

THE ROLE OF THE MILITARIES IN FIGHTING MODERN TERRORISM

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Abstract. *It is obvious that the Western democracies' war on global terror will be long and hard. Internal security forces simply do not have the capacities and capabilities to deal with the new kind of terrorism, which is yet to use military tactics and urban guerrilla warfare. Recent developments in Paris, France, can be seen as the beginning of a new paradigm in European security. Whereas thus far the European militaries have acted outside their countries, now the governments are reconsidering the possibility of their active involvement in the domestic security. In certain circumstances and political climate, the effects of using the military are positive, but it may have a harmful effect in adverse political and social conditions. If applied in certain circumstances and conditions in a given society, it can have negative consequences on further internal political relations because it can limit the rights and freedoms of the citizens, it can cause an escalation of the conflict, and even encourage a new generation of terrorists. This paper reevaluates the consequences of deploying the militaries in the fight against terrorism and its effects on the military, the terrorists and the civilian population. There has always been a balance between freedom and security but, if Western democracies begin to militarize their politics, it means that the terrorists are slowly achieving their goal.*

Key words: *military, terrorism, insurgency, society, Western democracy.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades, the European Union has imposed a viewpoint that the militaries in the democratic societies should not be focused on the internal threats. This standpoint was reflected in multiple trends in almost all European countries, such as: placing the border security in the hands of the internal security forces - the police, reducing their active military personnel and abandoning the conscript system. The European Union introduced a trend of demilitarization of the states and changed the role of their militaries. Instead of

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focusing on internal affairs, states started building military capabilities directed outward, away from home, as part of the collective security system.

However, with the recent terrorist attacks in Paris, France, Europe woke up to a new paradigm: soldiers in the streets of France, Belgium and other countries, as well as the announcements of several governments concerning the increase of their military budgets and even a military intervention against the terrorists in Syria.¹ But even earlier, during the summer of 2015, most of the European countries deployed their military forces on the borders to cope with the refugees from the Middle East. This means that there is a new trend and a changing role of the militaries in the democratic societies in the fight against terrorism.

In reality, as terrorist groups are becoming more active and better organized, the governments of many countries inevitably have to involve the military forces to defend their societies (Hughes 2011:7). There are many examples of this trend, such as: Russia, Turkey, India and Britain. When the terrorist groups begin to have well-organized structure, a larger number of activists, many resources and the population support, then the counterterrorism begins to take shape of a counterinsurgency fight (Hughes, 2011:21).

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate a critical approach to the effects and consequences of the use of the military in combating terrorism in contemporary societies. Recognizing the fact that the US and the NATO have failed to defeat terrorism for nearly 15 years in Afghanistan, it raises an issue that such a strategy is perhaps inappropriate. The practice shows that countries that have used the police approach to keep the conflict at low intensity had better success in counteracting terrorism than the countries that used a military approach that escalated into high intensity conflict.

The analysis in this paper includes a critical review of the changes, trends and challenges of the role of the military in counteracting terrorism in recent decades, while explaining the impact they have on the civil society and international relations. The conclusion of this analysis should address the question: whether the growing trend of deploying the military power of the European democracies in combating terrorism will have a positive or negative effect on the winning strategy.

2. CHANGES, TRENDS, AND CHALLENGES OF THE USE OF THE MILITARY IN COMBATING TERRORISM

There is still a lack of generally accepted definition of terrorism in International Law. Despite numerous definitions, in terms of warfare, tactics and techniques in combat, it is still a challenge to distinguish between terrorism, rebellions, insurrections, riots or wars of national liberation (Benest, 2009:170). The most frequently repeated cliché in the international politics is that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." Such a perception is a serious discussion topic in the international community because the operational approach that the governments use in combating modern terrorism significantly depends on the approach to this issue.

In effect, it is important to understand what kind of threat we are actually facing because there is a substantial difference in the manner and intensity of the use of security forces. The primary forces for combating terrorism are usually the police forces, deployed in order to solve the problem before it escalates or to hold it as a low intensity conflict.

¹ Source: Geir Moulson. (2015 December 1). German Cabinet Approves Military Intervention Against ISIS In Syria. The World Post. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/germany-isis-syria_565dae34e4b072e9d1c32977

When it comes to insurgencies, then the governments usually take much more extensive measures. To defeat the insurgents, it is necessary to coordinate all state resources and ensure a serious integration of the political, socio-economic, legal, police and military capabilities.

In the recent decades, the major challenge in combating terrorism is that in many cases these movements are closely linked with ethno-nationalist and religious motivations, political power struggle, extreme groups seeking power sharing, etc., where terrorism is just a tool to achieve the goal (a means rather than an end). Therefore, there is a long-standing debate over whether terrorism is a criminal act or an act of war, and what is the real reason that these groups decide to use terror as a form of extreme violence against the state. The strategy to fight terrorism will depend on the perception of the threat.

The mutation of the modern terrorism compels states to change their operational approach and pursue greater engagement of the military power in counteracting terrorism. This trend is not only due to the insufficient capacities of the police force but also due to the nature of terrorism which is becoming more belligerent. Three decades ago, the major threats were mainly the "lone wolves" and small terrorist groups with limited objectives but, with the emergence of al-Qaeda and particularly ISIS/ISIL/DAESH, terrorism has become a global threat. These organizations have a long-term vision and global ambitions, and they have practically declared a total war against the Western democracies.

There is a dilemma whether it is beneficial to use the military force in combating terrorism, knowing that there is a risk that such engagement of a greater power may contribute to the conflict escalation. This means that an internal threat of terrorism may have international implications. In the contemporary environment, given the rise of transnational terrorism that recognizes no borders, what happens in one country has a major impact on international relations as well.

Thus, the use of the military in combating terrorism first has implications on the state and then on the international relations. Therefore, it is necessary to estimate whether the military engagement is more effective than the police forces, i.e. whether the military organizational culture is a more appropriate response to modern terrorism. At present, it seems that the change of terrorists' behavior imposes a need for military response, but many agree that it is, in fact, the terrorists' goal. It is generally accepted that the terrorists' intention has been to provoke the Western democracies to sacrifice their freedom at the expense of security (Neal, 2010:8). The appearance of soldiers on the streets of Europe in 2015 could be interpreted as success for terrorism.

The terrorists' strategy rests on employing the general principles of guerrilla warfare, such as inducing the military to use disproportionate force that causes collateral damage on the civilian population. The use of the military in combating terrorism can have a positive impact in terms of temporarily suppressing terrorism, but it has a negative impact on the civil society and politics of the state, especially influencing the behavior of the military. In order to counter terrorism, the military forces must make a series of organizational changes that include extending the powers to carry out police duties. The estimates are that to win the counterterrorist campaign, the state government must mobilize ten times more soldiers than the estimated number of terrorists (Hughes, 2011:9), which is practically a mobilization and restructuring the state for war. This may be interpreted as a militarization of the civil society.

Unlike counterinsurgency, in principle, the counterterrorism should use less offensive measures in order to reduce the propensity of the terrorist group to adversely affect the population, such as prohibition of their political activities, police presence in public places and projecting psychological operations against terrorists (Hughes, 2011:22). In a counterterrorist

campaign, we should strive for a balance between freedom and security, in order to ensure that the conflict does not escalate. This is usually done through communication with the population, in order to set back the intentions of the terrorist groups to gain sympathies among the population. The problem is that this entails the use of more security forces.

The military forces of a state are used in compliance with the constitution and the laws of that state. Although there are no completely identical cases, the Western democracies generally use the police forces for the internal security, whereas they use the military forces for defense against external threats. It is inherently repugnant for the West, especially in the European countries, to see images of soldiers on the streets of Europe. In the liberal concept of freedom and democracy, militaries patrolling on the streets are not accepted as an appropriate solution. In many Western countries, the military is seen as a latent menace for democracy; for, if it gets out of control, it could endanger the freedoms and rights of the citizens. This is especially prevalent in the US where constitutionally the federal military forces have limited jurisdiction throughout the country. On the other end of the spectrum, there are countries that inherently use their militaries at home in the fight against terrorism, especially if they show patterns of insurgency and have open support of the population.

In most countries in the world, it is clearly designated who is responsible to ensure the internal security of the state. The question is whether terrorism should be considered as a military problem, to what intensity it should not be considered as a non-military problem, and when it becomes necessary to engage the military forces. As for the manner and intensity of using the military, it is crucial whether it is a large or a small country, and whether the action is taken domestically or abroad.

In order to respond to threats of terrorism, some states have military units with police authorities, or police units with military structure and capabilities. The nomenclature is different but, in general, these forces are tasked for armed responses closer to the military approach, but still within the jurisdiction of the ministry of interior. For example, Turkey, Serbia and France have *Gendarmerie*, Italy has *Carabineers*, Russia calls such forces the *Internal troops* (Hughes, 2011:14), Republic of Macedonia has *Rapid deployment unit*, ect.

In the fight against terrorism, states can rely on two models: either to prosecute terrorists under the law of armed conflict or to prosecute them under the criminal law of the state. The former is a luxury which may only be afforded by large states that have more credibility in the international community. They can afford to declare war on terrorism and treat it as a military threat. The latter is typical for smaller states because they are restrained by their own penal codes, which prevent them to use all capacities at their disposal. They treat terrorism as an act of crime, and prosecute terrorists as criminals under the criminal law. Although this model is typical for smaller countries, it is also characteristic for most of the liberal democracies (Erbay, 2012:6).

Unlike counterinsurgency, counterterrorism is confined within a legal framework when the states act against domestic terrorism. However, when it is directed outward, the military force can be used in multiple ways: for a force demonstration and projecting presence and control, as direct assistance to police forces and civilian authorities, or for conducting direct actions against the terrorists. Larger states can afford a so-called preventive defense as well, or to act before being attacked, which is controversial in terms of the UN Charter considering *jus ad bellum*. Such states can also perform covert, clandestine and intelligence operations, even winding leadership to change power as it happened in Iraq (Hughes, 2011:52).

After the Paris attacks, France began to review its national policy in terms of the use of the military to combat terrorism domestically and, to that effect, deployed over 10,000 troops on the streets of the major cities (Smith, Watson, Lister, 2015). Only in Paris, around 5,000 soldiers were deployed to patrol and provide security. By now, the Parisians have become used to soldiers on the streets, which were first deployed in the "Operation Sentinel" after the Charlie Hebdo attacks in January 2015.² This is a proof that modern terrorism imposes militarization in the heart of Europe at the cost of greater security. The Belgium military was also deployed in Brussels in the aftermath of the Paris attacks, due to reported threats and suspicion of ensuing terrorist attacks in Belgium. For the first time in 35 years, hundreds of armed soldiers patrolled Brussels together with the police forces, tasked with preventing terrorist attacks. The authorities even urged citizens to stay at home, declaring the highest level of alert on the Belgian government threat scale.³

It is important to acknowledge that the use of the military in combating terrorism domestically is not a novelty. The UK, Russia, Turkey, Israel, India and many other countries have historically performed counterterrorist operations in which military force was used. However, such practice was different and should be observed in particular time context, because the modern terrorism is a transnational threat with long-term goals. Unlike the IRA, the Chechen separatist, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Hamas, Hezbollah and other groups whose activities are driven by ideological as well as by ethno-religious and nationalist motives, the new trend in terrorism is a global war against redistribution of power in the international relations. Thus, the use of the military force becomes a necessary evil, essential to defeat global terrorism.

3. IMPACT ON THE CIVIL SOCIETY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The positive sides of using the military in combating terrorism are its unique capabilities to quickly resolve the threat and demonstrate that the state will decisively defend itself against the future threats. Both will be positive only if the military is used in accordance with the state laws and in conjunction with the units that are appropriate for combating unconventional threats. The aim must be to maintain a low-intensity conflict and conduct surgical strikes against terrorists in order not to cause too much collateral damage. To be done properly, these tasks require good coordination and synchronization with the police forces which are usually better acquainted with the population and the overall situation on the ground.

The Western democracies have always had a problem how to protect themselves from terrorism, balancing between the use of military capabilities and disruption of normal life of the citizens (Cuthbertson, 2006:128). Most European countries have opted for the police approach in combating terrorism, relying on experiences that showed that police approach is more effective than the military approach. Britain and Spain are examples of countries that initially used a military approach to combating terrorism, which was later replaced with the police approach, as they started treating the problem as a criminal act (Rykhtik, 2006:166). In Northern Ireland, the initial intervention was based on the law of

² *Internet source:* RT (2015 Nov 16). 5,000 soldiers patrol Paris as France adapts to 'militarized' threat at home & abroad; <https://www.rt.com/news/322226-paris-soldiers-militarized-threat/>

³ *Internet source:* Aljazeera news. (2015 Nov 22). Army patrols deserted streets as Brussels on edge. <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/11/army-patrols-deserted-streets-brussels-high-alert-151121160847096.html>

armed conflict, but they subsequently resorted to prosecuting the IRA members under the criminal law. This example is a successful study on the application of the military forces in combating terrorism where policing did better than the use of conventional force (Erbay, 2012:13).

The negative consequences arising from the use of military forces in combating terrorism could be an escalation of the conflict, generating new terrorists and giving greater power to the military which may be a threat to democracy. The first consequence is manifested the moment the military forces start walking on the city streets because it is generally perceived as a state of war. In the attempt to end the conflict, the state may apply excessive force that could cause unnecessary damage to the infrastructure and population. This can have economic, social and political consequences, especially given the fact that every action has a reaction in foreign policy.

The major problem with such a role of the military is a linear deployment of the military organization against a threat that is nonlinear and complex in nature as it involves many other social aspects (Erbay, 2012:7). Thus, if the military is not trained for unconventional tactics against the terrorists who are essentially an irregular force, it could cause negative effect and escalation of the conflict. Therefore, special operations forces are generally the primary weapon of choice in the fight against terrorism.

Next, the practice shows that the engagement of military forces in operations against terrorists domestically may cause a problem of legitimacy. The indiscriminate use of force causes collateral damage to the population, the consequence of which is resentment, frustration and, in case the population sympathizes with terrorists, even joining the terrorists' ranks. All those states that deploy the military in the fight against terrorism take a risk of facing counter-reaction and, instead of reducing the number of terrorists, they contribute to increasing their number (Erbay, 2012:3). The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan proved that terrorists are almost always hiding among the civilian population, thus provoking the coalition forces to cause considerable collateral damage, which ultimately triggers anger among the population. In operations where the military is engaged with conventional means of fighting terrorism, it is almost inevitable to make such mistakes.

It is usually the terrorists that violate the law of armed conflict and the rules of war. However, when states use excessive force, it inevitably leads to exceeding the authorities and the military starts breaking the law. Such scenarios are highly favoured by terrorists because they turn them into victims and contribute to building their legitimacy. There are numerous cases where small terrorist groups have grown into massive insurgencies and human rights' fighters only because the states irresponsibly used the military to suppress their activities, taking revenge on the civilians.

As there is a thin line between terrorism and insurgency, certain terrorist groups tend to build a political platform which would portray them as a legitimate force that is just protecting the rights of certain groups. When the state takes a military action against terrorists, it may encourage and facilitate recruitment among the members of the group "protected" by the terrorists. An example of this was the strategy of the ETA in Spain, which managed to recruit many new members by provoking repressive actions of the state (Erbay, 2012:5). The military action directly contributed to a greater cohesion and popularity by turning the terrorists into martyrs.

The third negative consequence is that the use of the military in combating terrorism could disrupt civil-military relations (Vankovska, 1995:89-126). Namely, in order to make the military effective in conducting tasks that are usually performed by the police forces,

the government has to vest more authorities in the military than usual (Erbay, 2012:5). When that happens, there is a threat of loss of freedom in the society in the name of greater security. Considering that it has far greater physical force and combat power at its disposal, the military can turn into a primary generator of security and, thus, it may gradually assert itself as a major factor for the survival of the state. There are numerous examples when the military, after asserting its primacy, has been gradually transformed into an institution which becomes "a state within a state". Such position of the military in the society can cause militarization of the political system (Vankovska, 1995:92) and contribute to a greater role of the military leadership in the political process. The danger lies in the fact that once you gain power and prestige, it is difficult to give it up.

The states counteracting terrorism on the basis of the law of armed conflict treat the fight against terrorism as warfare and use all available capacities against it (Schmid and Crelinsten, 1993: 309-310). All states cannot afford this because the international reaction varies in different states depending on their political, economical and military power. Those who can afford the immense force perceive terrorists as a national, regional or global threat and openly apply military force to destroy them. Yet, there is a risk of losing legitimacy in the fight against terrorism and facing condemnation of the international community. At the time of Boris Yeltsin's presidency, Russia faced such condemnation during the First Chechen War in the fight against terrorism on its own territory. The Western world condemned Russia as an aggressor because the Russian military used disproportionate force and caused too much collateral damage.

This means that, in the effort to counter terrorism, states may use methods which results in more harmful ways to democracy than terrorism itself (Crenshaw, 2010:2). When using the military, (among other things) there is a risk of losing the civilian control over the military power, which actually happened in Argentina, Brazil and Chile in the period between the 1960s and 1980s (Erbay, 2012:11). A modern example is the experience of deploying the Russian military in the fight against Chechen separatists during the Second Chechen War, which caused negative effects on the process of democratization and set back the political reforms in terms of returning to autocracy (Hughes, 2011:8). On account of the military success in Chechnya, Vladimir Putin gained huge popularity that enabled him to strengthen his political power in traditional Russian style.

Therefore, there is broad liberal view that all attempts that states make to engage the military with greater authorities only contribute to limiting the civil liberties. People knowingly and voluntarily give up freedom at the expense of the illusion of security, while the military response against terrorism does not always give expected results.⁴ On the other hand, the growing role of the military in combating terrorism has potential to militarize the international politics. Politicians may start to rely too much on the military power, seeking to solve problems only by using force.

In the past 40 years, even the United States as the strongest world power failed to identify the correct counterterrorist strategy, relying too much on the military approach as opposed to understanding what causes terrorism (Shelley, 2006:203). Whether the military force is effective in combating terrorism is still an unanswered question. The military is usually focused on winning while practice shows that we need to focus on the efficiency that is measurable through reduction of destruction of infrastructure and less collateral

⁴ FCNL - Friends Committee on National Legislation. (2015, June 11). The Illusion of Security. http://fcnl.org/resources/newsletter/june15/the_illusion_of_security/

damage on the population (Rykhtik, 2006:174). However, there is a major change in the attitude of the Western democracies toward a greater use of the military forces against terrorism, which may imply a new paradigm shift in the international security leading to a change in the future society.

4. CONCLUSION

Although counterterrorism is treated in the military sciences as a low-intensity conflict, the latest developments in the last two decades demonstrate that the emerging terrorism escalates as conflicts of high intensity. It is necessary to clearly distinguish what kind of terrorist groups are involved in the incidents because there is a huge difference between the motives of transnational (global) terrorism, which has global ambitions, and the local (regional) terrorist groups that have limited local ambitions. The latter can often be insurgents with other motives, and the states label them as terrorists only to delegitimize them or to seek international support to suppress them.

The fight against terrorism is asymmetric because terrorists, as non-state actors, have incomparably smaller capabilities than the states' military and police forces. That gives them an advantage against robust military formation, because it is relatively easy to undermine their strength and simultaneously exploit their vulnerability (Rykhtik, 2006:169). This is the main reason why many studies on combating terrorism recommend avoiding the military solution as inefficient, because it only contributes to inflaming the conflict and making the terrorists look like insurgents. The use of the military in counteracting terrorism can be both useful and harmful, whether applied at home or abroad.

In the attempt to destroy terrorists, states risk to use such an enormous force that inevitably leads to restricting human rights and freedoms and causes collateral damage on the civilian population. Thus, terrorists achieve their main goals, provoking democracies to intervene and generate instability. There are numerous examples where terrorists are often supported by the local population in the environment where they operate; consequently, the action against them may increase their numbers by motivating new recruits to join these terrorist groups. This is notable in Syria where the number of members of ISIS has increased due to the operations of several countries that intervened with air strikes⁵

All analyzes indicate that the use of the military in the fight against terrorism should be the last resort of modern states. The price that a modern democratic society could pay is the escalation of the conflict, the limitation of its citizens' freedoms and potentially producing new terrorists. The logic says that it is necessary to rethink the nature of terrorism as a phenomenon, and cure the disease instead of the symptoms. What happens currently in the Middle East, as well as the attacks in France in 2015, could be considered as a consequence of the Western world's "long war" against terrorism in Iraq and Afghanistan. The European countries exacerbated the radicalization by using the wrong approach during the Arab Spring in 2011. As a consequence of the security vacuum, the terrorists turned into an organization with a military structure and global ambitions.

However, although experiences show that the police approach is more effective than the military approach, and that it is better to treat terrorism as a criminal act, modern terrorism increasingly resembles insurgency where terrorist methods are employed for

⁵ CNN News. (2014 September 12). Jim Sciutto, Jamie Crawford and Chelsea J. Carter. ISIS can 'muster' between 20,000 and 31,500 fighters; <http://edition.cnn.com/2014/09/11/world/meast/isis-syria-iraq/>

different purposes. This mutation of the global terrorism will affect the role of the militaries in the democratic societies. The attacks in France and the decision of the French and Belgian governments to deploy their militaries on the streets of Paris and Brussels could be the beginning of a new security paradigm. Alongside with the increased threat of terrorist attacks, Europe is also facing the problem with immigrants from war zones in the Middle East. This will additionally require engagement of the military forces to control the borders and the flow of refugees. In order to be effectively used, the military will have to gain more authority and it will necessitate the change of state laws.

States will have to face a dilemma about the intensity of the military force and the operational approach to using the military intervention as the internal and global terrorist threats frequently overlap. If terrorism is considered as a military problem because of its transnational character, it will be necessary to engage in global response and planning to use states' militaries in broader coalition operations. In that case, the problem frame for the political leaders will be how to do this without militarizing their societies and maintain the balance between freedom and security. If the use of the military is absolutely necessary and decisive for winning the war on terror, it has to be achieved through joint effort within the framework of international law.

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ULOGA VOJSKE U MODERNOJ BORBI PROTIV TERORIZMA

Očigledno je da će borba zapadnih demokratija protiv globalnog terorizma potrajati dugo i biti naporna. Unutrašnje snage bezbednosti jednostavno neće imati kapacitete i sposobnosti da se izборе sa novom vrstom terorizma, koji tek treba da koristi vojnu taktiku i urbani gerilski rat. Nedavni događaji u Parizu, Francuska, mogu se posmatrati kao početak nove paradigme u evropskoj bezbednosti. Ako su evropske vojske dosad delovali izvan države, sada se preispitiva mogućnost njihovog aktivnog uključivanja u unutrašnjoj bezbednosti. Efekti upotrebe vojske mogu se predvideti u određenim okolnostima i političke klime, ali nepovoljne političke i socijalne uslove mogu imati štetan efekat. Ako se primenjuje u određenim okolnostima i uslovima u društvu, može imati negativne posledice na dalje unutrašnje političke odnose, kao ograničavanje prava i sloboda građana, prouzrokovanje eskalaciju sukoba, čak i podsticanje stvaranja novih terorista. Ovaj rad razmatra posledice upotrebe vojske u borbi protiv terorizma i njen uticaj na vojsku, terorista i civilnog stanovništva. Uvek je postojala ravnoteža između slobode i sigurnosti, ali ako u zapadnim demokratijama počnu da se primenjuju militarizovane politike, to znači da polako teroristi postižu svoj cilj.

Ključne reči: *vojska, terorizam, pobune, društva, Zapad, demokratija, sloboda.*