza.¹¹

The internal security risk did not disappear after the intifadas came to an end. The large-scale deployment of forces has continued. The soldiers have become the muscle for the Israeli internal security organization, the Shin Beth, and internal security in the occupied territories turned into the primary mission of the IDF ground forces.

EFFECT ON MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND READINESS

In 1968 the British Army had two infantry battalions and an armoured reconnaissance regiment¹² stationed in Northern Ireland.¹³ None of them was performing assistance to the civil authorities' duties. When the local political structures proved unwilling and the local police incapable of controlling inter-communal violence in 1968-1969, additional regular Army battalions (as well as specialists from the other services) were moved into the province. Army strength eventually stabilized at six regular battalions on long tours (initially 18, and subsequently 24 months), one regular battalion of short (initially four, subsequently six months) tour, and 11 UDR/RIR battalions. Additional units were deployed for specific manpower-intensive operations, or when the intensity of the conflict so required.¹⁴

At the peak of the "Troubles", 17,000 regulars plus 8,400 UDR/RIR – the equivalent of two divisions – were deployed. Since until the end of the Cold War the British Army's personnel strength stood at about 155,000, this 25,400 meant that – at least in 1973 – over 18 percent of its ground forces, as well as nearly proportional material and financial resources were tied down in internal security missions and were not available for regular defence tasks. Before a battalion was deployed, its personnel had to be trained on internal security duties. When it returned from Northern Ireland, leaves had to be granted, selected personnel had to be released to service schools, deferred medical treatments had to be taken care of, and the entire unit had to be retrained on its original mission. These added months to the deployment period – as a result, a battalion on a six-month short tour was not available for nearly a year, one on a 24-month long tour was away for nearly 30 months.

¹¹ Schachter, J. "The End of the Second Intifada?" *Strategic Assessment*, 13(3) pp. 63–70. <https://www.inss.org.il/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/FILE1289897140-1.pdf> Accessed on 6 July 2020

¹² In the organizational scheme of the British Army the cavalry and artillery regiments are battalion-sized formations.

¹³ David French, *Army, Empire, and Cold War: The British Army and Military Policy, 1945-1971*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p. 291.

¹⁴ *Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland*. Army Code 71842. (London: Ministry of Defence, 2006)

Hard data from Israel are more difficult to come by, but according to reasonably reliable sources, only three battalions (two in the West Bank and one in Gaza) were performing internal security duties in the occupied territories.¹⁵ In 1987, when active resistance began, the IDF had to increase its troop deployments significantly – this author estimates that it maintained at least a division-equivalent (about 12,000-15,000 soldiers) in the Territories, and ramped up their numbers when operations so required. Since the active duty personnel strength of the Israeli Defence Forces (all services) has fluctuated between 140,000 (1990) and 160,000 (today)¹⁶ – an average of 10 percent of this strength was tied down in the Territories, and was not available for national defence tasks. For Israel, with a much smaller economy than the UK's, with much more doubtful strategic alliances, and with potential enemies much closer, that was a very heavy burden.

The British battalions deployed to Northern Ireland did not exercise as a unit for at least a year, and the brigades that they were part of had to train with one battalion short. An artillery commander deployed to N. Ireland could not fire his guns at all during his tour of command, let alone participate in a major exercise.¹⁷ The IDF, whose effectiveness depends on a large body of reservists, was affected by these problems to a far greater extent. When reservists were called up, instead of the usual 17 weeks of training they went to the West Bank or the Gaza Strip to serve as muscle for the internal security organization, the Shin Beth. They became highly effective at that mission, but lost much of their primary skills: armour crews did not drive their tanks or fire their guns for years on end and did not participate in large-scale exercises. Cross-training was not conducted at all. Much the same was true of infantry and artillery, as well as other specialists. Even more seriously, brigade and division commanders had little or no opportunity to gain experience in commanding large formations on operations.¹⁸

The Cold War ended without the UK armed forces having to face the armies of the Warsaw Pact, and performed creditably in Operation Desert Storm. The IDF was less fortunate. The unexpected war with Hezbollah in 2006 showed the insidious effects of concentrating on internal security missions for a long time. Instead of chasing small, elusive teams of terrorists or rock-throwing Palestinian teenagers in sneakers, the IDF was suddenly confronted by a force equivalent to two highly trained infantry brigades with a decentralized command and control system, lavishly provided with state-of-the art anti-tank missiles, dug in on ideal defensive terrain. The IDF was not ready for it: Israeli commanders up and down the chain of command, as well as individual soldiers made elementary mistakes while trying to manoeuvre. The IDF suffered losses that were not only painful for Israeli society, but also highly embarrassing for a force that had racked up a long string of impressive successes against much larger national armies. This author is not suggesting that the IDF suffered a defeat, or that its embarrassing performance was due only to the long antiterrorist mission in the Territories. There is ample evidence that serious mistakes were made before

¹⁵ van Creveld, *The Land of Blood and Honey*. Ch. 4.; Erbay, *The Role of the Military in Counterterrorism*. p. 42., and Catignani, "Israeli Counterinsurgency."

¹⁶ Cordesman, A. H. *Arab-Israeli Military Forces in an Era of Asymmetric Wars*. (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2006) p. 96.

¹⁷ *Operation Banner*. p. 7–2.

¹⁸ Matt M. Matthews, *We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War*. (Ft. Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press. 2008) pp. 27–28., 50., 64.

and during the war by the highest military and civilian authorities.¹⁹ But the commitment of much of the available forces to the Territories did contribute to it.

Fighting a much weaker enemy that hides among the population, constant media scrutiny, frequent investigations and disciplinary actions for the sake of political expediency will inevitably affect the morale of the forces. These were not significant problems for the British Army: its long service professionals returned to “real soldiering” once their battalion’s deployment to Northern Ireland was over. The Israeli reservists had no such opportunity. When they were called up, they could look forward only to the dreary duty of trying to suppress the aspirations of a restive population, and to court martial for any mistake or error in judgment. This soon led to serious morale problems throughout the IDF.²⁰

Morale will also suffer if the political establishment or the superior officers fail to provide adequate support and rock solid legal protection to the soldiers on the ground. The assistance to the civil power mission requires that the soldiers (often of junior rank and with limited experience) make instant decisions on the application of force. Inevitably, they will make the wrong decision sometimes. In such cases (and especially if a hostile media condemns every action the security forces take) the temptation will be there to sacrifice the soldiers on the altar of political expediency. Both Israel and the United Kingdom let down their soldiers from time to time. Most disgracefully, the United Kingdom has allowed the prosecution (30-40 years after the alleged offense) of soldiers who had already been cleared once by an inquiry or a court martial.²¹

Finally, there is the issue of resources. Maintaining (or, ideally, improving) the armed forces’ defence capabilities is an expensive and never-ending process. If military assistance to the civil power becomes part of the armed forces’ mission, then a significant part of their budget must be dedicated to support it. Since defence budgets are seldom very generous, the armed forces must make hard choices in their acquisitions. Both the British Army and the IDF expended significant resources on internal security training, vehicles, weapons, ammunition, and other materiel optimized for internal security duties. Neither the specialized vehicles and equipment, nor the training programs were of any use on the battlefield, but they had to be paid for.

The British Army wound up its operations in Northern Ireland in 2007, and returned to its primary mission of national defence. In contrast, the IDF must still shoulder the heavy burden of the occupied territories: in 2017 75 percent of the regular forces and mobilized reservists were serving in the territories. Of these, 80 percent were providing security for the settlements, and 20 percent were engaged in counterterrorist operations.²² Current figures are not available, but they can hardly be much better.

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 22–28. and Kober, A. “The Israel Defense Forces in the Second Lebanon War: Why the Poor Performance?” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 31(1), pp. 3–40. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390701785211>

²⁰ van Creveld. *The Land of Blood and Honey*. Ch. 4.

²¹ “NI parties hit out at veteran prosecution pledge.” *BBC*, 15 November 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-2019-50372932>; O’Neill, J. “Military prosecutions: Veterans’ protections ‘should cover NI.’” *BBC*, 15 May 2019. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-48285622> Accessed on 6 July 2020

²² Ben-Sasson Gordis, A., Levi, Y. and Agmon, S. *Israel’s National Security and West Bank Settlements*. (Jerusalem: Molad, 2017) pp. 6., 15.

EFFECT ON MILITARY-CIVILIAN RELATIONS

The British Army has a well-deserved reputation of high standards of realistic training and discipline – but it is focused on defeating the armed forces of external enemies, so its doctrines are based on the Clausewitzian principle of applying overwhelming force to compel the enemy to submit. This is hardly the appropriate principle when dealing with fellow citizens, friends, brothers, voters, taxpayers. Since the first units that were deployed in Northern Ireland had received no training in military assistance to the civil power duties, both the commanders and their troops had to rely on the Clausewitzian tactics, techniques, and procedures they were familiar with. They interpreted the internal security tasks as combat missions, applied overwhelming and indiscriminate (or at least not very discriminating) force, and caused collateral casualties and damage. In no time at all, this behaviour thoroughly poisoned the relationship between the armed forces and society.

Initially the Army was seen as a neutral force that would rein in the wilder elements of both sides. When the first battalions were deployed to separate the communities, both the Catholics and the Protestants welcomed them, because they expected them to put an end to the riots and restore calm. Housewives – both Catholics and Protestants – treated the patrols to cups of tea and biscuits, and little old ladies (again, of both confessions) cooked breakfast for the soldiers on checkpoint duty.²³ The Army did its part also to win hearts and minds: it opened community centres, took children on excursions into the countryside, and delivered meals to pensioners.²⁴ The IRA recognized the danger in this good-natured sipping tea and children becoming friends with British soldiers, and successfully provoked the heavy-handed methods that primarily affected the civilian population. The troops responded to the provocations the only way they knew: with overwhelming and indiscriminate force. They used copious amounts of tear gas, returned fire when fired on regardless of possible civilian casualties, destroyed civilian property while conducting cordon-and-search operations, arrested and abused civilians who had little or no connection to the IRA.

The most egregious incidents took place in the first years of the operation. In late March 1970, in an effort to keep Catholic and Protestant demonstrators apart the Army used tear gas, which provoked several days of rioting. In the *Falls Road Curfew* incident (3rd July 1970), a large-scale operation to search for illegal arms in Belfast developed into a riot and gunfights between soldiers and the IRA, in which four civilians were killed. A 36-hour curfew was imposed on the area, and a cordon-and-search operation was mounted, in the course of which civilians were abused and their property extensively damaged by frustrated soldiers. In *Operation Demetrius* (9-10 August 1971) dawn raids were carried out throughout Northern Ireland in order to arrest IRA members and leadership. Several hundred people (few of them with any connection to the IRA) were arrested, and many were severely abused while in detention. During the protests that followed 20 civilians were killed (as well as two IRA members and two soldiers). Fourteen civilians were killed and 12 wounded during a demonstration in Londonderry in the *Bloody Sunday* incident (January 30, 1972).²⁵ The British Army begun a thorough training program in internal security duties, issued

²³ Hennessey, T. *The Evolution of the Troubles: 1970-1972*. (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2007) p. 6.

²⁴ Thornton, R. "Getting it Wrong: The Crucial Mistakes Made in the Early Stages of the British Army's Deployment to Northern Ireland (August 1969 to March 1972)." *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 30(1) pp. 73–107.

²⁵ Edwards, A. *The Northern Ireland Troubles: Operation Banner, 1969-2007*. (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2011) pp. 34–38. Erbay, *The role of the military in counterterrorism*, pp. 15–38.

(and regularly revised) restrictive Rules of Engagement, and generally assumed a less aggressive posture. But by the time these measures took effect, it was too late. The attitude of the Catholic population of Northern Ireland became hostile – now they viewed the Army as an alien occupying force.

The Clausewitzian principles have served the Israeli armed forces for over seven decades. An aggressive, combative spirit and the will to win have pride of place in their training, and they have a reputation for military competence, earned through a series of impressive victories over the regular forces of neighbouring states, sometimes against impossible odds. This competence has not carried over to success in resolving the internal security challenge posed by the restive Palestinian population.

Just as armed forces all over the world, the IDF also focuses on fighting the external enemies of the state. At the time the first intifada broke out, the IDF had no training, no doctrines, and no equipment for internal security operations. It obeyed the prime minister's order to "break arms and legs" as it broke up demonstrations: it used tear gas, baton charges, rubber bullets, and occasionally live ammunition. It imposed long curfews, carried out house searches and mass arrests, detained (and in the course of interrogation often enough tortured) prominent Palestinians. Shin Beth deployed teams of agents disguised as Arabs, whose task was to gather intelligence, but sometimes also functioned as death squads.²⁶

None of it was working. Even before the intifada, few Palestinians accepted willingly Israeli authority, but most sought some form of accommodation with the occupation, in order to provide shelter, food and security for their families. Friendly relationship between Israelis and Palestinians was rare (although not unknown) before the intifada, and even rarer between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians, but Israelis could still go shopping in Palestinian areas unarmed. This uneasy peace was already showing serious strains in the early 1980s, and it came to an end with the intifada. As time went on (for over five years), and as casualties mounted, attitudes hardened on both sides, and the Palestinians' resentment of the occupation turned into implacable hatred of everything Israeli – but particularly of the security forces.²⁷

When the peace process failed in the autumn of 2000, the second intifada broke out. During the first four or five weeks, events followed the pattern of the first intifada: violent demonstrations, civil disobedience, strikes, and small scale attacks on Israelis. The level of violence increased sharply as gunmen hiding in the crowd during demonstrations fired on the Israeli security forces and suicide bombers caused mass casualties in Israeli cities. Infiltrators, rockets and mortar fire disrupted the life of settlements near the border of the occupied territories. In response the IDF deployed heavy firepower (including artillery, naval gunfire, and helicopter gunships) and carried out raids and large-scale military operations to destroy the terrorist infrastructure, with the foreseeable collateral casualties – and the foreseeable hardening of Palestinian attitudes.²⁸ Then the Palestinian Security Services' forces began operations against the IDF.

Israel's security forces have been generally (though not always) successful in suppressing Palestinian violence directed against Israeli citizens. However, the measures they have taken reflect the attitude that Palestinians are not entitled to the same rights and protections

²⁶ van Creveld, *The Land of Blood and Honey*. Ch. 4. and Erbay, *The Role of the Military in Counterterrorism*. p. 41.

²⁷ *Ibid.* p. 52.

²⁸ *Ibid.* p. 45.

as Israelis, because they are the restive – and alien – population of a land acquired by force of arms, rather than fellow citizens or wards of the Israeli state. Instead of creating the conditions for a political solution, the military operations caused the Palestinians' unfocused resentment and latent hostility to become open and implacable enmity, ruining the chance of an amiable settlement for the foreseeable future. The organizations fighting the Israeli occupation have gained popular support; as a result, their strength and prestige have grown, perpetuating the need for the deployment of military forces.

EFFECT ON TERRORIST ORGANIZATION

In the 1960s, factionalism and inadequate leadership weakened the IRA. When the Troubles broke out, its military capabilities were quite limited: a process of demilitarization had started some years earlier, and it had few trained fighters, its stock of weapons and other warlike materiel was small, and a shortage of funds seriously constrained the scope of its operations.²⁹ By the early 1980s, the Provisional IRA had sidelined the Official IRA, and became a dedicated, highly skilled, professional organization that was capable of a sustained terrorist campaign not only in Northern Ireland, but also in the rest of the United Kingdom and on the continent of Europe.³⁰ The British Army's operations aided this development every step of the way.

The Army's heavy-handed tactics (in part provoked by the IRA³¹) created mass popular support among Northern Ireland's Catholics for a determined and sustained resistance to British occupation. Suddenly there was no shortage of recruits, funds were pouring in not only from the local Catholic population, but also from overseas. As the insurgency was gradually suppressed, the official IRA withdrew from the battle, but the Provisional IRA continued the fight by transitioning to a terrorist campaign. It adopted a cellular structure that was far more difficult to penetrate and disrupt than the original company-battalion-brigade structure, and developed efficient intelligence, quartermaster, finance, and engineering branches. Attrition took a toll on numbers, but those who survived the clashes with the security forces became more dedicated, more professional, and there was no shortage of recruits to take the place of those killed or arrested.³² The operations of the IRA became focused and well planned, their execution was professional and deadly. It also began to carry out operations overseas, in England and in the rest of Europe.

The British Army's operations also provided a wealth of propaganda material, and the Provisionals made full use of it. Events of Operation Demetrius, the Fall Road Curfew, and Bloody Sunday reverberated around the world. Not only did they bring international condemnation upon the United Kingdom, but also resulted in moral and material support to those opposed to the continued British occupation. The Provisionals also made mistakes that seriously damaged their cause, but local, British, and international public opinion was far more lenient towards them.³³

The effect of the IDF's operations on the terrorist organizations in the occupied territories parallels those of the British Army during the Troubles. When the Palestinian Authority

²⁹ Ó Faoleán, *A Broad Church*, pp. 17–45.

³⁰ *Ibid* and *Operation Banner*, pp. 1–3. – 1–4.

³¹ Ó Faoleán, *A Broad Church*, p. 56.

³² *Operation Banner*, pp. 3–1 – 3–3.

³³ *Ibid*. pp. 2–7 – 2–8, 2–14.

was established in 1994 in accordance with the Oslo agreement, the dominant Palestinian organization (Yasser Arafat's al-Fatah) was at a low ebb of its military capabilities, and the smaller organizations were in no better shape either. This changed in a few years, as the attrition of personnel and resources that the IDF's kinetic operations imposed on the radical Palestinian organizations forced them to adapt in order to survive. Their skills and professionalism improved, as they had to pay close attention to operational security, and plan their operations with meticulous care.

The heavy-handed treatment of Palestinian civilians and collateral casualties as a consequence of indiscriminate firepower significantly increased the Palestinians' support for violence against Israelis, and motivated many young men (as well as an increasing number of women) to retaliate in kind.³⁴ Some acted individually: random knife attacks and incidents of mob violence became more frequent. Others joined the various radical Palestinian organizations, whose prestige was growing: they were seen not as the cause of Israeli retaliatory strikes, but as the protectors of the people.

The operations of the security forces provided an unending stream of propaganda material that the Palestinians exploited with consummate skill. Graceful Palestinian teenagers pelting tanks with stones, houses badly damaged in Operation Cast Lead, Muhammad al-Durrah face down behind a concrete drum – they all became iconic images of the Palestinians fighting Israeli oppression. The Israeli authorities proved to be surprisingly inept at countering the Palestinians' media operations. They had a difficult task, no doubt: the Israeli voice often was not heard because many international new organizations and NGOs were willing partners in anti-Israeli propaganda.

THE LESSONS SO FAR

International experience has shown that soldiers do not make very good policemen. Nevertheless, they do have a role to play in the defence against terrorism, because a government facing a serious internal security challenge often has no other choice but to turn to the armed forces, until it can bring police strength and capabilities up to an adequate level. When it does call out the soldiers, the government must proceed with great care, lest it exacerbates an already bad situation. At the very outset, the government must clearly define the roles the armed forces are to play, the tasks they are expected to perform and the time-frame of their deployment.

The first and most obvious role of the armed forces is to support the police with military capabilities: the army's vehicles, aircraft, transport assets, and field equipment can supplement the limited cross-country and transportation capabilities of the police. Second, electronic and aerial reconnaissance capabilities can provide intelligence information the police cannot acquire otherwise. Third, most soldiers move with confidence in swamp, forest, and difficult terrain, day or night; fire and movement tactics, employment of heavy firepower and planning and executing large-scale operations are their daily fare. The police also need these skills in order to fight terrorists effectively, and soldiers can provide the necessary training easily enough.

However, terrorism (outside of the pages of some learned theoretical treatises) hardly ever occurs in its pure form. The challenge to the state's authority will likely encompass general

³⁴ Erbay, *The Role of the Military in Counterterrorism*, pp. 51–52.

political instability, competing propaganda narratives, street politics, mass mobilization, rallies, marches and demonstrations that may turn violent, riots, widespread civil disobedience, and inter-communal violence, in addition to terrorism. The terrorists will exploit party politics and parliamentary manoeuvres to find political cover, deploy very agile strategic communication to justify their actions, use rallies, marches, demonstrations and riots as cover for launching attacks on the security forces, and obtain shelter and sustenance among the sympathetic elements of the civil population.

These challenges must all be dealt with using the most appropriate tools for each, and the armed forces will likely be employed far more extensively than just supporting the police with transportation assets and intelligence collection, or training them in infantry tactics. Instead, they will also perform purely police functions: escorting demonstrations, breaking up riots, providing additional manpower to police patrols, arresting and processing suspects, identifying, separating, and detaining violent (often armed) extremists in the course of demonstrations, and pursuing and neutralizing identified terrorists.

Before the armed forces are employed on tasks that require them to use force against civilians, all ranks must receive extensive training in military assistance to the civil power. Without such training both the commanders and their troops will interpret internal security tasks as combat missions, apply overwhelming and indiscriminate (or at least not very discriminating) force, and cause collateral casualties and damage. In no time at all this behaviour can thoroughly poison the relationship between the armed forces and society. The soldiers must always act in accordance with the doctrine that the people they are dealing with are fellow citizens who do have certain constitutional rights, even if they abuse them, or they are people under occupation, who possess the sympathy of the international community, even if they abuse their victim status. Even if the security forces conduct themselves in the most professional manner, the collateral casualties and damage that excessive force causes may create more terrorists than it eliminates, as enraged individuals join the organization, offer it material and moral support, concealment, sustenance and the most precious commodity in an asymmetric conflict: information.

However, there are some counterterrorism tasks the military forces are better prepared to perform than the police. As countless encounters have shown, the law enforcement doctrines of proportionality, minimum necessary force applied as a last resort, respect for individual rights and the rule of law do not work very well against highly motivated terrorists, whose survival calculations are fundamentally different from those of ordinary criminals. Instead of the doctrine of minimum necessary force as a last resort, a more appropriate approach may be to apply such force as is necessary to secure the terrorists' arrest or elimination.³⁵ While police officers (even police commandos, trained in more aggressive procedures) may be quite uncomfortable with such escalation dominance doctrines, such approaches are quite natural for a soldier. Hostage rescue by violent assault, eliminating terrorist leaders by long-range sniper fire, ambushing a terrorist team on the way to an operation, or executing a retaliatory strike beyond the border are well within the skill set of military forces.

The armed forces' primary mission of defence against peer or near-peer external enemies requires a particular organizational structure, certain tactics, techniques procedures, and a

³⁵ Mahadevan, P. "The Gill Doctrine: A Model for 21st Century Counter-terrorism?" *Faultlines*. Vol. 19. <http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume19/Article1.htm> Accessed on 6 July 2020

certain mindset – as well as very comprehensive training programs. The antiterrorist mission requires a fundamentally different organizational structure, a different skill set, and an entirely different mindset – as well as very comprehensive, but entirely different training programs. Reorganizing and retraining for a fundamentally different mission, and not exercising regularly the primary tasks will inevitably lead to a decline in training standards in the primary defence mission. In order to reduce this negative effect on armed forces' readiness, it is imperative to keep military assistance to the civil power as short as possible: accelerate the development of police strength and release the soldiers to their traditional task quickly, as police capabilities improve. While the troops are needed, rotate the units after short deployments. The French Army may have found the right balance In Operation Sentinelle: the battalions deployed on internal security duties are returned after two months to their national defence mission. The two-month break in training routine is short enough not to lead to deterioration in the soldiers' or the units' training standards.³⁶

All internal security challenges (including terrorism) are primarily political, economic and law enforcement problems. No doubt, it may be necessary to use force in order to restore security and law and order, but the use of force comes only at the tail end of the list of tools available to the government to resolve the problem. The use of force is seriously counterproductive if it contributes to the root causes of the problem – or even worse, creates a new root cause. And that is exactly the greatest risk in employing the armed forces on internal security duties.

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³⁶ Personal communication, French Army Officer.

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