MILITARY ELITE FORCES: SURROGATE WAR, TERRORISM, AND THE NEW BATTLEFIELD

by

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Over the past thirty years, six Presidents . . . decided that a political use of the armed forces was the wisest choice on more than two hundred occasions. . . . These operations should receive commensurate attention in force planning and employment decisions.[1]

Since the Second World War, developments in military technology and in the realm of political behavior have generated growing interest in elite forces. Major recent changes which have heightened that interest are the shifts in conventional war tactical theory in the wake of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the growth of terrorism, and the renaissance in surrogate war. At the same time, yet other factors have stimulated this interest, including refinements in paratroop delivery, the emergence of political movements with strong links to such forces, and growing acceptance of the "constabulary" model outlined by Janowitz. Yet it should be kept in mind in considering such forces against this shifting background that elite forces created in the 20th century have been usually symptomatic of perceived stress or crisis in the parent organization or among civilian policymakers; that such units tend to drain leadership and resources from the parent military organization; that they are either underemployed or overemployed; and that, if committed to combat, they tend to suffer higher casualties than the average elements of the parent forces.[2] It is necessary to keep these patterns in mind in considering the forces which are influencing the growth of elite units.[3]

THE NEW BATTLEFIELD

The development of relatively simple and relatively cheap antitank and antiaircraft missiles has lowered the level of technical skill required to use these devices.[4] For example, the power of new weapons in the defense has shifted the Israeli Army's view of a balance of forces away from elite shock troops to larger general infantry forces to protect tanks in their groping for a point of imminent breakthrough, and it has generated "agonizing reappraisal" in other nations as well.[5] The need for security forces on a dispersed battlefield, the positioning of a deep and broad defensive screen, and the increase in the need for "tube" artillery for firing precision-guided munitions and neutralizing antitank and antiaircraft weapons in the battle zone are all results of the 1973 war.[6] At the same time, the mechanical aspects of the new tactics—requiring, as some suggest, small bands of missile controllers dispersed over the battlefield—cannot be divorced from two important linkages to military elite forces which are in turn influenced by political factors. The greater reliance on volunteer forces is but one part of the problem.[7]

One variant of the elite forces in a

constabulary mode, and a potential source of paradoxes, is that of the small strike force.[8] The still-debated *Mayaguez* incident, the veritable blizzard of accounts of the Entebbe raid, and the startlingly dramatic coup of the German counterterrorist force (with Special Air Service counsel) has thrown into bold relief the fact that maintaining such forces is an increasingly important element in the spectrum of power that ranges from nuclear weapons to overt propaganda in a world involved in quasi-war.

There is yet another potential role for elite forces stemming from the visions of future war. The Soviets, beyond their currently debated civil defense program, have for some time planned for "broken back" warfare, that is, the ability to fight on after a nuclear exchange. Here, as in the scenario of a full-scale conventional battle, unit cohesion, skill, and dedication are of obvious utility. Scenarios for the prepositioning of weapons and supplies, scavenger systems for "living off the land" in a heavily urban battle zone, and the provision for forms of mobility not based on direct lines of supply have a somewhat bizarre quality, but the maintenance of cohesion and initiative would be beyond the capacity of conscript and even regular forces trained to fight conventional battles. At the same time, raising elite forces drains the general forces of potential leadership, thus lowering the overall ability to cope with the major disjunctures that would accompany a large conventional encounter, especially if tactical nuclear weapons were involved. In the way of further irony, there is also the possibility that elite forces might be caught by circumstance and become spectators to the main battle in a conventional or tactical nuclear war, especially if their primary means of getting to battle is by air and the enemy commands the air, weather interferes, or transport aircraft are preempted for supply or evacuation. On the other hand, potential use of elite forces for critical-point security or as a supplementary "palace guard" at home might partially offset the waste implied in such a scenario.

Evidence regarding Soviet plans and intentions for deploying forces in a general invasion of even a small part of Western Europe is limited. There are, of course, many possible scenarios. These range from massive thrusts, carpeting the battlefield with hub-to-hub artillery and sprocket-to-sprocket tank assaults, to the deft use of bluster and mobilization to generate pressure to the point at which various elements in the civil population in Western Europe would block a coherent NATO response. The images of refugees jamming the roads of Belgium and France and blunting the French and British riposte to the blitzkrieg of 1940 come to mind, as do similar scenes in South Vietnam in 1975.[9] The Soviets have formed units for deep penetration against critical points, and one possibility that devolves from such a potential is a battle for crucial nodes in the communication-transportation system of Benelux-West Germany, involving small detachments of elite forces, perhaps aided by sleeper agents and activists, creating a melee in which nuclear weapons and conventional military hardware could not be brought to bear.[10] Events at Prague in 1968 demonstrated that the Soviets could carry out a skillful air-landing operation under pressure. Either the scenario of a diffuse offensive using special units or that of a general high-tempo offensive puts the burden for defense on small detachments of troops with the temerity and skill to operate against superior forces under conditions of poor communication. Further, the situation would require tenacity tempered with flexibility, characteristics not usually associated with conventional forces trained for linear warfare controlled by a "chain of command." While the difficulties of retrograde movement can be offset by granting independence of action to units à la the "optional command" tactics of the Israeli Army, such a system presumes very high levels of training, skill, and determination; therefore, the acceptance of numerical inferiority demands a qualitative offset.

THE TERRORIST CHALLENGE

Questions of tribalism and image are not as

trivial as they may appear on the surface. Beyond creating small group *esprit* to attract adventure-seeking youth, elite forces have a number of attractions to military and civilian policymakers which are at the same time potentially threatening to free institutions. Keeping the paramilitary nature of Janowitz' constabulary model in focus is valuable in considering the vision of a Tennysonian army/police force sketched by Michael Howard:

> Like the police, their function would overlap with the military and as with the police one would expect close cooperation and interchange of personnel. But also like the police, their discipline and traditions must be based, not on martial virtues, but on deep political wisdom and self-restraint; and finally like the police, they need to be securely under civilian control. . . . Regiments will bear as their battle honours the names, not of the battles they have fought, but those that they have averted.[11]

Whatever their apparent advantages, elite forces, like any other "weapon system," can be aimed in any direction, and, in being relied upon by their civil masters in delicate matters, they are trained for roles in which politicization is encountered more often than is the case with standard military forces. The reliance of the Soviets and the Chinese on elitism within the well-warped framework of Marxist theory is evidence of the persistence of a military form as old as the Pharaoh's bodyguard, the Persian Immortals, or the Spartan Three Hundred. Now, as then, in considering the responsiveness to civil authority of such potentially Praetorian forces, the question is: *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes*?

Just as the creation of elites in the modern age has often been a response to technological change, the phenomenon of terrorism has been altered by increasing literacy and technology. The use of posters and broadsides began in the Protestant Reformation, but the mimeograph machine must surely be nearly indispensable for modern revolutions. Changes in weapon technology have also altered the balance of power between regular troops and police and guerrillas and terrorists since the mid-19th century, paralleling the concentration of an ever-larger percentage of the populations of the world in cities, where the sinews of society have become increasingly vulnerable to terrorism.

The technology of modern societies, therefore, has come to shape the nature of revolution itself. This fact is pointed out by Edward Luttwak, who, like Jacques Ellul,[12] saw that the extremely delicate tendrils of high-technology societies made those societies vulnerable to the use of the scalpel of coups d'etat and guerrilla warfare, as opposed to the revolutionary mobs of the 18th and 19th centuries, based on a sophisticated analysis of assailable points in the techno-system of power.[13] Indeed, it is the image of a tiny band of determined and skilled firebrands seizing vital nodes of urban society that creates the unease that in turn drives the raising of a counterforce of politically conscious, paralegal (in respect to the tradition of military honor and the corpus of international law), and reliable paramilitary forces. Such counterforces are designed to serve as antidotes for governmental systems afflicted by the venom of terrorism.

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"SWAT" teams—local police intervention squads employing "special weapons and tactics," armed with military equipment, and uniformed and disciplined along the lines of Special Forces—appeared in American cities after the riots and terrorism of the late 1960's. The money and the doctrine came from the national government, a step in the direction of a *gendarmerie* long resisted in America.

In spite of the expense and the complications of developing a response, most of the analysis of terrorism has focused on the search for explanation and pattern among the terrorists themselves. There has been a great deal of wrestling with typology, with a fairly wild bandying about of such terms as terrorist, saboteur, guerrilla, freedom fighter, urban guerrilla, and the like.[14] Much of the analysis has been aimed either at the problem of how wide the range of purposes and techniques has been or at the tactics and organization of the guerrillas.[15] The varieties of hue, or motive, of style and individual characteristics have caused more than a little frustration, as J. Bowyer Bell has noted:

> The profile of the terrorist is not possible given the present state of analysis . . . . [It] certainly does not permit the erection of elaborate theories or the construction of elegant models.[16]

Walter Laqueur agrees that "generalizations are of little validity . . . few [are] even similar."[17] Beyond concerns regarding the philosophical terrorist, the idealism, the sociopathy, and so on, there is relatively little discussion of the mechanisms of response, beyond those aimed at controlling paramilitary insurgents.[18] In any event, in spite of the pattern of success, the use of troops as riot police is a reversion to an older form of maintaining order. As the interface between the guerrilla-revolutionary and military forces shifted from battles at the barricades to more diffuse forms of conflict in the 20th century, repeating rifles, light machine guns, submachine guns, hand grenades, mines, dynamite, and booby traps changed the equation of battle. At the same time, automobiles and trucks, radios, telephones, and aircraft made former conceptions of communication obsolete.

In the Irish "Troubles" of 1916-22—a prototype of modern irregular war—the British raised constabulary forces, the "Black and Tans," and the more elite Auxiliaries, the "Cadets" of the Royal Irish Constabulary, who soured the already ripe Irish stew.[19] The spectacle of these counterterrorist forces acting much like the lately derided "Hun" brought down the seemingly invulnerable Lloyd George, not the last liberal-minded politician to learn about the limits of military force the hard way. Extant in the "Troubles" was the emerging double standard regarding the duel of regular and irregular in such shadow wars. Granted, oppression spawned such struggles; and regime excesses soured the masses and thus precipitated the emotions that supported irregular warfare; and the laws of war evolving since the sack of Magdeburg gave little protection to the *franc-tireur*—irregular snipers who wore no distinctive uniforms. The bloody crushing of the Revolutions of 1848 and the Communards in 1871 revealed little general sympathy for such behavior. In the 20th century, however, the tolerance of people in liberal democracies for guerrilla and terror tactics increased, and a double standard began to emerge: The regular troops and police drawn into armed action or security duties were expected to "keep their cool," in spite of sneak attacks, blind bombing, or other forms of provocation.

Beyond ideological changes, developments in such areas as medical technology and diet, for example, were creating greater reliance on elite forces. The evidence of psychological impairment and physical deficiencies measured by increasingly objective criteria saw extensive rejection of inductees, fluctuating from 10 to 30 percent for US forces in the Second World War. The results may be compared with data

assembled by S. L. A. Marshall which show unexpectedly low levels of combativeness among infantry troops,[20] and estimates by other researchers of actual combativeness ranging from two to four percent.[21]

Such data should be appraised in light of the question raised by Milton Rokeach in *The Open and Closed Mind*: In analyzing political extremism are we dealing with psychopathy, or, at least, hostility well beyond the norm in the case of the forces on *both* sides of these ideological clashes?[22] The atrocity/counter-atrocity dialogue manifest in the "Troubles," in Palestine in 1946-48 (when Jewish schoolchildren called British airborne troops "poppies with black hearts"), in Algeria,[23] and in Vietnam (with regard to the Phoenix program, for example) suggests an analogy to a magnet in which filings are attracted to opposite poles, but are remarkably similar in that all are made of iron. The erosion of the soldier's code in limited war and the resort of middle-class intellectuals to the tactics of gangsters deserve more research by social scientists. There are, after all, certain similarities on both sides of the hedge. The reliance of terrorists and military and police forces alike on small group cohesion, the sense of alienation from the larger parent organization, and the subordination of means to ends are certainly common to both sides.[24]

A fundamental challenge to urban society of guerrilla war, terrorism, and the coup d'etat lies in their disdain of coherent boundaries. The desire of Secretary of Defense McNamara to close the borders of South Vietnam, albeit grandiose, was based upon the recognition of the fact that without identifying and containing insurgency, there is little prospect of bringing it under control, unless its own inner dynamic or a lack of support from the population leads to failure. The contiguity of the Casbah and the sealing of the frontier of Algeria gave the *paras* of the French Army something to chew on that was beyond the reach of the Americans in Vietnam. In the case of the modern urban guerrilla consortium, a similar lack of boundaries confronts nations seeking an effective counterstrategy. Paramilitary techniques seem to be considerably ahead of military tactics, and the reliance on elite forces is a symbol of that gap. Reaction in each case has required the commitment of the national will and national symbols by a specific nation or nations, with a high degree of risk. Thus, the failure of the US commando raid launched to rescue fliers during the Paris talks, although small, was more a strategic than a tactical failure.

With stakes much higher than the numbers involved might suggest, combat between irregulars and security forces has become a highly cerebral affair. The articulate, sophisticated, low-key quality of Templer and Lansdale, compared to the more traditional British and American general, reflects how a bluff, hearty style became inappropriate in the *go* game of counterinsurgency. As with an athletic contest—and increasingly so in modern warfare—many watch while relatively few do the actual fighting. Mobs may form and become a part of the game momentarily, but the ultimate issue is the ability of insurgents to disturb life and to cause enough uncertainty and annoyance to undercut the allegiance of the population to the government or induce apathy or contempt toward the government. Given the emphasis on violence and the risk, one must ask: How much does terrorism stem from strategy on the one hand and psychopathy on the other? It is so much the better if the security forces are goaded into a My Lai or a Derry massacre or the use of torture that demonstrates the bankruptcy of the regime—or serves to deepen the emotional loading of the central idea. The double standard of the public in liberal democracies is more understandable within the framework of the latter, and it should seem familiar to those who remember as children the enjoyment of watching Robin Hood confound the counterinsurgents in Sherwood Forest. From Hereward the Wake on through Du Guesclin to Lawrence of Arabia, the youthful urge toward sneaky violence against father authority is lionized, even though the behavior of the insurgent, as many have noted, is quite often

indistinguishable from that of the bandit. Whether such leaders gave very much of what they took to the poor is not as important as the fact that they symbolized assault against authority. In this respect, Americans now see that survival of the Vietcong was *in itself* their victory[25] and that the Tet offensive, like Jutland, was a tactical victory for the physically stronger side yet was seen a defeat *because it happened*.[26]

If terrorist-guerrilla forces are affected by irrational and contradictory influences, so are elite forces. The image of rapier-like predictability displayed by a band of intrepid, highly-trained troops offers a tool of policy to the rationally inclined, a symbol of power to the harried, and a quandary to the politically sensitive. While such forces appear to be self-contained, they do not exist in a cocoon. When they come into contact with the external world, their presence and methods can confound policy. The capture of Special Air Service (SAS) men on the Ulster-Ireland border in 1976, the embarrassing links between former SAS men in a purported assassination plot against Togo's president in late 1977,[27] and the visibility of former special operations personnel in mercenary forces in the 1960's and 1970's suggest the quandary implicit in the nature of elite paramilitary forces, especially insomuch as they often operate on the blurred boundaries between law enforcement, the military, and clandestine operations. Thus it was that US Army Special Forces suffered from the revelation of linkages between them and operations of the Central Intelligence Agency in hunting Vietcong leaders in 1968.[28]

Keeping in mind that these forces often shared foes as well as methods in scenarios of revolutionary violence, it should be remembered that, from the military standpoint, elite forces have been created by a rational process in this century. In many cases, their shaping took place in an atmosphere of highly charged emotion, in reaction to humiliation, frustration, or disaster. So it was with the proto-Fascist *arditi* of the Italian Army, the commandos, the US Rangers, Skorzeny's mini-empire of special forces, and the Long Range Desert Group/Special Air Services. The Second World War was, in particular, a fertile spawning ground of elite units.

In the cold war, elite units became a major component of military forces, frequently used as the "cutting edge" in "brushfire" wars and functions requiring a constabulary. British paratroops—and their cousins, the SAS troops—served as security forces in Palestine, Malaya, Cyprus, Aden, and Northern Ireland. American paratroops were used in paramilitary roles in the riots of the 1960's, in the Dominican Republic in 1965, and in Alabama and Mississippi in the early 1960's. German, Israeli, and Egyptian paratroop-trained "security forces" carried out the anti-skyjacking raids at Entebbe, Mogadishu, and on Cyprus.[29]

Of course, since elite forces are particularly conspicuous, they can therefore be used as a feint or ruse to mask other activities, in the way that Constance Babington-Smith's skills as an air-photo interpreter were used in World War II to mask the role of Special Intelligence in detecting German rocket installations on the Baltic.[30] Given the cases of the "Black and Tans" and "Auxies," the *paras*, and the Special Forces in confounding the purposes of their employers, it might seem to some that the best way to move against forces operating very much like professional criminals would be to use forces which approximate the undercover elements of various intelligence and police agencies, elements designed to infiltrate, take over, and "turn around." The problem of controlling such units is far more complicated than those associated with more visible elite forces. Nonetheless, dependence on formal power as evidenced by the employment of elite forces cannot be more than one part of an effective spectrum of responses, as members of the Irish Republican Army recognized in directing assassinations against plainclothes security forces of the British.

Thus police, general military forces, and even elite forces in such situations have sometimes served a role not unlike that of the infantry in World Wars I and II, that is, a

shrinking part of a broader complex of technological power. Nevertheless, in the counterterrorist role they might be subject to the kind of abuses of power which created concern in the United States in the Vietnam era and led to congressional hearings on the Central Intelligence Agency, but they might also provide a touchstone for those seeking solutions to complex problems in industrial society through means other than the frustrating and delay-laden dynamics of consensualism.

Beyond the temptations of easy solution, elite forces are colorful and distinctive, and elite force leaders—in the West at least—are often found at the extremes of the political spectrum, or seen as symbols thereof. In the way of yet another more subtle dimension of the problem relative to the political realm, it is not wholly reassuring to recall that in the riots that swept the United States in the mid-60's, some citizens found Regular Army officers who temporarily assumed the reins of power more sophisticated and more visibly competent than the political leaders and local civil servants with whom they usually dealt.[31] The role of the *paras* in bringing de Gaulle to power and the dependency of Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon on symbols of military power in their hours of travail suggest the elements of a pattern as yet only partially glimpsed. It is hardly surprising that the very visibility of elite forces has made the model repugnant to those opposing military involvement in civil politics. While the use of distinctive symbols and trappings to attract youth to "follow the drum" is hardly new, the "deglamorization" of the noncombat uniforms of the various Western armies may be as much a reflection of deference to the decline in class-related dress that began with the French Revolution as it is of a need for battlefield camouflage.

In this area, one may also consider the extent to which revolutionary success has lain historically in the transition of revolutionary movements from dependence on terror and guerrilla forces to the fielding of uniformed regular forces. Power in successor states has usually fallen into the hands of the controllers of orthodox military forces. In the Bolshevik Revolution, for example, in spite of subsequent images of Red Guards and workers-in-arms, the Kronstadt sailors and Lettish Rifles played key roles in the actual seizure of power. In the French Revolution, the going-over of the troops at the Bastille has similarly been overshadowed by images of the mob triumphant.[32] Nevertheless, the appearance of uniformed officers and troops of the revolution in the seats of power in the Irish Rebellion, in North Vietnam in 1954, in Cuba, and in Palestine marked the transition to legitimacy. The devouring of the forces that created the revolution that gave them birth is a cliché. The symbolic power of the uniform is an area in which more research needs to be done, in view of the frequency with which the terrorist and irregular gain goals but are denied power. It is also notable that the uniforms worn by the victorious revolutionaries have often been but slight variants of those of their former overlords.

The symbolic visibility of elite forces and regular military forces is, indeed, central to the question. With increasing frequency, elite forces have been created reactively, as illustrated by the proposal of Prime Minister Harold Wilson to create special antiterrorist squads in 1972[33] and President Carter's "Project Blue Light," involving a unit to counter terrorism and skyjacking based on a cadre of US Army Special Forces. On the surface of it, such organizations may seem consistent with the Janowitzian constabulary trend, but in this they also inadvertently give some chips away in the game of counterterrorism by reinvoking the heroic model. In the aftermath of Entebbe and Mogadishu, they may serve as a cautionary symbol. However, they also formally validate the threat itself. On the other hand, since modern police technologies give an increasing advantage to the forces of order, whatever their ideological underpinnings, the use of elite forces as deterrent forces may forestall terror by sending a signal that the stakes are getting high and retribution without success is likely.

The power of the media is also a cliché. Uncertainty regarding the real power of the terrorist and the guerrilla is also a basic element in the use of anonymous terror. Are there three, three hundred, or three thousand behind the simultaneous explosion of a dozen bombs? Elements of Romanticism and the overrepresentation of well-educated (at least from the standpoint of status) middle classes conform to the predictions of some early sociologists of a world in which the collapse of regular armed power and police bring not freedom, but increased vulnerability of the society to personal violence.[35] Since visibility is in itself the bedrock of terrorist activity,[36] and since a good part of the game of the terrorist is the seeking of validation through reaction on the part of formal authority, the formation of elite forces, more military than constabulary, is a victory in itself. As already noted, the resort of liberal democracies to military forms of response, is, in a sense, regressive. Police forces were created in the early 19th century to give the state a response to threat short of the commitment of the *ultima ratio regis*—the "final argument of kings," that being the cannon on which the phrase was inscribed. The instance of Napoleon's having gained visibility as the counterrevolutionary queller of mobs was yet fresh in many minds. Given the dislike of many in democratic societies for military forms and the terrorist claim that the punitive and violent nature of the state lies smoldering like a volcano—and that acts of terror merely force hypocrisy into the light of day—the resort to military forms offers some problems. Because of the many convolutions involved in this line of argument—and the forces at work in the shaping of policy under pressure—it is a point of view more likely to be held by academic analysts who conduct postmortems and speculate at leisure. The hypothesis of such pathology, however, is nonetheless challenging to the would-be user of a military response to terrorism, and it is even more of a challenge if the reactor employs elite forces. It is in this context that Walter Laqueur's proposition that terrorism is only really successful against democracy must be considered most carefully.[37]

Another aspect of elitism which may not be weighed in shaping the policy process behind the forming of such units is the extent to which the creation of organizations to carry out certain tasks results in those organizations seeking out circumstances which commit them to action. As Sumner put it rather more tersely: "What you prepare for is what you get."[38] The issue of responsiveness to discipline is related to this, since elite forces appear to be more reliable to authority. Certain forces, however, are set loose in their very creation and maintenance. The intensity of small-group identification and perceived superiority to general units aggravate the natural tendencies of young men in parallel organizations to rivalry.[39] The competitive energies thus crystallized may well be displaced against external authority and the general forces. The problems provided to commanders and provost forces by unit rivalry are proverbial. There is, moreover, a deeper emotional dynamic implicit to elite units, a kind of camaraderie or, if Freudians had their way, something beyond that.

While the use of uniformed military personnel in security and counterterrorist roles has certain advantages in terms of image as well as achievement—if they are employed successfully—the triumph of highly trained elite forces in the mid-1970's against terrorists is not a guarantee of such achievements *ad infinitum*. At the same time, the glow of success is unlikely to engender the active search for alternate means. However, over time, terrorist activity may produce international solidarity among security forces; it may spur security forces to exchange techniques and cooperate to prevent such shoot-outs as those in Uganda and on Cyprus, where battles developed between rescuers and local security forces. Clearly, the unheralded arrival of one nation's armed forces on the soil of another nation without previous agreement is an act pregnant with difficulties under the best of circumstances. This raises the question of whether elite forces are the best way to combat terrorism or whether a more traditional police-type force—recruited and supported on a retainer

by various nations, in exchange perhaps for a break in insurance rates for participants—would not have greater mobility and, beyond that, less symbolic and diplomatic vulnerability. While United Nations forces are anathema to many nations—including the United States—a "private" firm might eliminate some problems of uninational deployment, including the difficulties of diplomatic disadvantages that would arise in the case of failure by a single country's counterterrorist forces.

This, like an antiterrorism treaty or an international terrorism tribunal, seems unlikely to happen. Yet a basic dilemma facing democracies in raising elite forces to cope with terrorists is that such forces may be seen as proof that the challenged system lacks the flexibility and creativity to cope with the terror, because it allowed the conditions to develop in which terrorism emerged. This circular argument yields to those, primarily Marxists, who see such phenomena as evidence of virtual bankruptcy of the system, although the Italian backlash to the Moro affair seems to weaken such arguments. Clinicians and ideologues, then, may be expected to continue to do battle over the question of motivation and the genesis of terrorism. In respect to the use of military elite forces in counterterrorist roles, however, the paradox persists. The elite-force model since World War I has been a lodestone for attracting the aggressive and eager from larger societies or conscript forces, where enthusiasm for the kind of stress and existential self-definition expressed in "The Para's Prayer"[40] is rare. If the general society leaves the dirty work to forces drawn from those in society attracted to what is viewed generally as an undesirable task, as it does with policing on the whole, then there will continue to be problems with what counterforces do out there, on the job, without anyone to see them. Beyond that, there is yet another question: What challenge for which they were selected and trained has been met, or passed away? The images of the *arditi*, the Spanish Foreign Legion, and the *para* origins of the French *Organisation de l'Armee Secrete* cast long shadows.

THE POTENTIAL FOR SYNERGY

At this point, it is useful to consider the interaction of the emerging roles of the elite forces as shaped by the "new battlefield" and the terrorist challenge. Before proceeding further, the growth of elite forces should be considered. The increase in such forces from 1974 to 1977 has been about 170,000, to almost a million. Such units are spread fairly evenly over the world, with less evidence in Southeast Asia and British Empire successor states and a slightly higher increase relative to gross national product evident in Africa and Latin America, where special force and "palace guard" units abound. The latter type and airborne units are also growing in Arab oil-producing states.[41]

The post-Vietnam debate in the US on the future of elite forces has focused on their tactical utility in a mechanistic sense, in keeping with traditional US view of clear-cut, mutually exclusive provinces of political and military action.[42] This is rather surprising, since many feel that the very essence of the American frustration in Vietnam came from the decision to go down the wrong fork in the decision-road in the early 1960's, that is, in opting for commitment of military forces on a large scale rather than a more diffuse and less satisfying involvement in a complex of police, social welfare, and political activities, with gain and counterpressure replacing traditional military goals of battle and victory.[43]

With that in mind, and remembering that the terrorist challenge and the "new battlefield" are coming into focus at a time when conscription is reemerging, it may be that the image of a depopulated battlefield in conventional war and quick-reaction forces to cope with emergencies—terrorist or those encountered in surrogate wars[44]—offers a tempting prospect to those averse to a return to conscription. A reversion to a simplistic, linear doctrine is not surprising, however, to students of American military history. In every war in the last century and a half, except Korea, the American Army (and its allies) outnumbered its enemies and was supported as well by a rich and sophisticated

technological base. American tactics have been linear and presumptive of such superiority until recently, when, for the first time, the nuances of a conventional war in Western Europe have intruded on the consciousness of American military policymakers.

The change in assumptions is evident in Field Manual 100-5, the heart of US Army operational doctrine, which focuses on the threat of Soviet conventional assault against Western Europe and which displays new attitudes and strong German influence to a remarkable degree. There is no evidence, however, that the authors are aware of the similarity between their position and that of the advocates of the spirit of the attack of the French Army in the early 20th century. Nor do they seem aware of the possibilities of scenarios other than that of a short, bloody war, assumptions being drawn from the 1973 Yom Kippur War. There is no Iwan Bloch to suggest that the "new battlefield" may produce a scenario closer to 1914 than 1940, nor does sophistication in the production of doctrine seem to have gone so far as to suggest that the best preparations are those which consider the widest variety of options and create, above all, a flexibility of mind and a tolerance of ambiguities and uncertainties.

The elite force has in its nature a symbolic certainty, suggesting the ability of courage and aggressiveness to swing the tide. Its institutionalization of the mythical warrior band and its evident reliability counter the truism that "armies do not win wars by means of . . . super-soldiers but by the average quality of their standard units."[45] Nevertheless, the press of events which creates the environment which produces policy in bureaucracies creates a need for clear solutions. The glamour, the seeming reliability, and the emerging uncertainty of electronic battlefields, surrogate wars, and terrorism have created a rich environment for these flowers, which for all their strangeness and beauty often exhaust or poison the soil in which they grow and which show far less hardiness than their gardeners have expected. It remains for the historians of the future to determine whether the recent proliferation of these exotic species is a symptom of certain policy, of the search for responsive instruments, or of a trend toward the cybernation of war and conflict. In analyzing the question, it should be kept in mind that many elite forces, even those formed for clearly functional reasons, have been embroiled in civil-military turmoil.[46]

THE PROBLEMS OF CONTEXT AND INTENT

The most difficult question in respect to national security policy in the post-World War II period is the reality of threat, that is, force credibility. The pressures toward the "retribalization" of the world are not new. They were faced by the Romans, who failed, and by the Papacy, which failed, and subsequently by the British and the French, also unsuccessfully. Many nation-states hold in thrall those who desire their own national identities. As it was at Versailles in 1919, so it is today. The Atlantic littoral seethes with dissidence. Basques, Welsh, Scots, Bretons, Irish, Tyroleans, Quebecois, Lapps, and others seek their place in the sun. A chorus of disunity has rent Europe with some regularity, and the pattern of "pumpernickel principalities" has been as much the norm in European history as the exception. Indeed, America's bloodiest war was to halt the growth of sectional separatism, the seeds of which are still dormant.

That there is some justice in the claims of "micro-nationalists" may be granted easily enough; that Romanticism, neurosis, and a too-great sensitivity to history affect them must also be granted. No doubt Lewis Richardson, that redoubtable statistician of war, would lament the potential for violence implicit in the increasing of boundaries, seeing as he did, before Lorenz' hypothesis of the "bond" was propounded, that boundaries create a sense of "them" and "us" that provides a stimulus to war. At the same time, there are less theoretical aspects of the problem to consider. It may be that these sparks of potential conflict which beset the Atlantic community in its state of "semi-

siege" in the shadow of a resurgence of Soviet military strength are essentially free of external manipulation. They have old roots, and they are reactions to real stimuli, separate from any agenda of a cold war.

On the other hand, the manipulation of the "problem peoples" of other nations is a game played by the imperial powers for the last half millenium at least. The rivalry between Russia and Britain in Central Asia, the continuing evidence of British pressure in the American Midwest after the Jay Treaty, and the French anxieties about British machinations in the Moroccan Rif predate the current struggle. In that respect, it should be noted that Special Forces and SAS in their current forms were patterned after the various guerrilla cadres clustering around the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) and the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in World War II; the formation of such units as Special Forces fit the "captive nations" strategy which foundered in 1956. However, given the skill of the Soviets in using surrogate forces in Korea, Indochina, the Middle East, and Africa—perhaps a by-product of their ghastly losses in Finland and in World War II—it is asking a lot to expect those in the West aware of the enormity of Soviet intelligence operations to see all such claimants for independence as purely products of normative and independent historical evolution.[47] It is difficult for policymakers or the public to "see life steadily and see it as a whole" in the age of propaganda, and it is difficult for academicians to maintain perspective, given the politics of peer group pressure in the age of revisionism. Obviously, it would be of value, tactically and strategically, for the Soviets to deny the West basing access on the Atlantic littoral as they have in Asia and Africa. To gain footholds of their own would be yet a richer prize.[48] Some are uneasy about the fact that one argument in the Vietnam debate—the domino theory—has, in spite of the perception of many that it was invalid, nevertheless been supported by a click or two, and beyond the immediate locus of that grim struggle.

ELITES AND LEADERSHIP DRAIN

The maintenance and expansion of elite forces in the all-volunteer Army presents special implicit problems. If motivation and leadership are at a premium in the general forces, then concentrating the "best and the brightest" in elite forces is at best an uncertain trade-off.

In World War II, it was suggested that allowing the Marine Corps to accept volunteers until late 1942 while the other services were locked into the draft created the anomaly that men who might have been lieutenants and captains in the expanding conscript forces were serving as riflemen and squad leaders in the Marines. The high selection profile allowed the Army Air Forces in enlisted drafting until late 1943 resulted in a large number of highly intelligent conscripts being assigned to marginal roles, while the Army's combat arms experienced a shortage in effective leadership and eventually a major infantry replacement crisis.

The maintenance of two airborne divisions, of Special Forces, Rangers, and so on, and the competition of the Army with the Navy, Marine Corps, and Air Force further aggravate the problem. The current allocation of leadership and intelligence as a resource in the manpower structure of the armed forces as a whole is the result of conflicting organizational demands, and while it may suggest a kind of bureaucratic or political balance-point, it is not rational, nor is it in the broader national interest.

The strategy of training elite forces in the South Vietnamese armed forces is close at hand. Their airborne troops, rangers, and marines did very well, but they suffered high casualties. Did excessive reliance on such forces contribute to the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975? Certainly the Germans found such a strategy extremely damaging in early 1918 when they culled the ranks of their army for storm troops; when their "peace offensive" failed, they had not only lost the *crème de la crème* but a good part of the junior leadership leavening of their general

forces, with subsequent heavy damage to morale among the services.

IN SUM

In respect to the growing focus on elite forces as instruments of policy, then, it seems that those who shape and manage such forces must sort out conflicting data and depend yet on intuition and the rarer commodities of "common" sense and wisdom. In searching for perspective, it is not wholly reassuring to consider the view of terrorism expressed by official sources as "incompatible with a human world order"[49] in contrast with the view that:

> . . . sixteenth century defense intellectuals and military planners . . . [improved] their moats and castle walls to protect against threats that they could not quite see were undermining the entire social and political order. We are probably now living in the transition period between the age of nation states and whatever era is around the corner.[50]

In conclusion, it should be noted that at a time when military service has become almost generally rejected by the upper middle class in the United States at least, the elite force serves a specific function in maintaining "force credibility," and reliable aggressiveness provides a rich milieu for the maintenance and growth of such units. Nevertheless, it should be kept in mind that there can be an inverse proportion relationship between such credibility and legitimacy, or acceptance of such forces in a society based on popular representation. Usually, legitimacy of military force is proportional to the perceived distance of its orientation to the severity of threat on the external boundary of the parent society. In the case of terrorism in particular, a unique situation of threat creates a demand for the intervention of the military in a highly combative mode well short of the external boundary; it thereby produces an anomaly. Without deft control and awareness of the nuances surrounding the use of elite forces, one may expect unpredictable side effects.

NOTES

1. Barry M. Blechman and Stephen S. Kaplan, "Armed Forces as Political Instruments," *Survival*, 19 (July-August 1977), 169-73.

2. Roger A. Beaumont, *Military Elites: Special Fighting Units in the Modern World* (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1974).

3. The author expresses his appreciation to William Snyder of the Political Science Department of Texas A&M University for his comments and suggestions and to Martin Edmonds of the University of Lancaster and Francois Subileau of the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, who co-chaired the workshop of the European Political Research Consortium in April 1978, at which the first draft of this paper was presented.

4. For a recent commentary and restatement of the trend, see Charles Moskos, "From Institution to Occupation: Trends in Military Organization," *Armed Forces and Society*, 4 (Fall 1977), 41-50.

5. Edward Luttwak and Dan Horowitz, *The Israeli Army* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), pp. 337-97.

6. For varying perspectives, see Steven L. Canby, "Regaining a Conventional Military Balance in Europe: Precision Guided Munitions and Immobilizing the Tank," *Military Review*, 55 (June 1975), 26-38; John T. Burke, "Precision Weaponry: The Changing Nature of Modern Warfare," *Army*, 24 (March 1974), 13-16; and Stanley D. Fair, "Precision Weaponry in Defense of Europe," in *New Dynamics in National Strategy* (New York: Crowell, 1975), pp. 179-90.

7. The need to heighten attractiveness has led to a variety of changes including, in the US Army, some sensitivity in the direction of the more totemic or tribal aspects of military organization. See "Hats, Hats Everywhere," *Army*, 28 (February 1978), 12, for a discussion of regulations on headgear for the combat arms. For those who may relegate such aspects to the category of trivial, see John W. Frye, "The Green Beret: Where It Began," *Army*, 26 (May 1976), 39-41.

8. For a popular view and close insight into the attractions of elite forces to a camaraderie-starved mass society, see the "Raid!" issue of *Strategy and Tactics* (September-October 1977).

9. See Science Applications Inc., *Evaluations of Collateral Damage* (La Jolla, Cal.: Science Applications Inc., 1977), sponsored by and prepared for the Defense Nuclear Agency (publication DNA 4264F), pp. 229-301.

10. Graham H. Turbiville, "Soviet Airborne Forces," *Army*, 26 (April 1976), 18-28.

11. Michael Howard, *Studies in War and Peace* (New York: The Viking Press, 1972), pp. 151, 207. For a variant, see Philip Kronenberg, "Militia in the Seventies: A Conflict Paradigm," in *War in the Next Decade*, ed. Roger A. Beaumont and Martin Edmonds (Lexington, Ky., and London: The University Press of Kentucky and Macmillan Ltd., 1974), pp. 110-34.

12. Jacques Ellul, *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Knopf, 1964).

13. Edward Luttwak, *Coup d'Etat: A Practical Handbook* (Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett, 1969), pp..vii-viii.

14. See Paul Wilkinson, *Political Terrorism* (New York: John Wiley, 1974). For the purposes of this analysis, Wilkinson's category of sub-revolutionary terrorism is employed. Described on page 38, it is essentially terror aimed at influencing or irritating.

15. For example, see Albert Parry, *Terrorism: From Robespierre to Arafat* (New York: Vanguard Press, 1976); Yonah Alexander, *International Terrorism* (New York: Praeger, 1976); Jay Mallin, ed., *Terror and Urban Guerrillas* (Coral Gables, Fla.: University of Miami Press, 1971), p. 148; and Thomas Greene, *Comparative Revolutionary Movements* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974).

16. J. Bowyer Bell, "The Profile of a Terrorist: A Cautionary Tale," in *International Terrorism*, ed. Carol Edler Baumann (Milwaukee: Institute of World Affairs, University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, 1974), p. 12.

17. Walter Laqueur, *Terrorism* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977), p. 120.

18. For example, see Charles A. Russell and Bowman H. Miller, "Profile of a Terrorist," *Military Review*, 57 (August 1977), 21-34; Frank Kitson, *Low Intensity Operations* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon, 1971); and Franklin Mark Osanka, ed., *Modern Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1963).

19. See J. Bowyer Bell, *On Revolt: Strategies of National Liberation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), pp. 198ff.; George Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question: A Study of Anglo-Irish Relations* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1976), pp. 317-20.

20. S. L. A. Marshall, *Men Against Fire* (New York: Monroe, 1966), pp. 10, 56-57.

21. J. McGhie, "The Psychology of the Soldier in the Battlefield," *RUSI—Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, 118 (June 1973), pp. 39-41.

22. Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind* (New York: Basic Books, 1960). For an analysis of linkages, see Arthur L. Gaushon, "Terrorists Have a Common Bond," *Houston Chronicle*, 22 March 1978, p. 2.

23. Alf Anchers Heggay, *Insurgency and Counter-Insurgency in Algeria* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), pp. 230-44.

24. Richard Burt, currently State Department correspondent of *The New York Times*, suggested to the author that the similarity in rationale and rhetoric of the air power proponents and the radical terrorists offered some valuable insights. J. Bowyer Bell has suggested that the attributes of guerrilla-terrorists "are not remarkably different from those of a conventional professional soldier." Bell, "The Profile of a Terrorist: A Cautionary Tale," p. 12.

25. That Americans forgot their own long revolution, the many defeats at the hands of the British, and the key role of foreign aid and recognition is still mystifying—or evidence of inadequate public education.

26. For a concise analysis of this aspect of the 1968 Tet offensive, see Douglas Kinnard, *The War Managers* (Hanover, N.H.: published for the University of Vermont by the University Press of New England, 1977), pp. 76-80.

27. *Washington Post* Service release, 31 January 1978.

28. Francis J. Kelly, *U.S. Army Special Forces, 1961-1971*, published as part of the Vietnam Studies series of the US Department of the Army (Washington: US Government Printing Office, 1973), p. 147.

29. For a summary of French special units, see Pierre Darcourt, "Deux Grand unites peuvent intervener rapidement outre-mer," *Figaro*, 6 April 1978, p. 6.

30. William Stevenson, *A Man Called Intrepid* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1976), p. 488.

31. See Robin Higham, ed., *Bayonets in the Streets* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1969), pp. 185-205.

32. See Crane Brinton, *The Anatomy of a Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1965), pp. 252-53.

33. Wilkinson, p. 142.

34. United Press International release, 2 March 1978; Geoffrey Norman, "Black Berets to the Rescue," *Esquire*, 11 April 1978, pp. 43-44.

35. See Brian Jenkins, *High Technology Terrorism and Surrogate War: The Impact of New Technology on Low-Level Violence*, Rand Paper P-5339 (Santa Monica: The Rand Corporation, January 1975). The source contains a review of trends which, Jenkins observes, have led to an erosion of the scale of violence, a McLuhan-Mao neutrality, and "incessant but low-level warfare."

36. See James Eliot Cross, *Conflict in the Shadows* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1963), pp. 63ff.; Laqueur (p. 109) notes that "in the final analysis, it is not the magnitude of the terrorist operation that counts, but the publicity."

37. Laqueur, p. 234.

38. William Graham Sumner, "War," in *War: Studies from Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology*, ed. Leon Abramson and George W. Goethals (New York: Basic Books, 1964), pp. 205-28.

39. For a pre-Entebbe perspective, see Jay Mallin, *Terrorism in a Vulnerable Society and the Counter-role of the Military* (Coral Gables, Fla.: Institute for the Study of Change, 1973). He notes that the suppression of the Tupamaros had as an unhappy side effect the politicization of the military.

40. "The Para's Prayer" was written by Parachutist-Aspirant Zirnheld of the SAS, who was killed in action on 27 July 1942. It is translated by Kenneth Douglas in Paul-Marie delaGorce, *The French Army* (New York: Braziller, 1963), and it is reprinted by permission of George Braziller, Inc., in Beaumont, *Military Elites*, p. 77.

41. Data on elite forces are gleaned from *The Military Balance, 1974-1975* and *1977-1978* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1974 and 1977).

42. See David C. Schlachter and Fred J. Stubbs, "Special Operations Forces: Not Applicable?" *Military Review*, 58 (February 1978), 15-26; Shaun M. Darragh, "Rangers and Special Forces: 'Two Edges of the Same Dagger,'" *Army*, 27 (December 1977), 14-20; and Gerald T. Cecil, "Airborne—All the Way?" *Army*, 27 (August 1977), 14-21.

43. Robert B. Asprey, *War in the Shadows* (New York: Doubleday, 1975), p. 742.

44. For example, see "Again, U.S. Is Gearing Up For Brush-Fire Wars," *U.S. News and World Report*, 27 February 1978, pp. 24-25.

45. W. J. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory* (New York: David McKay, 1961), p. 453.

46. Several of the elite forces emerging in the 20th century had a specific political flavor at the outset, including, for example, the Spanish Foreign Legion, the International Brigades, the *Waffen SS*, the Blackshirts, the US Army's Special Forces, the Brandenburgers, and the Red Guards. In other cases, leaders of functional elite forces later played political roles, as did Karl Doenitz, of the German submarine forces; Rommel, a *gebirgsjager* officer in World War I; Edwin Walker, of the 1st US-Canadian Special Service Brigade; David Stirling, of the SAS; and Curtis LeMay, of the Strategic Air Command. In yet other instances, functional units themselves became cadres of or models for political parties or movements, or security forces in a political milieu; examples include the *arditi*, airborne forces, the SAS, and Special Forces.

47. For one perspective, see "Backers of Terror," *The Sunday Telegraph* (London), 27 February 1972, p. 19.

48. Regaining perspective in the tangle of debate and polemic has inadvertently created a new interest in history and in geopolitics. For example, see Colin Gray, *The Geopolitics of the Nuclear Era: Heartland, Rimlands and the Technological Revolution* (New York: Crane, Russak, 1977).

49. As noted in "Problem of International Terrorism," a statement of the US Department of State released on 14 September 1977.

50. James A. Stegenga, "Deterrence: Reckless Prudence," *Air University Review*, 28 (January-February 1977), 83.