PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION UNDER MILITARY OCCUPATION: A PRESENTATION OF COGAT
C.S. Georgia

Călin-Ștefan Georgia
Faculty of History and Philosophy,
International Relations and Security Studies Doctoral School,
Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania
Email: georgia_calin@yahoo.com

Abstract
Following the Oslo accords, Areas A, B and C have been created, with area C under Israeli military occupation. Our paper aims to offer a brief look into the core values that animate the Israeli political and security establishment and how these are reflected in the way the governance of area C of the West Bank is implemented.

Key words: *Security, Israel, The West Bank, cultural identity, governance*

1. Introduction

The present paper aims at presenting the particularities of the Israeli civil-military environment and by doing so also draw a sketch of the Israeli governance of Area C. The West Bank has been under military occupation ever since the 1967 Six Day war and was governed by a military unit which today is called The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT).The governance process stands out by being a hybrid between a military and a civilian system, with the prevalence of the military one. In the chapters to come we will take a brief look at the Israel's security situation between 1967 and 2005, we will take in account the main conditioning factors of the Israeli security environment, will present the COGAT and in the end draw our conclusions.

2. The History and Background

In this chapter we will look at Israel's regional security and part of its history, as well as the conflicts related to the Palestinian issue. We believe that these aspects are quintessential to understanding one of the most important particularities of this state: that it has been fighting for its survival, in one form or another, since its creation in 1948 and this fact has come to shape the collective mind, the strategic thinking of the decision-makers and the very nature of Israeli institutions. Because of our space limitation we will only focus on the period between 1967 and 2005 as this is directly relevant to our subject.

Following this was the War of Attrition of 1967 which lasted until 1970. Besides Jordan, Egypt and Syria, the U.S.S.R. and Cuba also participated in the conflict, which took a great toll on the Israeli forces but no important territorial losses were imposed on the Israeli State. One important detail is that, as we will argue in a following chapter, Israeli military doctrine was not designed for an attrition war but for short conflicts, making this war one of the hardest fought by the Israeli side.

It's worth to mention that since 1968, the Palestinian Liberation Organization supported militants in South Lebanon which conducted raids against Israeli targets. Israel's military retaliated against Lebanese targets in an effort that their punitive operations would force the Lebanese to deal with the PLO militants on their own. The so called PLO insurgency in Southern Lebanon lasted until the PLO's expulsion from Lebanon in 1975.

Three years after the War of Attrition, during 1973 Yom Kippur's celebrations which coincided that year with the Ramadan, an Arab coalition launched an attack against Israel in

the Golan Heights and Sinai. The war was launched at the initiative of Syria and Egypt with the intent of recovering the lost territories of the Six Day War. They were also supported by Jordan, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Cuba, Morocco, Libya, Tunisia, Kuwait and North Korea. Although vastly outnumbered and outgunned, the Israeli State managed to win the war after 18 days of fighting, with its territories intact and a strengthened military deterrence. However, this war left a deep scar in the Israeli public psyche.

The 1978 Southern Lebanon conflict was another one of the high points of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. After a PLO Fatah sanctioned operation which came to be known as the "Coastal Road Massacre", the Israeli Defence Force implemented Operation Litani, an invasion of South Lebanon. The operation ended with the displacement of the PLO from its positions in Southern Lebanon but its continued residency in the country and the creation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon.

On the background of repeated engagements between PLO militants and the IDF which caused civilian casualties on both sides, Israel launched Operation Peace for Galilee also known as the 1982 First Lebanon War. The "casus belli" was also reported to be stemmed from the attempted assassination attempt of Israel's ambassador to the United Kingdom by the Abu Nidal group (which was in fact an opponent of the PLO). On one side there was Israel and its allies, the Free Lebanon State and the Phalange and al-Trazim militias and on the other the Lebanese National Resistance Front (Jammoul), the PLO, Syria, Hezbollah, the Amal Movement, the Independent Nasserite Movement (Al-Mourabitoun), the Islamic Amal military movement, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia, The Islamic Unification Movement (Al-Tawhid) and the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Following this conflict, the PLO was relocated to Tripoli. Israel also gained a security zone in the South Lebanon Security Belt which was based on the Free Lebanon State. Israel's image was tarnished during this conflict by being associated with the massacre of Sabra and Shatila, perpetrated by the Christian Phalangite militias on Palestinian refugees and Lebanese Shiites at a few meters from the Israeli positions.

Between 1985 and 2000 there was a low intensity conflict, fought by proxy between Israel and Lebanese Christian militias and Hezbollah affiliated groups backed by Iran. The conflict was mainly fought within what was called the South Lebanon "Security Zone". Seen as a Hezbollah victory, the Israeli military retreated from the area in 2000 during Ehud Barak's administration and the Christian militia group The South Lebanon Army collapsed.

The first Intifada (1987-1991/1993) and the second one (2000-2005) which happened in parallel with some of the aforementioned events came to open a new a painful chapter in the Israeli security environment, one in which the already dissolute nature of "the enemy" became even more so and announced an era in which the battle would be fought not only using the strategic depth available to the country but one that would be carried out in the hearts and minds of the Palestinian and world population alike, where pressure on Israel would come from within and beyond its administered territories. Along civil unrest and disobedience which materialized in acts from throwing stones and Molotov cocktails at Israeli security force to boycotts, riots, strikes and widespread violence. The toll of the first intifada was heavy on civilian losses and badly damaged the image of the IDF, also drawing a great deal of external pressure on Israel and ended between the Madrid conference and the signing of the Oslo accords. The second Intifada came at an even higher cost, raising new challenges for the Israeli security forces and politicians alike and ended after Yasser Arafat's death and the subsequent Fatah-Hamas conflict. These two phenomena are very complex and would require further expansion but since this is not our paper's focus we can only briefly remind them.

3. The conditioning factors of Israeli National Security

Before delving into any analysis of this extremely complex institution which has played and continues to play a crucial role in the Israeli state we need to take in account, even if briefly, the conditions that affect Israeli national security and the main strategic

requirements which the state must fulfil in order for it to assure its existence and efficiency.Like other authors[1], we have stated in previous paragraphs that the fact that Israel has been at war since the beginning of its existence as a state is a major if not the most important factor in the conditioning of Israeli political, military and societal consciousness. Establishing this, there are several conditions which have shaped this collective consciousness and which, in our opinion, to this day and for a long time to come, will shape collective consciousness and public policies alike for many years to come.

First of all, one must mention the inexorable link between the Israeli political and security environment. In a country which, as we stated before, has been in an almost continuous state of war since its independence and which relies on conscription for its military system, many of the Israeli citizens have at one point in their lives, performed military service. As a matter of fact, all of Israel's prime ministers except Golda Meir have had important military careers before entering politics. Before we present the conditions below, it is very important to note this very intimate relationship about which other authors have written extensively[2345].

The geography, as in any other geopolitical analysis, is a first step in getting one's bearing in understanding a phenomenon and particularly in this case,understanding Israel's geography is one of the sine-qua-non conditions of understanding its core need of security. Sitting in the Rothberg amphitheatre on Jerusalem's Mount Scopus and looking at the Dead Sea and the Jordanian border puts things into geopolitical perspective. "Strategic depth" is a very valuable resource in Israel. The term is used in military terms to refer to the distance between the battle lines, the front or the danger zones of the areas of operation in a conflict and Israel's own civilian and industrial infrastructure, namely cities, industry and other key strategic assets. The solution up to this point for addressing this shortcoming was creating "artificial" strategic depth.

Especially after the Yom Kippur war, which posed some very tough challenges to Israeli forces, precisely because it turned in a war of attrition and one in which Israel could not apply its most effective strategy, the general consensus among decision-makers and military men alike was that the challenges posed by Israel's 1949 would make those positions indefensible. As a consequence, the concept of "defensible borders"[6] took life at the same time with the pursuit of the political and military elites to achieve such assets through border modifications and security arrangements.

Such an achievement of artificial strategic depth was achieved for instance by entering security arrangements with actors like Egypt on the situation in Sinai and to some extent, with the Palestinian Authority concerning the situation in some parts of the West Bank[7]. Another approach which has been extensively used especially in the first decades of the existence ofthe Israeli state is the building of fortified settlements and thus not only establishing a presence but erecting fortifications that would harass and impede the progress of the enemy[8].

---

[1]Rebecca L. Schiff, *The Military and Domestic Politics: A concordance theory of civil–military relations*: Routledge, 2009

[2]Yoram Peri, 'The Political–Military Complex: The IDF's Influence Over Policy Towards the Palestinians Since 1987', *Israel Affairs*, 11, no. 2, 324–344

[3]Amos Perlmutter, 'The Israeli Army in Politics: The Persistence of the Civilian Over the Military', *World Politics*, 20, no. 04, 606–643

[4]Gabriel Sheffer and Oren Barak, *Israel's security networks*, *A theoretical and comparative perspective*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013

[5]K. Michael, 'The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil--Military Relations: The "Discourse Space" Model and the Israeli Case during the Oslo Process', *Armed Forces & Society*, 33, no. 4, 518–546

[6]B. G. Bromet, 'Defensible Borders and Strategic Depth', 2011. (accessed 2015)

[7]Bromet, *idem.*

[8]Yoav Ben-Horin and Barry Posen, *Israel's Strategic Doctrine*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1981.

Another solution found by Israeli strategists was to transfer the battle to the enemy's territory as fast as possible. This way even if some damage is sustained by the Israeli strategic civilian infrastructure, it would be at least limited and as the battle lines shift the destruction would be transferred to the enemy's infrastructure. Needless to say, this approach still shapes Israeli and civilian military thinking, requiring a great emphasis on very good offensive capabilities coupled with an equally important early warning andpre-emptive capabilities[9], as past events have shown.

Because of the 1948 and the following wars against Israel's Arab neighbours, strategic thinkers in the country have come to treat the "enemy", the Arab states themselves as a monolith and one of the strong points in the "us versus them" strain of thought is population. In 1981 it was not uncommon to speak about this ratio as 3.2 million Jews versus 120 million Arabs and even if today's Israeli demography yields a higher number, close to 8 million, the situation from this point of view did not change.As a result, an emphasis was put on the quality of the troops, at the same time using a reserve system with a very good ability for rapid mobilisation in case of war. This way, even if the state has limited manpower and resources, it would be able to balance the use of the two in order to achieve high combat effectiveness without having to spend the resources for a large fighting force.It's important to mention that since the Yom Kippur war Israel has expanded its military and today's IDF is much larger and better equipped than two decades ago.

Taking in account the above mentioned facts, the main vulnerabilities of the IDF, for a long time, were a surprise (coordinated) attack from its neighbours and/or a war of attrition. Both of these were also speculated upon as history proved it in the Yom Kippur War. For many years and even today, Israeli strategy is synergistically linked to these conditions. The structure of the IDF is tributary to this, being essentially a small standing army with a reserve system that can mobilize in case of need. The lack of strategic depth that intensely conditions any Israeli resolve is also an asset in this case, the encirclement of the Israeli position being dealt with by interior lines and enhanced mobility that the proximity of the lines grants to the defender. As the occupation of the Sinai demonstrated it, the management of the added strategic depth proved to raise challenges for a system designed for rapid deployment and mobilization within a territory with a limited strategic depth resource.

4. The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories

The COGAT is, in its essence, a military unit created by the Israeli state in order to better manage civilian life in the occupied territories. In the wake of the 1967 six-day war, the captured territories raised the challenge of governance and the sole option was to establish a military government. Despite having some experience with establishing a military government during the Sinai campaign in 1956, at the moment of cessation of hostilities, there was no plan in place for the governance of the newly occupied.

Inextricably military in the first days of its creation, the COGAT has gradually taken on elements of civilian identity, in order to be able to better manage the civilian affairs in the administered territories and to better cope with the challenges raised by the complexity of social life.

At the beginning, as the Israeli military doctrine was focused on hostile states which posed a conventional threat and this also reflected in the management of the territories. Although there were paramilitary forces acting against military and civilian targets, the threat was not as big as today and also the external threat was much more virulent than today. This determined the Israeli military leaders to employ additional measures in order to ensure that there is civil obedience in the territories. One important principle of governance during the 70s for instance was that the occupation has to be as invisible as possible[10]. Also, COGAT worked close with Palestinian officials and leaders with which they negotiated the

---

[9]Yoav Ben-Horin, Barry Posen, *op.cit.*, p. 5.
[10]Shlomo Gazit, personal communication, 2015, Tel-Aviv, Israel.

implementation of Israeli policy. After Oslo I and II and nowadays, Israel's military doctrine has changed and it is now primarily focused on asymmetrical threats. With an added emphasis on preventing terrorism, the Israeli doctrine is now hanging in the balance of the very thin red line between armed combatant and civilian. As a result, COGAT stopped working with its Palestinian partners from the 70s and started implementing policy as a central authority, enforcing its orders through the Israeli army.

One of the characteristics of this institution is that, from the moment of its creation until the present moment at which we are perfecting the present study, it has a dual dependency, on one hand to the Ministry of Defence, to which it directly reports and to the General Staff. Although COGAT reports directly to the Minister of Defence regarding to all its activities and most of the interior affairs of the unit, it has a special relationship with the General Staff of the Israeli Defence Force which directly affects the efficiency of the unit and its very possibilities to project actions within the Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

Continuing with a brief sketch of the institution, we will start at the leadership and work our way downward, towards the agents in the field. Thus, the COGAT is headed by a military commander who reports directly to the Minister of Defence. The military commander also works closely with the Chief of Staff of the IDF and its whole hierarchic military structure[11]. The commander of the COGAT leads two main departments in the institution, one dedicated to economy matters (fiscal, commercial etc.) and another one to matters relating to services (education, health etc.). These two main departments are run by staff officers who act like intermediaries between the policy of the Israeli Government, through its various specialized ministries and the implementation of these institutions' policies in the Palestinian Territories. COGAT's point of contact with the material reality on the field is possible through a military interface it is connected to, through an area commander. The area commander is an officer within the Israeli Defence Force system, subordinate to the General Staff through the military hierarchy[12].

In an attempt to clarify things and offer a good image into how the systems works and what this framework looks like, general (ret) ShlomoGazit makes a reference to the trajectory of a curfew order within the system in his book "Trapped Fools".

Thus, as a response to specific security situations on the ground, a sub-district commander would issue a request to the area brigade commander, who in his turn would forward the request to the territorial commander, who would verify it by sending it to the Head of the Operations Department at the General Staff. At the same time, the sub-district commander also reported to the civilian-affairs commander who had a direct subordination relation with the COGAT, which in turn reported to the Ministry of Defence. In conclusion, in this example we would have two separate documents climbing up two different systems. First, we have the curfew request which follows the military hierarchy through the chain of command to the General Staff, which in turn then issues a curfew order, together with a timetable and all the details relating to the operations to take place. Second, we have a recommendation which follows the Civilian Administration chain of command with the entry point at the level of the sub-district commander, passing to the civilian-matters commander and through the system made of department-specific staff officers, each in charge of a specific branch of the governance system (identical to the Israeli government one with the specific ministries and policies dictated by Jerusalem). This way, at least in theory, the institution that implemented the civilian policies and had the best grip on the civilian political-social realities could contribute with feedback and recommendations vis-a-vis of a military operation or order.

---

[11]*Idem.*
[12]Shlomo Gazit, *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in The Territories*, London: Frank Cass, 2003.

5. Conclusions

Israel's management of the West Bank is a unique case in the world because of the very nature of the security and political situation of the region. As we have noted, several factors stand out as distinctive particularities of the studied phenomenon. The Israeli occupation of the West bank dates back to 1973 amounting to 42 years. During this time, as the Israeli geopolitical and security situation was shaped by the events mentioned above, this also influenced the management priorities, linking them irrevocably to the main security apparatus which is the Israeli Defence Force.

The initial and current objectives of the COGAT areto ensure an efficient management of civilian life in the West Bank, although this objective has not been always implemented the same. For instance, as modern combat and military doctrine shifted from focusing on conventional engagements to asymmetrical warfare involving a very thin line between combatant and non-combatant, COGAT as an institution primarily subordinated to the IDF and Ministry of Defence has also aligned its policy to the general security objectives of the country's national security system. While not the most effective or good governance-focused system, COGAT is definitely a very interesting civil-military endeavour of governance.

Bibliography

1. Gazit, Shlomo, personal communication, Tel-Aviv, Israel, 2015;
2. Sheffer, Gabriel; Barak, Oren, *Israel's security networks*, *A theoretical and comparative perspective*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013;
3. Bromet, B. G., 'Defensible Borders and Strategic Depth', 2011, www.shaularieli.com (accessed 2015);
4. Schiff, Rebecca L., *The Military and Domestic Politics: A concordance theory of civil–military relations*: Routledge, 2009;
5. Michael, K., 'The Dilemma behind the Classical Dilemma of Civil--Military Relations: The "Discourse Space" Model and the Israeli Case during the Oslo Process', *Armed Forces & Society*, 33, no. 4, 518–546;
6. Peri, Yoram, 'The Political–Military Complex: The IDF's Influence Over Policy Towards the Palestinians Since 1987', *Israel Affairs*, 11, no. 2, 324–344;
7. Gazit, Shlomo, *Trapped Fools: Thirty Years of Israeli Policy in The Territories*, London: Frank Cass, 2003;
8. Yoav Ben-Horin; Barry Posen, *Israel's Strategic Doctrine*, Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1981;
9. Perlmutter, Amos, 'The Israeli Army in Politics: The Persistence of the Civilian Over the Military', *World Politics*, 20, no. 04, 606–643, 1968.