

Issue of military force in counter-terrorism



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The use of military force in counter-terrorism is controversial because it can result in adverse political, strategic, and ethical consequences.[1] Various counter-terrorism strategies have been tested, including diplomacy, targeted killing, reconnaissance and military aid to civil authorities. Counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency warfares are both complex as it varies between different conflicts. For this reason, no two examples of terrorism are the same, and thus the effectiveness of military intervention varies according to the situation and context that it is employed in. Counter-terrorism strategies have shown that there are no simple or complete solutions to the threats posed by terrorism[2]. This essay will discuss the effectiveness of different counter-terrorism strategies, focusing on the military, along with their tactical side effects. It will do so by explaining the difference between fighting a nationalistic terrorism group and a global terrorism group and showing the complexity of dealing with such threats. It will also give examples of counter-terrorism approaches to terrorist organizations in Afghanistan, Northern Ireland and Colombia. As well as showing the importance of balancing between military and political approaches In addition, this essay will demonstrate how military responses links to the wider strategic goals. It will argue that a military response is effective when merged with other approaches and not by itself depending on the objectives and incentives of the terrorist group

Military interventions, like all responses to terrorist threats, are inherently subject to certain limitations. Given the complexity of terror threats, no single response can ever provide a comprehensive solution. The ambiguity of the term itself creates problems for any form of response. Terrorism can be

defined as a term or a label applied to specific actions that are mostly used to reach a political goal. That's why it is hard to understand and conceive a terrorist group and determine in a substantial way how we go about deterring its actions.[3]The damage resulting from a terrorist attack affects how we understand the intentions of the terrorist group responsible for the attacks and it greatly affects how we respond to the attack. For example, after the events of 9/11 the US took the attacks as an act of war and launched a war against Al-Qaeda. The use of force or a military intervention to respond to terrorist attacks occurs after it is conceived as an act of war or if it is threatening the state's entity.[4]On the other hand, other terrorist attacks like car bombing or suicide bombing by non-state actors might be considered as an act of madness or someone with mental illness. This highlights the difficulty in deciding whether an incident is a terrorist act or a criminal act. However, this is further compounded by the objectives, strategies, and tactics of the terrorists themselves. The follow case studies will demonstrate how the context and type of threat often shapes the effectiveness of a military intervention.

The objectives of terrorist groups can often vary between nationalist and global objectives, which impacts the degree of influence a military intervention can achieve. It is often simpler to deal with terrorism linked to nationalistic causes as the terrorist group's objectives are typically confined to a single state. Their aims may include changing a regime or obtaining recognition[5]. On the other hand, when dealing with global terrorist threat it is far more complex to reach an end state or resolve the problem as the terrorist's objectives tend to be much larger and wide ranging[6]. Various

strategies have been tested in an attempt to deter and put an end to terrorism. The war on terror, portrayed as a global threat, started with the invasion of Afghanistan in response to Al-Qaeda attacks on the US as Bin Laden took credit for the attacks.[7]The US invaded Afghanistan in the hope of ending terrorism and protecting its land. They tried to do so by collapsing the Taliban's regime and dispersing Al-Qaeda.[8]However, they didn't reach an end state of the original conflict. In fact, what they did it was only short term and didn't have a great effect, as they only denied the terrorists the safe haven that was provided to them by the Taliban. Moreover, the terrorists regrouped somewhere else and started planning their comeback. That demonstrates one of the major issues of fighting terrorists not defined by state borders as they can take refuge anywhere as their objectives aren't necessarily related to any single state. This also shows the necessity to combine military interventions with other approaches to get a more comprehensive strategy to fight terrorism. By 2010, more than 2000 Coalition troops were killed in Afghanistan fighting for the cause.[9]The objective of this war was defeating, locating and demolishing terrorist organizations and protect US citizens and allies at home and abroad from the threats of terrorism. However, this war only diminished the terrorist acts in one location and the ideology of the group they were fighting is present today. It is fair to say that a military intervention is effective for a short term against terrorism but it isn't enough to end terrorism as a whole. This was shown as the US succeeded in Eliminating the founder of Al-Qaeda Osama Bin Laden making Afghanistan a more stable country and crippled Al-Qaeda but the war didn't successfully end terrorism as the US wanted. Since, as mentioned earlier non-state terrorists' aim isn't state related, hence it can't

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be fought with military force only as the terrorists reaction would be relocate their forces somewhere else to continue fighting for their goal. This is demonstrated in the modern day by the rise of other terrorist groups as ISIS, Hamas, and Hezbollah.

In Northern Ireland, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) used terrorism as a strategy in their political war to separate Northern Ireland from the UK. Counter-terrorism has to be persuasive in order to convince terrorists to choose a different way to achieve their goal and seek other non violent ways to reach it[10]. The conflict in Northern Ireland started with the authorities trying to suppress protest campaigns, which led to violence and the emergence of armed paramilitary organizations[11]. The conflict required a political approach more than a military one. A political approach was required because the reason or the goal behind the war was to force the UK to negotiate a withdrawal from Northern Ireland and this needed to be addressed politically instead of using force. The use of force solely led to more damage and the development of armed paramilitary organizations to protect their aim. To reach a successful political settlement it is vital to understand the political situation and aspire to solve it by all means[12]. Conventional military land forces in this political issue played an effective role as it prevented casualties, maintained the stability of the country and gave an advantage in the political settlement[13]. The UK government got the balance right between military interventions and political settlement as they launched numerous military operations such as Operation Banner, Operation Motorman, and Operation Demetrius. However, leading to the Good Friday Agreement, a peace agreement between the British and the

Irish governments, struck on the 10th April 1998 creating a power-sharing government including political forces aligned with armed forces, and agreeing how Northern Ireland should be governed. It is important to keep in mind while forming strategy against terrorism or insurgency in general that the military side is not the only side of the strategy[14]. A successful military advance provides the government supremacy when they seek negotiation. [15]The UK government formed a well balanced response to the terrorist acts suitable for this kind of situation. This response displays how a combination between a political and military intervention was successful; since the political resolution had been achieved with the military providing security and aiding the civil authorities

Nevertheless, relying on soft force is also not always the right approach. ' it may be comforting to believe that diplomacy with state sponsors of terrorism and with terrorist groups themselves can alone alter their behaviour. However, such wishful thinking is dangerous'.[16]On 7 November 1998, President Andres Pastrana gave the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) a very large area as a way of showing goodwill and preventing hostilities. However, that motivated the FARC to increase the pressure by raiding FARC camps.[17]This showed the ineffectiveness of using soft power alone. After that the President was hugely criticized and had to regain control over the land he gave and increase military measures against the FARC. Subsequently, the threat level diminished and it slowed down the progress of the FARC. If the Colombian President had used military force first or just threatened to use it, it could have given him greater control and maybe averted the havoc. ' Sometimes it is the willingness to use military

force rather than simply engage that enables diplomacy to succeed'.[18]This demonstrates the value of using hard force first as it sets the foundation and makes it easier for the negotiations and diplomacy to have an effect and succeed

The evidence provided in this essay leads to the conclusion that, using military force in the war against terrorism is effective in deterring terrorism and terrorist groups but the effects are limited. It is also vital to consider the terrorist group's tactics and strategies to further understand their motives and intentions. A military intervention has to be assisted by other methods to reach a more holistic outcome and have a greater effect as shown in the IRA conflict. Moreover, in deterring terrorism we have to identify the type of threats we are facing and how the terrorist group operates in order to effectively counter their actions. This essay also demonstrates how finding the right balance between hard force and soft force is essential against terrorism as in the FARC conflict. Evidence within this essay identifies that a military response is effective in deterring the threats posed by terrorism in the area of the intervention, if it was utilized correctly in a holistic approach. It might have an immediate effect or long-term effect depending on the type of terrorism and the type of approaches taken against it.

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[1]Hughes (2011) Letort papers.

[2]Corum (2008), p. 24.

[3]jackson (2011), p. 223.

[4]Id.

[5]Jackson (2011), p. 177.

[6]Lutz (2013), p. 4.

[7]Fawn (2003), p. 15.

[8]Jackson (2011), p. 251.

[9]Id.

[10]Crelinsten (2014) p. 11-12.

[11]O’Neill (2019), *The Troubles: How 1969 violence led to Army’s longest campaign*. BBC news.

[12]Corum (2008) p. 256.

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[13]McInness (2001), The British Army and the peace process in Ireland.
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[14]Corum (2008) p. 26.

[15]Ibid (2008) p. 256.

[16]Rubin (2014), p. 238.

[17]Rubin (2014), p. 237.

[18]Ibid (2014), p. 239.