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ABSTRACT
How does the urban environment, and the ethnic geography at its heart, influence the combat effectiveness of democracies conducting counterinsurgency operations? We argue that the city's ethnic geography – whether it is ethnically homogenous, segregated, or mixed – influences combat effectiveness through two main mechanisms: intelligence and public opinion. There is no 'ideal' urban ethno-demographic setting where militaries are likely to be effective in combat. Rather, different ethno-geographies lead to different challenges with respect to intelligence and public opinion, which in turn affect combat effectiveness. We test our arguments through a structured focus comparison of the Troubles and the First Palestinian Intifada.

How does the urban environment, and the ethnic geography at its heart, influence the combat effectiveness of democracies conducting counterinsurgency operations? Though military strategists caution against fighting in cities, urban warfare is a feature of many modern conflicts, including those involving democratic states. US counterinsurgency operations in Iraq between 2003 and 2011, for example, were concentrated predominantly in the country's largest cities, including Baghdad, Ramadi, and Falluja, while Israel has undertaken significant military operations in the densely populated Gaza Strip in 2008, 2012, and 2014. In addition to urban warfare, many of today's conflicts are also influenced by ethnic politics in various forms. Taken together, counterinsurgency operations increasingly entail fighting in cities, where state militaries are forced to contend with how the ethnic makeup of the city and the geographic location and concentration of its resident ethnic groups may affect the conduct and effectiveness of operations.

This article therefore explores the relationship between urban ethnic geography and combat effectiveness, focusing specifically on the factors that shape the skill and will of democratic militaries to engage the enemy in urban combat. Both military doctrine and historical experience warn that

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the physical terrain and infrastructure of cities present conventional military forces with a range of challenges in terms of movement, manoeuvre, use of firepower, and communications. But the defining feature of urban warfare, and arguably its most formidable aspect, is the presence of a sizeable civilian population in the conflict zone. This population constitutes the centre of gravity in urban military operations; it is the primary source of power 'on which everything depends', and against which all of the military's strength and energy should be directed.[1] Developing a clear and comprehensive picture of the city's population – from demographic characteristics to cultural factors – is then a critical first step towards understanding its potential impact on the operation at hand.

Building on previous scholarship that identifies spatial proximity and ethnic ties as the foundation for collective action, we develop a straightforward typology of urban ethnic geographies and outline the ways that different ethno-territorial configurations impact the various components of combat effectiveness in urban environments. Our central argument is that the city's ethnic geography – whether the city is ethnically homogenous, segregated, or intermixed – influences combat effectiveness through two main mechanisms: intelligence and public opinion. While certainly not the only two explanations for variation in combat effectiveness, e.g., the operational and tactical performance of militaries on the urban battlefield, both intelligence and public opinion play a central role in shaping the combat skills and will to fight of soldiers in urban missions. Accurate and timely intelligence, for example, is critical to coordinating combat operations and recognising the enemy in urban warfare and counterinsurgency operations. And positive public opinion on the homefront, amongst the local population in the urban conflict zone, and on the international stage can strengthen soldiers' commitment to battle and willingness to follow the rules of engagement. That said, the military's ability to gather intelligence from the local population and to shape public opinion are tied to the ethnic geography of cities.

Ethnically homogeneous and segregated cities make for a uniquely inhospitable environment for human intelligence operations. This is in large part because the close-knit community structures and robust ethnic networks that characterise these urban settings facilitate in-group policing and inhibit infiltration. At the same time, maintaining positive public opinion is especially challenging in ethnically intermixed and segregated cities. Here, the presence of multiple and often conflicting audiences – each with its own needs, interests, and potential to either contribute to or undermine ongoing operations – confounds efforts to manage the media landscape and influence public perceptions. In essence, the ethnic geography of cities delimits the

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[1]On centres of gravity, see: Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1976), 595.

availability of and access to intelligence and affects the management of public opinion, which in turn influence combat effectiveness in urban contexts.

In order to test the plausibility of our argument, we conduct two structured historical case studies of urban counterinsurgency campaigns: the British military during the Troubles in Northern Ireland (1969–1975) and the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) during the first Palestinian Intifada (1987–1993). In both cases, the conventional military of a democratic state was confronted with a much weaker urban-based insurgency over a similar period of time. The Palestinian cities and refugee camps which experienced clashes with the IDF are ethnically homogenous, while Belfast, especially after major population movements began in 1969, was effectively ethnically segregated. Evidence suggests that errors in initial intelligence and the difficulties of gathering human intelligence in an ethnically homogenous urban environment led to costly setbacks for the IDF, especially in terms of training, equipment, coordination, and leadership. Negative public opinion may have undermined morale, but its influence was not directly tied to Palestinian urban ethnic geography and its role was less consequential than that of intelligence. In Northern Ireland, ethnic segregation between the Catholic and Protestant communities in Belfast posed a serious challenge to intelligence collection, which in turn reduced both skill and will early on, although skill improved over time. The presence of three distinct audiences – the Catholics, Protestants, and the British home front – complicated the Army's efforts to manage public opinion, thereby impairing soldiers' skills and will. Again, skill improved with better training over time, but will declined as negative public opinion at home hurt morale and negative public opinion in Belfast reduced discipline. While both campaigns yielded a mixed record of combat effectiveness, the variation in urban ethnic geography helps explain different manifestations of soldiers' skill and will. To be clear, there is no 'ideal' urban ethnic geography setting where militaries are particularly likely to be effective in combat. Rather, different urban ethnic geographies create different challenges and opportunities with respect to intelligence operations and public opinion, which then affect different aspects of combat effectiveness.

In the remainder of this article, we first define combat effectiveness and discuss indicators to operationalise the concept. After presenting our theory, we demonstrate the plausibility of the argument in the two aforementioned cases. In the conclusion, we briefly address US counterinsurgency operations in Baghdad in 2003 to glean insights about the relationship between urban ethnic geography and combat effectiveness in a third case of an ethnically intermixed city, as well as summarise the study's overall findings and implications.

Combat effectiveness

Focusing on the operational and tactical levels of military activity, combat effectiveness refers to the skill and will of a military to engage the enemy in an organised manner.[2] It does not refer to the outcome of battle, which depends in part on combat effectiveness but also on material resources, military doctrine, and political will. Ultimately, combat effectiveness is about performance on the battlefield as opposed to the political outcome of a particular conflict.

This study therefore focuses on the skill and will of soldiers fighting in cities rather than on the political decisions regarding the broader strategy of counterinsurgency or the overall outcome of the conflict. These are important distinctions when thinking about counterinsurgency operations. With respect to strategy, when debating how governments can defeat insurgencies, some scholars emphasise the importance of targeted violence and discriminate use of force to minimise civilian harm combined with political concessions and social reforms that address the motives for the insurgency (and the popular support behind the insurgents).[3] Others question the success of this 'population-centric' approach and instead highlight the utility of brute force for controlling civilians and breaking the insurgents' will and capacity to fight.[4] The effectiveness of soldiers in combat is certainly relevant to the successful implementation of either strategy. But even skilled and motivated soldiers cannot guarantee that a particular strategy will prevail. France's experience fighting the National Liberation Front (FLN) in Algeria, for instance, demonstrates that while the military was able to accomplish some tactical objectives against the insurgents, the overall campaign was lost in no small part due to the political costs of brutalising the population.

In our analysis, we remain agnostic as to whether the governments of Israel and Great Britain chose the appropriate strategy for ending the insurgent challenge. Instead, we assess whether soldiers had the skill and will to undertake the tasks at hand while paying close attention to the mechanisms whereby urban ethnic geography influenced that skill and will.

Skill

In order to be effective in battle, soldiers must have the ability to conduct basic tactics and to coordinate and communicate with other members of

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[2]Brathwaite, 'Effective in Battle: Conceptualizing Soldiers' Combat Effectiveness', *Defence Studies* 18/1 (2018), 2.

[3]Julian Paget, *Counter-Insurgency Operations: Techniques of Guerrilla Warfare* (New York: Walker 1967); and Ian F.W. Beckett, *Insurgency in Iraq: An Historical Perspective* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College 2005).

[4]Jacqueline L. Hazelton, 'The 'Hearts and Minds' Fallacy: Violence, Coercion, and Success in Counterinsurgency Warfare,' *International Security* 42/1 (2017); and Douglas Porch, *Counterinsurgency: Exposing the Myths of the New Way of War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2013).

their unit or with other units. Additionally, they need high-quality leadership that is able to implement command and control and ensure that the unit operates according to the appropriate chain of command.[5] There are thus three indicators of soldiers' level of skill – basic tactics, coordination, and leadership.[6] Essentially, skill captures whether soldiers have the training and leadership to execute the strategy chosen by their superiors.

Will

In addition to having skill, effective soldiers must also have the will to put that skill into action.[7] We identify three indicators of soldiers' will to fight: discipline, morale, and initiative. Discipline is the level of coercion – or threat thereof – necessary for officers to maintain control over their soldiers. Discipline also encompasses the soldiers' willingness to follow the rules of engagement, even under fire. Morale is the attitude of the troops towards their situation and their commitment to the goal of the fight. Initiative is the willingness of soldiers to seek out engagement with the enemy and to try new tactics when the old ones fail. If skill captures whether soldiers have the ability to implement the leadership's chosen strategy, will captures their motivation to do so.

Population and conflict in urban environments

Population is central to studies of conflict and war. Counterinsurgency scholars, for instance, emphasise the importance of securing and controlling the population as part of the effort to build legitimacy for the government.[8] While research on civil wars shows that factors such as relative demographic size and territorial settlement patterns of different social groups influence their political objectives, military capabilities, and legitimacy, as well as conflict dynamics.[9] Much of this work, however, centres on rural guerrilla warfare and insurgencies in remote and often scarcely populated peripheral areas marked by mountainous

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[5]Caitlin Talmadge, *The Dictators Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian*, Regimes (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press 2015), 6.

[6]Indicators are from Brathwaite, 'Effective in Battle'.

[7]Kirstin J.H. Brathwaite, 'Symbols and Sacrifice: The Role of Nationalism in Combat Effectiveness', Ph.D. Dissertation University of Notre Dame, 2014; Risa A. Brooks, 'Introduction', in Risa A. Brooks and Elizabeth A. Stanley (eds.), *Creating Military Power: The Sources of Military Effectiveness* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press 2007), 12 .

[8]David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare; Theory and Practice* (New York, NY: Praeger 1964, 2006); and Andrew F. Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins UP 1986).

[9]Monica Duffy Toft, *Geography of Ethnic Violence: Identity, Interests, and the Indivisibility of Territory* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2003); Halvard Buhaug, 'Relative capability and rebel objective in civil war', *Journal of Peace Research* 43/6 (2006): 691–708; Halvard Buhaug, 'Dude, where's my conflict? LSG, relative strength, and the location of civil war', *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 27/2 (2010): 107–128; and Margarita Konaev and Kirstin Brathwaite, 'Dangerous Neighborhoods: State Behavior and the Spread of Ethnic Conflict', *Conflict Management and Peace Science*, 36/5 (2019), 447–68.

terrain or dense forests and jungles.[10] These settings, both in terms of the demographic composition of the local population and the operational environment for military actions (including and especially counterinsurgency) differ significantly from the densely populated urban areas where many of today's most violent conflicts are fought. Our contribution then is an explicit focus on population variables specifically in the context of urban warfare.

Military strategists have long viewed the urban operational environment as a particularly challenging one in large part because urban operations inevitably unfold among a civilian population of significant size and density. And compared to other types of operations, civilian considerations have a disproportionately large influence on the conduct of urban operations.[11] Military decision-makers then view the population as a 'thinking and active component of the operational area', and strive to understand the key demographic and cultural features of urban populations.[12]

Yet, efforts to assess how the civilian population may influence combat operations are seriously complicated by the complex cultural, political, socio-economic, religious, and ethnic tapestry of cities. Given this complexity, there are many ways to classify social relations and groupings and to delineate fault lines in urban settings, with urban studies scholars employing labels such as 'divided', 'polarized,' and 'contested', to emphasise different dimensions of fragmentation.[13] Urban divisions, it is worth noting, are often created, deepened, and perpetuated through urban planning and design, with land ownership regulations, zoning policies, and jurisdictional boundaries used to distribute different groups spatially according to income, race, ethnicity, religion or some other ascriptive attribute.[14] Cities and their populations are also affected by national, regional, and global developments. Urban divisions are then inherently shaped by both long term, gradual processes such as industrialisation, urbanisation, migration, economic development, and technological advances as well as more sudden, unpredictable events like natural disasters or large-scale violence that cause massive damage to urban infrastructure.[15]

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[10]A notable exception is Paul Staniland, 'Cities on Fire: Social Mobilization, State Policy, and Urban Insurgency', *Comparative Political Studies* 42/12 (2010), 1623–49.

[11]Russell W. Glenn, *Heavy Matter: Urban Operations' Density of Challenges* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND, MR-1239-JS/A 2000), 13–15.

[12]Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Publication 3–06, *Joint Urban Operations*, 20 November 2013, A-7.

[13]Anthony C. Hepburn, *Contested Cities in the Modern West* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004); and N. Kilot and Y. Mansfeld, 'Case Studies of conflict and territorial organization in divided cities', *Progress in Planning* 52 (1999): 167–225.

[14]Scott A. Bollens, *On Narrow Ground: Urban Policy and Conflict in Jerusalem and Belfast* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press 2000); Frank Gaffikin and Mike Morrissey, *Planning in Divided Cities: Collaborative Shaping of Contested Space* (Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing 2011); Michael C. Lens & Paavo Monkkonen, 'Do Strict Land Use Regulations Make Metropolitan Areas More Segregated by Income?' *Journal of the American Planning Association* 82/1 (2016), 6–21.

[15]Edward W. Soja, *Postmetropolis: Critical Studies of Cities and Regions* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers 2000); Scott A. Bollens, *Cities, Nationalism, and Democratization* (Oxford, UK: Routledge 2007); and Jane Schneider and Ida Susser, *Wounded Cities: Destruction and Reconstruction in a Globalized World* (Oxford, UK: Berg 2003).

That said, our focus is on urban counterinsurgency operations in conflicts where ethnic identity and grievances play a critical role for violent political mobilisation, and where the warring sides are organised along ethnic lines.[16] Thus, for present purposes, the most important information pertains to the ethnic makeup of the city and the spatial distribution (or concentration) of the city's various ethnic groups.[17] Building on previous studies that established spatial proximity and ethnic ties as the foundation for collective action, we offer a typology of urban ethnic geography in Table 1.

The city's ethnic geography is first defined by the number of distinct ethnic groups it contains. An ethnically homogenous city is one where a single ethnic group is demographically preponderant, accounting for over 90% of the city's population, such as Tokyo or Quebec City. An ethnically heterogeneous city, in contrast, is marked by ethnic diversity, and is home to two or more politically relevant ethnically distinct groups, where the largest minority group accounts for at least 10% of the population, such as Lagos or Beirut. For ethnically heterogeneous cities, the principal distinction is between cities where the different ethnic groups are largely concentrated within specific neighbourhoods or areas and segregated from one another, such as Nicosia or Jerusalem, and cities where these populations are more dispersed and generally intermingled at the neighbourhood level, such as Los Angeles.

The impact of urban ethnic geography – whether the city is ethnically homogenous, segregated, or intermixed – on combat effectiveness is best understood through two main mechanisms: intelligence and public opinion.[18]

Table 1. Urban ethnic geography typology.

		Ethno-demographics	
		Preponderant	Diverse
Spatial distribution	Dispersed	Homogenous	(Heterogeneous) Intermixed
	Concentrated		(Heterogeneous) Segregated

[16]Nicholas Sambanis defines ethnic conflicts as 'wars among communities that are in conflict over the power relationship that exists between those communities and the state'. Nicholas Sambanis, 'Do Ethnic and Non-ethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes? A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part I)', *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45/3 (2001): 259–282, 261.

[17]Following Horowitz, 'Ethnic groups are defined by ascriptive differences, whether the indicum is color, appearance, language, religion, or some other indicator of common origin, or some combination thereof'; and Donald Horowitz, *Ethnic Groups in Conflict* (Berkley: University of California, Berkley Press 1985), 17.

[18]While the ability to gather intelligence from the population may be influenced by local public opinion, soldiers' ability to target militants, avoid civilian casualties, and therefore maintain positive local opinion also depends on good human intelligence. Intelligence and public opinion can therefore be seen as interrelated but nonetheless distinct mechanisms; each responding in its own way to the city's ethnic geography, and in turn, exerting influence on different components of combat effectiveness.

Intelligence

According to Stathis Kalyvas, 'it is widely accepted that no insurgency can be defeated unless the incumbents give top priority to and are successful in building an intelligence organization.'[19] But while intelligence is imperative for effectiveness in counterinsurgency, cities have unique characteristics that complicate information gathering: multistorey buildings, walls, underground tunnels, and other obstructions hinder the performance of technical intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) systems, restrict access and observation space for mobile ISR operations, and degrade communication signals.[20] Overall, as Ralph Peters summarises, 'from mapping to target acquisition, from collection to analysis, and from battle damage assessment to the prediction of the enemy's future intent', intelligence requirements in urban environments surpass those of rural settings or more traditional open battlefields.[21]

Still, while many sources of intelligence (imagery, communication intercepts, etc.) are indeed degraded in urban areas, the presence of large civilian populations means that the sources of human intelligence effectively multiply.[22] Human intelligence is therefore arguably 'the most important and most prolific type of intelligence gathered in the urban environment.'[23]

Now, leading civil wars scholars argue that the state's security forces are quite effective in gathering intelligence from urban populations, which in turn gives them an advantage in counterinsurgency operations.[24] Kalyvas, for instance, claims that 'incumbents tend to control cities', and urban areas are in fact 'inimical to rebels because it is easier for incumbents to police and monitor the population.'[25] Anonymous denunciation is also believed to be safer in cities than in small, closely knit rural communities.[26] This, coupled with the higher level of state control, facilitates 'the collection of information through blackmail and bribes', leaving urban insurgent groups particularly vulnerable to 'penetration and information leaks.'[27]

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[19]Stathis Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006), 174.

[20]Ralph Peters, 'Our Soldiers, Their Cities', *Parameters*, (Spring 1996), 43–50; and Jamison Jo Melby and Russell W. Glenn, *Street Smart: Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield for Urban Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2007).

[21]Ralph Peters, 'Our Soldiers, Their Cities,' p. 48.

[22]Scott Gerwehr and Russell W. Glenn, *The Art of Darkness: Deception and Urban Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2000), 12.

[23]Department of the Army, Field Manual No. 2–91.4, *Intelligence Support to Urban Operations*, Washington, DC, 20 March 2008, 4–1.

[24]Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*; Matthew Kocher, 'Human Ecology and Civil war', Ph.D. Dissertation, University of Chicago, 2004; Bard E. O'Neill, *Insurgency and Terrorism: From Revolution to Apocalypse* (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books Inc. 2005); and Joerg Le Blanc, 'The Urban Environment and its Influences on Insurgent Campaigns', *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 25/5 (2013), 798–819.

[25]Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 133.

[26]James Fearon and David Laitin, 'Ethnicity, Insurgency and Civil War', *The American Political Science Review* 97/1 (2003), 80.

[27]see note 25 above.

In contrast, we argue that the ability to gather intelligence from the local population depends in large part on the city's ethnic geography, and more specifically, that ethnically homogenous and segregated cities pose greater barriers to human intelligence operations than intermixed cities. Most basically, in ethnically homogenous and segregated cities, residents are less likely to provide the state's forces with targeting intelligence about members of their community. As Paul Staniland explains, some urban areas are marked by robust and resilient ethnic and religious networks and tight-knit communities.[28] In fact, not only does intra-ethnic policing discourage cooperation with the government in such urban communities, but the local population also often supports the insurgents. US forces in Baghdad, for instance, reported that 'reliable human intelligence from inside of Sadr City was nearly impossible to obtain' until mid-May of 2008, when the reality of the Sadrist Jaish al-Mahdi's (JAM) defeat became clear to the residents of this predominantly Shia district of the city.[29] Furthermore, in segregated cities, supporters of the state may simply not have any actionable intelligence to share about hostile communities or insurgent forces, even if they wanted to.

Ethnically intermixed cities, on the other hand, promote interethnic communications and cooperation, and can facilitate the emergence of multiple collective and individual identifications beyond ethnicity.[30] More of the city's residents are therefore likely to remain neutral, or even be willing to offer information and cooperation to state forces. Moreover, in intermixed cities (unlike in segregated cities), people from different ethnic groups live near or work with one another, meaning that individuals who support the state are more likely to actually have relevant and timely information about insurgent forces that can be useful for the counterinsurgency efforts.

The lack of adequate intelligence can undercut the combat skills of state forces in ethnically homogenous or segregated cities in several ways. First, poor intelligence about the enemy makes it harder to conduct patrols, execute searches, and protect civilians during riots or insurgent attacks. Second, given that GPS-enabled communications are degraded in urban environments, failing to obtain accurate and actionable intelligence from the local population can seriously undermine effective communications and coordination across and within units. Finally, the demand for skilled small unit leadership is also more pressing. Lack of intelligence may also reduce soldiers' will to fight. Without solid information to help differentiate between civilians and combatants, the psychological toll of operating amongst a non-cooperative and often hostile local population can hurt morale and breed discipline

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[28]Staniland, 'Cities on Fire'.
[29]David E. Johnson, M. Wade Market, and Brian Shannon, *The 2008 Battle of Sadr City: Reimagining Urban Combat* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2013), 12.
[30]James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, 'Explaining Interethnic Cooperation', *American Political Science Review* 90 4 (1996), 715–735.

problems as soldiers grow frustrated with the rules of engagement. It is also far more difficult to take initiative and seek out engagements with the enemy if one does not know who or where the enemy is.

This is not to say that collecting information from the population in ethnically intermixed cities is an easy task. In order to maintain the goodwill of the population, the military must try to minimise civilian harm and collateral damage, which often requires stricter rules of engagement and skill in using nonlethal tactics and equipment. Nonetheless, looser ethnic group networks reduce the costs of collaboration with the state, allowing the counterinsurgents to identify and cultivate critical human intelligence sources, and in turn, be more effective in conducting urban operations. This discussion yields the following hypothesis:

H1: Poor or incomplete intelligence reduces the combat effectiveness of militaries operating in ethnically homogenous or segregated cities.

Public opinion

It is widely acknowledged that, especially in democracies, public opinion influences foreign policy in general, and the use of force in particular.[31] While all regimes have audiences whose support they must maintain, the opinions of the general public tend to be more important in democracies than non-democracies.[32] If the public views a particular policy or military action negatively – whether as a result of mounting military casualties, harm to civilians, or poor chances of success – democratically elected leaders may be pressured to change course; to limit the resources or the time they're willing to devote to allow for said policy to succeed. In contrast, leaders in non-democracies, such as Saudi-Arabia in their campaign in Yemen, are not dependent on widespread public support for their policy. Additionally, state control over the media and limitations on the free flow of information in non-democracies mean that if negative public opinion does exist, combat troops are less likely to be aware of it and thus, affected by it, than in democracies.

In counterinsurgency operations, in particular, support from the local population is also critical; it improves the state's ability to gather intelligence, increases the safety of troops in friendly areas, and reduces the number of

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[31]Matthew Baum and Philip B.K. Potter, 'The relationship between mass media, public opinion, and foreign policy: toward a theoretical synthesis', *Annual Review of Political Science* 11 (2008), 39–65; James Igoe Walsh, 'Precision Weapons, Civilian Casualties, and Support for the Use of Force', *Political Psychology* 36/5 (2015), 507–23; and Dominic Johnson and Dominic Tierney, *Failing to Win: Perceptions of Victory and Defeat in International Politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press 2006).

[32]See for example: Benjamin Goldsmith, et al. 'Political Competition and the Initiation of International Conflict: A New Perspective on the Institutional Foundations of Democratic Peace', *World Politics* 69/3 (2017), 293–531.

potential recruits or passive supporters for the enemy side.[33] Finally, international public opinion can be important as well, for instance, if the state in question is concerned about its international reputation, or dependent on international aid or support from key allies.

'Reducing the risk of adverse world or domestic opinion', according to the US Marine Corps manual on Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain (MOUT) is one of the key reasons that restrictions on the attacking force have been imposed in most urban battles since 1967.[34] Indeed, abiding by strict rules of engagement designed to limit civilian casualties and collateral damage is essential because civilian casualties reduce local support for state forces.[35] Doing so, however, can diminish soldiers' skill since it requires extensive training in tactics and equipment different from what would be used on an open battlefield or in rural settings. Furthermore, use of small unit policing tactics is necessary for urban combat, and the greater scrutiny that comes with the urban environment, puts a greater premium on highly qualified leaders at lower ranks.

At the same time, restrictive rules of engagement and high levels of media scrutiny can also directly influence soldiers' will. Soldiers are less likely to take initiative in combat in an environment where mistakes can lead to civilian deaths or injuries being caught on camera.

Morale suffers if public opinion back home turns against the conflict and potentially against the soldiers fighting it. Finally, hostility from the local population can make soldiers resent the difficulties they endure in following the rules of engagement, which can cause lapses in discipline.

Maintaining positive public opinion in urban military operations is an uphill battle. Ethnically heterogeneous cities, however, present additional and more specific problems. Small unit commanders are responsible for managing the media situation in their area of operations.[36] Yet, the more diverse the population the more local knowledge these commanders must have in order to effectively tailor messages that will resonate with the different subpopulations, thus increasing the already high demands on small unit leaders. Relatedly, messaging for one group may not play well with other groups, both in the area of operations and on the home front. Operating in a media-dense environment with multiple audiences requires an additional set of skills for leaders and soldiers. Meanwhile, failure to engage the media allows the insurgents to dominate the narrative. If the state's military looks weak and ineffective, it is likely to lose the support of both

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[33]David Betz, 'Communication Breakdown: Strategic Communications and Defeat in Afghanistan', *Orbis* 55/4 (2011), 614.

[34]US Marine Corps, *Military Operations on Urbanized Terrain* (Washington D.C.: Department of the Navy 1998), 1–18.

[35]G.R. Dimitriu, 'Winning the Story War: Strategic Communication and the Conflict in Afghanistan', *Public Relations Review* 38 (2012), 196.

[36]Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Urban Operations*, I-7.

the home front and the local population.[37] This, in turn, can lead to lapses in discipline, hurt morale, and stymie initiative. With that, our second hypothesis is:

H2: Negative public opinion is more likely to reduce combat effectiveness in ethnically heterogeneous cities.

It is worth noting that while we focus on how the city's ethnic geography influences combat effectiveness, it is possible the ethnic identity of the state's armed forces (or that of state-sponsored militias) also affects the conduct and effectiveness of urban operations. As some scholars have suggested, civilians are more likely to share information about 'the identities or activities of armed groups during wartime', with co-ethnics rather than across ethnic boundaries.[38] Yet, research also shows that a range of other factors, including the distribution of combatant control over the territory in question, exposure to violence, and the provision of economic aid or monetary incentives can motivate individuals to provide information and support to the counterinsurgents.[39] Overall, it remains unclear whether the coethnics' 'informational advantages' necessarily make them more effective than non-coethnic forces. In the case studies presented below, the armed forces of the state can be considered ethnically distinct from the populations in the urban area of operations, allowing us to control for the influence coethnicity may have had on the outcome of interest.[40] We therefore leave the consideration of this factor to future studies.

The troubles in northern ireland (1969-1975)

Background

Rural insurgency, terrorism, and urban insurgency have all played a role in Northern Ireland's conflict. We focus on the urban elements of the Troubles, in particular on military operations in Belfast from 1969 when the British Army

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[37]Raphael S. Cohen, 'Just How Important Are "Hearts and Minds" Anyway? Counterinsurgency Goes to the Polls', *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 37/4 (2014), 610.

[38]Jason Lyall, Yuki Shiraito, and Kosuke Imai, 'Coethnic Bias and Wartime Informing', *Journal of Politics* 77/3 (2015), 834; Jason Lyall, 'Are Coethnics More Effective Counterinsurgents? Evidence from the Second Chechen War', *American Political Science Review* 104/1 (2010), 1–20.

[39]Kalyvas, *Logic of Violence in Civil War*, 175–176; Luke N. Condra and Jacob N. Shapiro, 'Who Takes the Blame? The Strategic Effects of Collateral Damage', *American Journal of Political Science* 56/1 (2012), 1167–187; and Eli Berman, Jacob N. Shapiro, and Joseph Felter, 'Can Hearts and Minds Be Bought?' *Journal of Political Economic* 119/4(2011), 766–819.

[40]There was some shared ethnic background between the 'Scottish' units of the British Army and the Protestants in Northern Ireland, but these units were not actually made up of entirely Scottish soldiers. Andrew Sanders and Ian Wood, *Times of Troubles: Britain's War in Northern Ireland* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 2012), 9.

took over major security operations to 1975 when the professionalisation of Northern Irish police forces led to the drawdown of the British Army.[41]

The post-war era saw improved economic conditions in Northern Ireland for both Catholics and Protestants, while educational reforms led to improvements in the Catholics' level of education and higher degree attainment.[42] However, significant discrimination against Catholics persisted in employment and housing, and they still faced perpetual minority status in the political system of the day. By the end of the 1960s, the possibility of progress combined with a stagnant political reality to produce a series of non-violent street protests, and the predominantly Catholic Northern Irish Civil Rights movement was born.

In the summer of 1969, Protestants organised their annual Apprentice Day Parade in Londonderry to celebrate the successful defence of the city against the Catholic King James II in 1689.[43] The march was to proceed around the city and then through the Catholic Bogside neighbourhood. Frustrated by the government's refusal to allow Catholic civil rights marches, the Bogsiders barricaded their neighbourhood.[44] During 3 days of clashes, with Bogsiders throwing stones and petrol bombs and the police (Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and B-Specials) responding with batons and teargas, rioting spread to Belfast.[45] The Northern Irish Government (Stormont) then decided to deploy the British Army to Londonderry on August 14 and to Belfast on August 15. This marked the beginning of The Troubles, with the British Army assuming responsibility for security in Northern Ireland.[46]

In 1969, Belfast was the largest city in Northern Ireland with a population of about 415,000.[47] According to 1961 and 1971 census data, Catholics made up about 36% of the population of Northern Ireland, and approximately 28% of Belfast.[48] Historically, much of the city was segregated, though there were also a number of mixed neighbourhoods and areas where segregated neighbourhoods met, known as interfaces. The violent riots of 1969 resulted in large-scale displacement and entrenchment of that segregation, as Catholics moved closer to other Catholics and Protestants to Protestants, hoping for safety in numbers.[49] By 1971, the city was almost entirely segregated by

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[41]Peter R. Neumann, 'The Myth of Ulsterization in British Security Policy in Northern Ireland', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 26/5 (2003), 365–377.

[42]John Darby, 'The Historical Background', in John Darby (ed.), *Northern Ireland: The Background to the Conflict* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press 1983), 24.

[43]Desmond Hamill, *Pig in the Middle: The Army in Northern Ireland 1969–1984*, (London: Methuen London Ltd 1985), 1.

[44]Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 2.

[45]Ibid, 6.

[46]Ibid, 15.

[47]World Population Review, http://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/belfast-population/accessed on 15 August 2017.

[48]Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) website http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/ni/popul.htm, accessed 15 August 2017; Paul Doherty and Michael A. Poole, 'Ethnic Residential Segregation in Belfast, Northern Ireland, 1971–1991,' *Geographical Review* 87, no. 4 (1997): 522, 525.

[49]Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 24.

neighbourhood. While violence occurred throughout the region, the majority of IRA attacks on the Army occurred in cities – Belfast and Londonderry.[50]

Considering that our theory claims that ethnically segregated cities present a greater challenge for intelligence operations than intermixed cities, which in turn affects combat effectiveness, we would ideally have liked to compare British operations in an ethnically intermixed urban setting with British operations in an ethnically segregated urban environment. Yet, the speed at which the population movements occurred makes such a comparison impossible. Collecting intelligence during periods of mass displacement is notoriously hard, and when it is acquired it expires quickly. As a result, we treat Belfast as a single case of an ethnically segregated urban geography.

As predicted by H1, Belfast's segregation made intelligence gathering difficult and reduced soldiers' combat skills. Additionally, public support from the multiple audiences the British military faced declined over time, which as proposed by H2, had a negative impact on combat effectiveness, and in particular, the military's will to fight. Notably, the British Army's policy of internment – arresting and incarcerating suspected terrorists without charge – had mixed effects on combat effectiveness. As discussed below, while intelligence did improve as a result of this policy, internment also turned public opinion against the British Army. Although better intelligence did enhance some aspects of combat effectiveness, negative public opinion harmed others, with the overall performance exhibiting a lower level of combat effectiveness at the operational and tactical levels than commonly thought.[51] In fact, we find that Northern Ireland illustrates the difficulty of urban military operations in ethnically segregated environments.

Intelligence

The first units that arrived in Belfast immediately struggled with a lack of intelligence. Quickly realising that their Combat Net Radios did not work in the urban environment, soldiers demonstrated initiative by developing a system of 'talk throughs', using off-the-shelf commercial systems such as Pye radios and 'pocket phones.'[52] Nonetheless, reflecting the limits of technology in cities, consistently functioning communication systems were a problem throughout the conflict.

In addition to failures in their communication technology, soldiers had limited information about the environment. According to Desmond Hammil, 'the army knew nothing of the rigid sectarian geography of the city with its

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[50]Edward Burke, *An Army of Tribes: British Army Cohesion, Deviancy and Murder in Northern Ireland* (Liverpool: Liverpool University 2018), 78.
[51]See, for example: Kocher, 'Human Ecology and Civil War'.
[52]Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland*, (London: Ministry of Defence 2006), 6.6.

myriad little side streets wandering haphazardly through sensitive Catholic and Protestant areas.'[53] The initial assumption was that the civil authorities – particularly the RUC – would provide the army with the necessary information. However, the RUC had very little current information about the Catholic population, having long been seen by Catholics as agents of Protestant oppression rather than civil servants. Ethnic identification reduced the intelligence-gathering capabilities of state police forces. Additionally, the aforementioned population movements meant that information regarding the sectarian geography became outdated quickly.[54]

The barricades erected in Catholic areas such as the Falls Road during the Autumn of 1969 prevented the army and the police from collecting intelligence and allowed the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) to organise and consolidate control over the Catholic community behind the barricades. The PIRA emerged to answer criticism that both the Official IRA and the army failed to protect the Catholic community from Protestant rioters. It acted as local 'law enforcement', providing protection but also enforcing loyalty to the community. The segregation of Catholics from Protestants and the lack of security presence ensured that denunciations and informing were dangerous activities. Numerous examples exist of suspected informants being 'disappeared' after show-trials.[55] Even after major raids on the Falls Road and the resumption of limited patrolling in July 1970, PIRA control made human intelligence collection difficult.

Patrolling allowed the army to collect some information itself, but also made it a target for the PIRA snipers who had better knowledge of the city's geography.[56] Methods for patrolling safely were another example of soldiers demonstrating initiative by changing tactics when faced with an intelligence deficit. Soldiers quickly shifted from the box formation patrols they had been trained to use to a system of parallel patrolling, where units proceed along parallel routes. When the PIRA adapted to this new system, soldiers moved to multiple patrolling, where several small units would proceed on separate, seemingly random routes, occasionally checking in with one another.[57] Such patrolling, when conducted often enough, allowed soldiers to become familiar with the city's geography as well as the local population and who among them was a potential informer.[58]

In August 1971, the army shifted towards a policy of internment. The first major operation entailed the arrest of 346 individuals, many of whom had been involved in the Official IRA in the 1940s and 1950s but had been inactive

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[53]Hammil, *Pig in the Middle*, 15.
[54]Sanders and Wood, *Times of Troubles*, 11.
[55]Ibid, 65.
[56]Ibid, 43.
[57]Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner*, 5.3.
[58]Burke, Army of Tribes, 193.

for decades.[59] Most of the active PIRA leadership had word of the arrests beforehand and fled south to the Republic of Ireland or went into hiding.[60]

While the initial arrests revealed just how poor British intelligence regarding the PIRA was, the new internment policy did yield an increase in information by overcoming the barrier of intra-ethnic policing inherent in segregated ethnic geographies. According to the army, the ability to arrest and hold individuals for even a few hours for 'screening' gave people the opportunity to pass information to the army in private, allowing them to avoid the PIRA's in-group policing.[61] At the same time, internment allowed the army to make use of their 'deep interrogation' techniques.[62] Internment proved disruptive enough to PIRA planning and activities that the army was able to conduct regular patrolling afterwards, with the intelligence benefits that continued presence in the community brought.[63] It did not, however, provide enough intelligence to prevent PIRA attacks on the city. Between March and August 1972, following the introduction of internment, 600 bombs were detonated in Northern Ireland.[64]

The lack of intelligence influenced combat effectiveness in several ways. Soldiers were not initially trained in intelligence gathering, the assumption being that the domestic security role would be supported by information from the civil authorities. This skill improved over time,[65] as resident battalions became more familiar with the area and with the development of Northern Ireland Training and Advisory Teams (NITAT), which trained units specifically to operate in Belfast.[66]

To some extent, lack of intelligence inspired initiative from the soldiers, as they overcame the limitations of their initial technology and training. However, poor intelligence also had a negative impact on soldiers' will. The lack of clarity regarding the enemy and even the mission harmed morale.[67] Problems with intelligence also influenced discipline, making soldiers less willing to abide by the strict rules of engagement.[68] In July 1970, during the first major army action on the Falls Road since the

[59]Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 60.
[60]Robert J. Savage, *The BBC's 'Irish Troubles': Television, Conflict and Northern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press 2015), 81.
[61]Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner*, 2.7.
[62]The European Court of Human Rights declared these techniques to constitute 'inhumane and degrading treatment'. *Case of Ireland v. United Kingdom*, application no. 5310/71, judgement issued on 20 March 2018.
[63]John Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency: From Palestine to Northern Ireland* (New York: Palgrave 2002), 163.
[64]Edward Burke, 'Counter-Insurgency against "Kith and Kin"? The British Army in Northern Ireland, 1970–76', The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History 43/4 (2015), 662.
[65]Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner*, 5.1; and Burke, *Army of Tribes*, 193.
[66]Ibid, 7.8; Sanders and Wood, *Times of Troubles*, 69.
[67]Burke, *Army of Tribes*, 193; Bart Schuurman, 'Defeated by Popular Demand: Public Support and Counterterrorism in Three Western Democracies, 1963–1998', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism* 36/2 (2013), 156.
[68]Burke, *Army of Tribes*, 68.

erection of the barricades, frustrated units wreaked destruction in many of the homes they searched as they failed to find as many weapons or terrorists as they had expected to find.[69] However, improved intelligence did not lead to better discipline so much as more targeted misbehaviour. For example, Andrew Sanders and Ian Wood quote a former soldier saying 'day to day, on the ground, we had the local IRA Active Service Units terrorised. We knew who they were and threatened to shoot them on sight. One patrol killed an IRA man's dog and shoved its back legs through his letterbox with a note in its mouth threatening him that he would be next.'[70] Edward Burke argues that officers, especially junior officers, played an important role in this context, setting the tone for their soldiers and helping to explain why some units violated the rules of engagement more often than others.[71] Indiscipline among soldiers in Northern Ireland is strongly denied by the army. But the £466,469 paid in settlements by the Ministry of Defence to civilian victims of army violence and abuse during this period suggest otherwise.[72]

Belfast's ethnic segregation made intelligence gathering difficult for state forces as it allowed for in-group policing. Though there was some improvement in patrolling technique over time, most of the strides the British made in intelligence came from the political decision to institute internment. This provided additional information about the Catholic community, though because it was not often applied to Protestants, intelligence regarding that community remained low. The lack of intelligence reduced British skill and will, though soldiers did demonstrate initiative in patrolling tactics.

Public opinion

Belfast's ethnic geography meant that the British Army faced three distinct audiences that had largely incompatible expectations and demands: The Catholic and Protestant communities who were in conflict with one another and with the British state, as well as the British home front. The first British soldiers deployed to Belfast realised this quickly, and expressed frustration at the feeling of being 'pig in the middle.'[73] Army leadership saw the conflict primarily as a battle for public opinion: ''As far as we are concerned, northern Ireland is basically a propaganda battle, not a military battle'.'[74] The urban

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[69]Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 38; Rod Thornton, 'Getting it Wrong: the Crucial Mistakes Made in the Early Stages of the British Army's Deployment to Northern Ireland (August 1969 to March 1972)', Journal of Strategic Studies 30/1 (2007), 88.

[70]Sanders and Wood, *Times of Trouble*, 68.

[71]Burke, *Army of Tribes*, 12.

[72]Huw Bennet, ''Smoke Without Fire'? Allegations against the British Army in Northern Ireland, 1972–5', *Twentieth Century British History* 24/2 (2013), 294; and Burke, *Army of Tribes*, 75, 110.

[73]Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 21; and Burke, *Army of Tribes*, 193.

setting meant that all British actions were highly visible, both to the media and to the local communities.[75] British attempts to appease all three audiences led to restrictions on rules of engagement, changes in standard counterinsurgency tactics, and limitations on intelligence gathering strategies. These restrictions initially reduced soldiers' skills, while negative public opinion on all fronts reduced will.

When the army first deployed in Belfast, they had support from all three audiences. The BBC broadcast footage of the first soldiers arriving in the Falls Road area being given tea and sandwiches by the local Catholics whose homes they were protecting.[76] Over the course of the next 18 months, however, opinion among all three groups turned negative.

Protestant opinion changed most quickly, particularly after the release of the Hunt Report which called for disbanding the 'B-Specials', a police unit with a reputation of both Protestant sectarianism and brutality towards the Catholic community.[77] Protestants viewed the end of the B-Specials, and the increasing army presence that replaced them, as a failure of the British government to uphold Protestant culture and safety. Protestant areas of the city erupted into riots after the report was released, and one member of the RUC was shot by the Ulster Volunteer Forces (UVF), a Protestant militia. The Army also killed two Protestant rioters.[78] By the time the army drawdown began in 1975 following Ulsterisation, Protestant communities had begun operating their own no-go areas, and Protestant paramilitary organisations were active. Their primary targets were Catholics, but the army was also in the crosshairs.[79]

Relations between the army and the Catholic community also deteriorated quickly, as the army struggled to contain Protestant rioters and several streets of Catholic homes were burned to the ground. Even prior to the emergence of PIRA, the Falls Road Committee erected barricades and took responsibility for the safety of the neighbourhood, arguing that the Army was proving itself incapable of protecting them.[80] All goodwill was lost after the July 1970 house searches and accompanying curfew on the Falls Road.[81] It is worth emphasising that while internment and house searches may have increased the intelligence available to the army, public opinion plummeted and these policies resulted in the total rejection of the army by the Catholic community

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[74]Paul Dixon, ''Hearts and Minds': British Counterinsurgency Strategy in Northern Ireland', in Paul Dixon (ed.), *The British Approach to Counterinsurgency: From Malaya and Northern Ireland to Iraq and Afghanistan* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2012), 283.

[75]Burke, *Army of Tribes*, 64.

[76]Savage, *The BBC's 'Irish Troubles'*, 52.

[77]Gareth Mulvenna, *Tartan Gangs and Paramilitaries: The Loyalist Backlash* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press 2016), 56.

[78]Ibid, 57.

[79]Ibid, 92.

[80]Hamill, *Pig in the Middle*, 21.

[81]Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner*, 2.5.

and continuous reports of abuse.[82] Polling conducted in 1974 found that 95% of Catholics opposed internment.[83]

Concern over public opinion at home and efforts at winning hearts and minds in Belfast influenced soldiers' skills. Some units arrived in Belfast having spent the last months training to defend continental Europe from a Soviet invasion. Needless to say, the mechanised tactics they had learned did them little good in Belfast's dense urban counterinsurgency environment.[84] Other units had absorbed the lessons of the recent colonial insurgencies the British Army had fought in Aden, Kenya, and Malaya, but were disallowed from applying those lessons in Belfast.[85] Northern Ireland's union status combined with the 'whiteness' of its inhabitants to limit the tactics available to the army. Yet, even when accepting restrictive rules of engagement (which became less restrictive over time), the army still drew on its colonial training, sometimes to comical ends. At one point a unit attempting to control a riot unfurled a banner ordering the crowd to disperse: the message was written in Arabic.[86] By 1971/72, training had improved immensely, with a specific training programme implemented for every unit before it deployed, teaching them about the rules of engagement and the particulars of combat in Belfast.[87]

Ultimately, the Catholic and Protestant communities' demands were so diametrically opposed that it was impossible to please both. The Protestants saw the army as being too accommodating towards the Catholics, while Catholics pointed to house searches, arrests, and shootings as evidence of army brutality against their community. Restrictive rules of engagement designed to win over the Catholic community angered the Protestants but did not do enough to pacify the Catholics. Soldiers were frustrated, especially as they began to suffer injuries and deaths themselves.[88]

As local public opinion soured on the British Army, local attitudes towards paramilitary groups became more positive over this period. In 1968, 51% of Protestants and only 13% of Catholics stated it was right for members of their group to take up arms. By 1973 16% of Protestants and 25% of Catholics agreed with the statement 'Violence is a legitimate way to achieve one's goals'. The broad language of the second question may explain why Protestant support drops between 1968 and 1973 but makes the 25% Catholic approval of the use of violence that much more meaningful. Interestingly, by 1978 public attitudes towards paramilitary groups shows a large minority viewed them favourably: 46% of Catholics viewed the IRA positively, while 25% of Catholics viewed even Protestant paramilitary

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[82]Bennet, 'Smoke Without Fire', 285.
[83]Schuurman, 'Defeated by Popular Demand', 157.
[84]Sanders and Wood, *Times of Troubles*, 35.
[85]Newsinger, *British Counterinsurgency*, 164.
[86]Ministry of Defence, *Operation Banner*, 5.14.
[87]Ibid, 7.8.
[88]Sanders and Wood, *Times of Troubles*, 36; and Burke, 'Counter-Insurgency against Kith and Kin,' 660.

actions as justified. Forty-four per cent of Protestants saw their own para-military actions as justified, and a surprising 35% saw the IRA as patriots and idealists.[89] While the IRA did not enjoy majority support, this polling data demonstrate that the British were losing the battle for public opinion across the city.

British home-front opinion was more closely tied to army casualties than to the treatment of the warring communities. Polling data from the period suggest that the British public initially supported the action in Northern Ireland.[90] But by September 1971 opinion polling by the *Daily Mail* showed that 59% now favoured immediate withdrawal.[91] Polling in 1972 found similar numbers.[92] As public support for the mission in Northern Ireland declined, soldiers found themselves facing worry and criticism from parents and wives.[93] Paul Dixon argues that there was no morale crisis at the time, but recruitment of new soldiers dropped precipitously, and those who were deployed to Northern Ireland had 'anxiety over attitude of wives and families.'[94] A campaign of families demanding the end of the deployment put pressure on the government and the army.[95]

Facing criticism from all sides, and operating in a situation of great danger, soldiers were frustrated and sometimes violated the rules of engagement, demonstrating low levels of discipline.[96] Soldiers were not to fire their weapons unless fired upon, or unless the individual was clearly holding a weapon and had been warned. Though very few soldiers were ever prosecuted or punished for violating these rules, numerous incidents suggest that violations occurred.[97] And while the army argued that the PIRA, and later Protestant paramilitaries, fabricated the accusations, sheer numbers as well as more recent investigations suggest that at least some of the charges were well founded. For example, on what came to be known as Bloody Sunday, the army killed 28 unarmed civilians in Londonderry in violation of their rules of engagement.[98]

Soldiers were also unlikely to demonstrate initiative under these circumstances. Although some innovation occurred in tactics, such as patrolling methods, we found no evidence of soldiers serving in Northern Ireland during this time seeking out engagement with the enemy or volunteering for

[89]Bernadette Hayes and Ian McAllister, 'Sowing Dragon's Teeth: Public Support for Political Violence and Paramilitarism in Northern Ireland', *Political Studies* 49 (2001), 913.
[90]Dixon, 'Britain's 'Vietnam Syndrome'', 112.
[91]Ibid, 109.
[92]Savage, *The BBC's 'Irish Troubles'*, 117.
[93]Dixon, 'Britain's 'Vietnam Syndrome'', 112.
[94]General Ford, as quoted in Dixon, 'Britain's 'Vietnam Syndrome'', 112.
[95]see note 93 above.
[96]Burke, Army of Tribes, 68.
[97]Bennet, ''Smoke Without Fire'', 303; and Burke, Army of Tribes, 75.
[98]Lord Saville of Newdigate, William Hoyt, and John Toohey, *Principal Conclusions and Overall Assessments of the Bloody Sunday Inquiry* (Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed on 15 June 2010).

difficult assignments. In part, this was a function of the lack of intelligence, but it was also a result of the pressure on soldiers not to be caught on camera doing anything untoward. The press was ubiquitous, often arriving at the same time as soldiers.[99] Though the BBC was sensitive to charges of being anti-military or too sympathetic to the PIRA, Irish reporters were not.[100] Concerns about press coverage shaped soldiers' behaviour, making them less likely to seek engagement with the enemy.

In sum, public opinion, and the complicated nature of the publics the army was trying to influence, reduced British combat effectiveness in Belfast. Limitations on the use of force, necessary for keeping Catholics and the British at ease, upset the Protestants and reduced soldiers' skill. Frustration regarding poor public opinion negatively impacted discipline. And while declining support at home did not severely impact morale, it nonetheless burdened the soldiers as they carried out their mission. As British skill increased to handle restrictive rules of engagement, the sense of being hated by all the parties in Belfast proved frustrating and will decreased.

First palestinian intifada (1987–1993)

Background

The Intifada that began on 8 December 1987 was a popular uprising in pursuit of Palestinian self-determination and the end of Israeli military occupation. Initially spontaneous, it soon came under the auspices of the United National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU), which promulgated the proliferation of 'people's committees' responsible for organising protests and mass demonstrations, and for coordinating commercial shutdowns, boycotts of Israeli goods, and labour strikes across the Palestinian territories.[101] During the first 2 years, these activities were accompanied by low-intensity violence such as the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails, and burning tires during demonstrations, while use of firearms was scarce.[102] Between June 1990 and June 1992, however, the Intifada transformed from a popular struggle to a militant confrontation waged by radical youths operating independently from the local and central authorities and terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians orchestrated by Hamas and Islamic Jihad.[103] By September 1993, when the signing of the Declaration of

[99]Sanders and Wood, *Times of Trouble*, 52.
[100]Savage, *The BBC's Irish Troubles*, 88.
[101]Kristen J Urban, 'Blueprint for a democratic Palestinian state: UNLU communiques and the codification of political values for the first two years of the Intifada', *Arab Studies Quarterly* 16 (1994), 67.
[102]Joel Brinkley, 'Israelis See Failure to Halt Uprising as It Nears 3d Year,' *New York Times*, 5 December 1989; Efraim Inbar, 'Israel's Small War: The Military Response to the Intifada', *Armed Forces and Society* 18/1 (1991), 30.

Principles launched the political negotiations process, 1162 Palestinians and 160 Israelis had been killed.[104]

The Palestinian territories have a relatively ethnically homogenous Arab population. The majority is Sunni Muslim and there is a small Christian minority. During the Intifada, IDF clashes with the Palestinians occurred largely in or around urban areas. As Richard Creed observes, 'the Gaza Strip is one large urban area, while the refugee camps in the West Bank are essentially suburbs of towns like Ramallah and Jericho.'[105] These urban areas, especially the Gaza Strip, are extremely densely populated, and Israeli restrictions on Palestinian construction coupled with the rapid expansion of Jewish settlements only further exacerbated the already severe crowding and shortage of adequate housing.[106]

Fighting a protracted conflict in an ethnically homogenous urban environment created both operational and tactical challenges for the IDF. Social pressure, in-group policing, intimidation and intra-ethnic violence deterred Palestinians from providing information to the IDF, and as predicted by our theory, intelligence gaps degraded soldiers' combat skills. While IDF commanders worried about negative domestic and international public opinion affecting morale, this potential effect was more a function of the media-saturated urban environment than of Palestinian urban ethnic geography. Overall, public opinion had less of a direct impact on combat effectiveness than intelligence.

Intelligence

On the eve of the Intifada, no specific organisation within the Israeli intelligence community was directly responsible for assessing developments in the Palestinian territories.[107] The General Security Service (GSS) focused on intelligence for counterterrorism and paid less attention to Palestinian national aspirations. Military intelligence was not active in that arena either. The Civil Administration, which oversaw the majority of service provisions to the

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[103]See Aryeh Shalev, *The Intifada: Causes and Effects* (Jerusalem: Jaffee Center for Strategic Studies 1991); Edgar O'Ballance, *The Palestinian Intifada* (London: Macmillan Press 1998); Mary Elizabeth King, *A Quiet Revolution: The First Palestinian Intifada and Non-Violent Resistance* (New York, NY: Nation Books 2007); and Hemda Ben-Yehuda and Shmuel Sandler, *Arab-Israeli Conflict Transformed* (Albany: SUNY Press 2002).

[104]Priscilla Roberts, (ed.), *Arab-Israeli Conflict: The Essential Reference Guide* (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO 2014), 282.

[105]Richard D. Creed Jr., *Eighteen Years in Lebanon and Two Intifadas: The Israeli Defense Forces and the U.S. Army Operational Environment*. (Fort Leavenworth, KS: USA Command and General Staff College 2002), 31.

[106]Government of Israel. Central Bureau of Statistics, *Statistical Abstract of Israel* 1987 (Jerusalem: Central Bureau of Statistics 1987), 714; and Meron Benvenisti and Shlomo Khayat, *The West Bank and Gaza Atlas* (Jerusalem: The Jerusalem Post Press 1987).

[107]Ephraim Kahana, 'Analyzing Israel's Intelligence Failures', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 18/2 (2005), 262–279.

Palestinian population, employed and maintained ties with Palestinian police, judges, lawyers, tax collectors, utility workers, and other service providers, some of whom shared security information with their Israeli overseers.[108] But it was not an intelligence agency, and it did not engage in threat assessment.-[109] Thus, and despite a noticeable increase in violence throughout 1987, the Intifada caught the Israeli government and military completely by surprise.[110]

Failures in initial intelligence were made worse by the collapse of Israel's network of Palestinian collaborators. Since 1967, Israel has recruited tens of thousands of Palestinians who provided the GSS information from within different public institutions, organisations, and detention facilities as well as some who helped the Israeli forces eliminate wanted individuals. Whereas previously collaborators were largely tolerated by the community, once the Intifada began, they were deemed a 'destructive cancer expanding the internal rot, which could corrupt, split, and weaken the entire society.'[111]

The UNLU ordered all Palestinian Civil Administration employees to resign, and those who refused were ostracised and threatened. The names of merchants who violated strikes were also made public, 'so that their punishment will be carried out terminally and in a revolutionary manner.'[112] Palestinian policemen resigned en masse, some citing a sense of 'national duty'; but those who remained on Israel's payroll came under immense pressure, were threatened and some were killed. Concurrently, the local popular committees organised opportunities for public 'repentance' in mosques, churches, and town squares, and under significant social pressure (and in fear of reprisals), hundreds of collaborators recanted. Others were surely deterred from filling their place.[113]

Failures in initial intelligence undermined IDF soldiers' combat skills in a number of ways. In terms of tactics, neither the regular units nor the reserve units received any policing or riot-control training before being deployed to the territories. There were also severe shortages in riot-control equipment such as gas canisters and rubber bullets, which proved useless beyond a range of 15 metres.[114] The lack of a clear command and control structure to direct intelligence collection and sharing also precluded effective coordination between military intelligence, the GSS, and the units deployed on the

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[108]Menahem Hofnung, 'The Price of Information: Absorption and Rehabilitation of Collaborators in Israeli Cities', *Law and Government* (Mishpat U'Mimshal) 18 (2017),55–97 (in Hebrew).

[109]Eyal Pascovich, 'Intelligence Assessment Regarding Social Developments: The Israeli Experience', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 26/1 (2013), 95.

[110]Shalev, *The Intifada*, 37.

[111]*Monday Report*, 8 May 1989, cited in B'Tselem, 'Collaborators in the Occupied Territories: Human Rights Abuses and Violations', January 1994, http://www.btselem.org/publications/summaries/199401_collaboration_suspects.

[112]Circular no. 4 of the Fatah, 21 January 1988, cited in B'Tselem, 'Collaborators'.

[113]Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Non-Violence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press 2011), 119.

[114]Inbar, 'Israel's Small War', 32.

ground. Furthermore, as failures in initial intelligence fed into misperceptions about the full scope and severity of the uprising, the Ministry of Defense and the IDF failed to prioritise leadership development for counterinsurgency duties. Especially during the early years of the Intifada, unit commanders 'were not always the most talented of the available junior and middle-rank officers.'[115]

To some extent, Israel was able to capitalise on its technological superiority; using sophisticated optical equipment to identify and photograph violent protestors from great distances.[116] But GSS collaborators and informants were the main source of information about the identity, location, and activities of Palestinian militants. The loss of this human intelligence network significantly undermined Israel's overall intelligence capabilities and consequentially, IDF's combat skills. The Intifada's leadership was highly decentralised, and without information from collaborators, the IDF could not anticipate when and where confrontations might unfold and was therefore unable to contain the uprising. In turn, IDF began buttressing its military presence, increasing from approximately 1,000 to between 10,000 and 12,000 troops. This allowed for a more widespread deployment, and large-scale patrols in densely populated urban areas became commonplace. At the same time, a growing presence of ill-prepared and ill-equipped troops, led to an increase in Palestinian casualties, which only fuelled the uprising's momentum.

By March 1988, unable to end the Intifada by force and starved for information, the Israelis shifted to a strategy of attrition based on collective punishment measures designed in large part to 'deter the local populations from providing logistical, intelligence, and any other form of assistance' to the militants.[117] As IDF Chief of Staff Dan Shomron stated, 'they will not go to work, they will not earn a living, and they will not receive travel permits and business licenses until they realize that peace is as vital for them as it is for us'.[118] Of course, without Palestinians applying for Israeli permits, the GSS had fewer opportunities to recruit collaborators.

At the same time, concerned that the growing number of casualties and increasing economic hardships would drain the popular resistance campaign, UNLU also intensified its pressure on the Palestinian population. In particular, they targeted those still working in Israel or for the Civil Administration, and most of all, known or suspected collaborators and informants. Underground paramilitary groups, or 'strike forces', increasingly took charge of policing the

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[115]Stuart A. Cohen, 'How Did the Intifada Affect the IDF?' *Conflict Quarterly* (Summer 1994), 9.
[116]Ibid, 41.
[117]Sergio Catignani, 'Israeli Counterinsurgency: The Never-ending "Whack-a-Mole"', in Paul B. Rich and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counter-insurgency* (London: Routledge 2012), 267.
[118]Interview with Chief of Staff Dan Shomron, *Yediot Ahronot*, 15 January 1988.

Palestinian local communities, especially in the refugee camps which were at the forefront of the uprising. Under the banner of Palestinian self-sufficiency, the strike forces pursued an aggressive and often violent enforcement strategy meant to eradicate all forms of Palestinian cooperation and especially collaboration with Israel.[119] As the uprising progressed, however, more and more people were denounced and killed because of personal vendettas, intra and inter-organisational conflicts, or for being involved in criminal or illicit activities. By 1990 more Palestinians were killed by other Palestinians on suspicion of collaboration than by Israel.[120]

Nonetheless, by the end of 1988, Israel was able to rebuild its human intelligence network by focusing almost exclusively on prisons. Tens of thousands of Palestinians were detained and imprisoned during the 6 years of the Intifada, and the Israeli security services recruited thousands of political activists, militants, and ordinary criminals using a range of methods – from offers of early release or monetary incentives to extortion, coercion, and torture.[121] In addition, the IDF and the Border Police created special undercover units adroit in blending with the local population. These units proved imperative for intelligence operations, and were also tasked with identifying, capturing or killing suspected terrorists.[122] Furthermore, the number of Border Police units more than doubled. Although they had the appropriate training and experience serving long-term periods in the Palestinian territories, Border Police units were often heavy-handed when dealing with Palestinian civilians, which raised questions about their ultimate effectiveness. These shortcomings were made worse by the fact that most IDF officers and NCOs did not speak Arabic and had little if any training in intercultural negotiation techniques, which aggravated tensions between the soldiers and the local Palestinian population.

Overall, the shift in Palestinians' attitudes towards collaborators highlights the well-established argument that conflict can reinforce ethno-political or ethnonational identity, making it more salient than other societal cleavages or group identifications. But in addition to the nationalist mobilisation during the Intifada, the ethnic homogeneity of the Palestinian areas facilitated the in-group policing with the goal of deterring collaboration with Israel. Failures in initial intelligence led to costly operational and tactical mistakes which only contributed to the spread and escalation of the Intifada. Meanwhile, the loss

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[119]Brynjar Lia, *A Police Force without a State: A History of the Palestinian Security Forces in the West Bank and Gaza* (Reading, UK: Garnet Publishing Ltd. 2006), 41–50.

[120]B'Tselem, 'Collaborators' 1.

[121]Hillel Cohen and Ron Dudai, 'Human Rights Dilemmas in Using Informers to Combat Terrorism: The Israeli-Palestinian Case', *Terrorism and Political Violence* 17/1–2 (2005), 229–243.

[122]Ido Rosenzweig, *Combatants Dressed as Civilians? The Case of the Israeli Mista'arvim under International Law* (Jerusalem: The Israel Democracy Institute 2014), 23–24; Ephraim Kahana, *Historical Dictionary of Israeli Intelligence* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2006), 185–186; and Ami Pedahzur, *The Israeli Secret Services and the Struggle Against Terrorism* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press 2009), 81.

of the collaborators network and subsequent challenges of collecting information from the local population in an ethnically homogenous urban environment caused further setbacks and created significant problems in terms of training, equipment, coordination, and leadership. Although the IDF gradually adapted to fighting this sort of conflict, the Intifada, to a great extent, exposed Israel 'in all its weakness'. And this, as the Israeli military journalists Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari observed, was 'perhaps the real import of the surprise.'[123]

Public opinion

Israel maintains a pragmatic approach towards Palestinian public opinion, and the IDF does not 'entertain the illusion that it could generate sympathy from the Arab occupied population.'[124]

As such, insofar as negative public opinion stands to influence combat effectiveness, such influence is not directly tied to Palestinian urban ethnic geography *per se*. Rather, it primarily stems from the fact that military operations in urban environments are generally more likely to be closely monitored by the media and subsequently, are more susceptible to public scrutiny.

The two main audiences with the potential to influence combat effectiveness during the Intifada were the Israeli home-front and international public opinion, especially in the United States.

On the international stage, the IDF had to deal with media coverage that was 'dominated by the Palestinian perspective.'[125] Although Israel has imposed restrictions on reporters in the Palestinian territories, footage of IDF violence against Palestinians was widely disseminated.[126] This sense of losing control over the information environment led the IDF to perceive the media as a 'catalyst of confrontation and increased violence.'[127]

In late December 1987, determined to restore order but also alert to international criticism over the high number of Palestinian civilian casualties, Minister of Defense Yitzhak Rabin issued a new 'iron fist' policy to pacify the territories.[128] More IDF troops, including reserve units, were deployed and confrontation tactics were adopted; soldiers equipped with riot batons were ordered to charge demonstrators and to use physical force to disperse protests. Still, the beatings policy backfired. As Rabin dryly remarked, beaten

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[123]Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Ya'ari, *The Palestinian Uprising: Israel's Third Front* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster 1989), 31.

[124]Efraim Inbar and Eitan Shamir, '"Mowing the Grass": Israel's Strategy for Protracted Intractable Conflict', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 37/1 (2014), 72.

[125]Michal Shavit, *Media Strategy and Military Operations in the 21st Century: Mediatizing the Israel Defense Forces* (New York, NY: Routledge 2016), 21.

[126]Thomas Rid and Marc Hecker, *War 2.0: Irregular Warfare in the Information Age* (Westport, CT: Praeger 2009), 104.

[127]Shavit, *Media Strategy and Military Operations in the 21st Century*, 21.

[128]Efraim Inbar, 'Yitzhak Rabin and Israel's National Security', *Journal of Strategic Studies* 20/2 (1997), 37.

Palestinians were even 'hotter news' than dead ones.[129] In the United States, public opinion polls revealed that the percentage of Americans who had a positive image of Israel declined to a 15-year low, while public support for the Palestinians increased.[130]

On the domestic front, the Intifada received a great deal of attention in the Israeli media and had a meaningful impact on Israeli public opinion. The flagship national Shamir-Arian survey reported that 59% of respondents thought that the national mood had become worse, and 55% said that the Intifada had changed their opinion regarding security and politics.[131] According to public opinion surveys conducted in 1988, 1991, and 1993, the overwhelming majority of Israelis felt that the Intifada could be put down or at least contained by military force.[132] At the same time, the majority of the public also expressed a growing concern that the Intifada was negatively affecting the IDF's fighting ethic.[133]

Confronted with negative media coverage in the foreign press and uncharacteristically critical domestic media, IDF unit commanders and even the top leadership became increasingly frustrated with criticisms of their operational decisions, especially with regard to the rules of engagement. Responding to criticism from right-wing politicians, who berated the IDF for failing to defeat the Palestinians by force, Chief of Staff Shomron warned: 'Anyone who wants to end the Intifada must remember that there are only three ways to achieve this: transfer, starvation, or physical elimination – that is, genocide.'[134]

Some military sources also warned that negative media coverage in the foreign press and overt domestic criticism of the IDF would weaken soldiers' will. The difficulty of conducting operations amidst a hostile population under the watchful eye of the press coupled with the lack of proper training and equipment for such missions and the fact that the rules of engagement were often not sufficiently clear or uniformly enforced caused lapses in discipline. By 1992, Israel's military courts had filed indictments against 241 IDF officers and soldiers, principally on charges of unlawful use of weapons, cruelty towards Palestinian civilians, and theft and destruction of Palestinian property. One hundred and ninety-four servicemen were eventually found guilty. Furthermore, 200 reservists were also jailed for refusing to serve in the Palestinian territories. Although conscientious-political refusal did not seriously undermine the military's ability to conduct operations effectively, the

[129]Yitzhak Rabin, 'Interview on the Israeli Television, 13 January 1988, transcript', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17 (Spring 1988), 151.

[130]Cited in Alvin Richman, 'American Attitude Toward Israeli-Palestinian Relations in the Wake of the Uprising,' *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 53/3(Autumn, 1989), 415–430.

[131]Arian and Shamir, *The Elections in Israel 1988* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press 1990), 3.

[132]Asher Arian, *Security Threatened: Surveying Israeli Opinion on Peace and War* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press 1995), 68.

[133]Asher Arian, Michael Shamir, and Raphael Ventura, 'Public Opinion and Political Change: Israel and the Intifada', *Comparative Politics* 24/3 (1992), 317–334, 319.

[134]'Army Doubtful of Military Solution', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 June 1989.

symbolic power of this movement was non-negligible. News coverage of these incidents was widespread, and many senior field officers fiercely resented both the discipline trials and what they saw as inappropriate political activism amongst the reservists, claiming they were undermining cohesion and hurting troop morale.[135]

Overall, negative international media coverage and heightened domestic public scrutiny had a notable effect on soldiers' morale, and to some extent, discipline. This effect, however, should be considered in context: Israeli (Jewish) public support of the IDF remained high, far surpassing any other political or public institution in the country. Ironically, the changes to the rules of engagement IDF implemented partly in response to the international outcry over mounting civilian casualties, such as the limitations on the use of firearms and the shift to police-style riot-control techniques, not only failed to turn international public opinion in Israel's favour but also had an adverse impact on soldiers' combat skills.

Conclusion

This article argues that a city's ethnic geography influences the combat effectiveness of democratic state militaries engaged in urban counterinsurgency operations through two main mechanisms: intelligence and public opinion. While the limited ability to gather intelligence from the local population is one key explanation for reduced combat effectiveness among militaries operating in ethnically homogenous or segregated cities, negative public opinion can help explain reduced combat effectiveness among militaries operating in ethnically heterogeneous cities.

An analysis of two influential cases of urban counterinsurgency operations confirms the plausibility of our theory about the relationship between urban ethnic geography and combat effectiveness. The Palestinian Intifada exemplifies combat operations in an ethnically homogenous urban environment. The evidence suggests that intelligence failures significantly undermined IDF performance. The military was ill-prepared for operations in densely populated urban areas; soldiers lacked the necessary training and equipment for dealing with demonstrations and riots, and highly skilled leadership was scarce. The sudden loss of Palestinian informants exacerbated these problems. The dearth of usable intelligence, coupled with the fact that the rules of engagement were not sufficiently clear or uniformly enforced, deterred soldiers from taking initiative in confrontations with Palestinian demonstrators and militants. Although IDF skill improved over time, the errors made at the onset of the Intifada contributed to its spread and escalation. IDF commanders were also frustrated by negative international public

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[135]Stuart Cohen, *Israel and its Army: From Cohesion to Confusion* (New York, NY: Routledge 2008), 144.

opinion and critical domestic voices. Political activism amongst reservists as well as highly publicised trials of IDF soldiers reflected problems with discipline and to some extent, low morale.

The Troubles illustrate the effects of a heterogeneous yet segregated urban environment. Belfast's ethnic geography allowed the PIRA to police the Catholic community and made intelligence difficult to acquire, thus reducing the British Army's effectiveness. While soldiers demonstrated initiative in overcoming some of the challenges posed by the urban terrain, the shortage of actionable intelligence fuelled frustrations and undermined discipline. Having three different publics closely following their progress also reduced British combat effectiveness. The army adopted strict rules of engagement in order to appeal to the Catholics and the British at home, but those restrictions angered Protestants, and also meant that soldiers often did not have the appropriate training when they arrived in Belfast. Over time, training improved, and the British Army became more adept in handling the restrictions of public opinion. At the same time, the British soldiers' feeling of being caught between two incompatible populations had a negative impact on discipline, and overall will decreased.

Although space considerations prevent us from exploring the relationship between urban ethnic geography and combat effectiveness in a third case study of an ethnically intermixed city, anecdotal evidence from US counterinsurgency in Baghdad provides some insights. Consider the experience of the Second Brigade Combat Team, First Armored Division, which deployed to the Karkh and Karada districts of Baghdad in 2003, covering an area of operations with a population between 700,000 and a million people, among them Sunnis, Shi'as, and the city's largest Christian population. Having learned the hard way that conventional ISR assets were 'simply ineffective' in an urban environment, US forces had to shift from reliance on imagery operations, electronic reconnaissance, and standard combat patrols to a human intelligence-centric system that utilised an extensive network of Iraqi informants.[136] This required units to fundamentally change their intelligence organisations, collection assets, and analysis processes, as well as to find and train additional personnel. An overhaul of such proportions, especially in the midst of a war, put a serious strain on leadership at all levels. But as the Brigade's 'understanding of the culture and nuances of local demographics' improved, it became better at cultivating informants from 'different ethnic, sectarian, political, tribal, and other groups' within its area of operations.[137] It therefore seems that ethnic diversity and intermixed

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[136]Ralph O. Baker, 'HUMINT-Centric Operations: Developing Intelligence in Urban Counterinsurgency Environment', *Military Review* (March–April, 2007), 13.
[137]Ibid., p.17.

populations were not a major obstacle to human intelligence operations in this context.

Baghdad's ethnic geography, however, did pose a challenge to information operations and efforts to shape local public opinion. Given the 'demographic diversity' of Second Brigade's area of operations, commanders soon learned that treating the Iraqis as 'a single homogenous population that would be receptive to centrally developed, all-purpose, general themes and messages' was a flawed and ineffective approach. Developing messages and products specifically tailored to 'the unique circumstances and demographics of the neighbourhoods' was not an easy task, especially since few if any American soldiers or commanders have undergone cultural training before deploying to Iraq at this stage.[138] Nonetheless, it was viewed as a necessary step towards 'engendering tolerance' for US troop presence and increasing the population's willingness to cooperate.[139] While further research is certainly in order, this anecdotal evidence suggests the plausibility of our theory's predictions about intelligence collection and public opinion in the context of an ethnically intermixed city.

Over the past 20 years, rural violence has been declining and conflict is becoming increasingly concentrated in urban areas.[140] This urbanisation of conflict calls for a better understanding of how urban populations may influence the conduct and ultimate effectiveness of combat operations. Evidence from a comparative study of the Troubles and the First Intifada offer support to our central claims about how urban ethnic geography conditions the availability of and access to intelligence and shapes the management of public opinion, which in turn influence soldiers' combat effectiveness. Further research is necessary to determine the generalisability of our argument. That said, this article makes an important contribution by bringing together insights from the literature on civil wars, which has explored the role of ethnic identities, networks, and territorial settlement patterns in conflict but largely neglected wars in cities, and findings from research on urban warfare in strategic studies and military history, which traditionally been less concerned with urban ethnic geography and its implications for combat effectiveness.

Finally, this research also has a number of relevant policy implications. For one, conflict-induced population movements can render intelligence gathered prior to the onset of the conflict obsolete. Scenario planning and intelligence preparation of the urban battlefield should therefore explicitly consider the implications of such changes on the soldiers' ability to collect

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[138]Ralph O. Baker, 'The Decisive Weapon: A Brigade Combat Team Commander's Perspective on Information Operations', *Military Review* (May–June 2006), 15–16.
[139]Ibid, p.31.
[140]OECD, States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence (Paris: OECD Publishing 2016), 51. 10.1787/9789264267213-en.

information from the population and to effectively execute operations more broadly. Another issue to consider is that social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, have made it more difficult for states to assert control over the information environment during urban military operations, and in turn, to shape public opinion. While this article has focused on democratic regimes, this 'democratisation' of news and information also means that unlike in the past, at least some non-democracies could be forced to contend with the impact of public opinion on their involvement in urban military operations. Russia's efforts to underplay the extent of its entrenchment and military casualties in Syria and eastern Ukraine to avoid losing public support at home and having that undermine effectiveness in theatre is one possible example. Our findings, however, suggest that the ease with which state forces can mould public opinion as well as the influence public opinion may have on combat effectiveness are both conditioned by urban ethnic geography. All told, as urban military operations increasingly become the norm, scholarly research on armed conflict and war must also shift focus to cities.

Disclosure statement

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