Human Terrain and Cultural Intelligence in the Test of American and Israeli Theaters of Confrontation

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This article describes and defines the concept of "human terrain" that developed in the American military following its experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq and elaborates on the reasons that led to its development. It focuses on the theoretical foundations and on the correlations between human terrain, cultural intelligence, and intercultural competence, all against the backdrop of the American and Israeli experiences in different theaters of confrontation.

Acquiring an in-depth understanding of the local culture is an essential condition for ensuring the relevance of a military mission. Cultural intelligence as a means of correlating the cultural knowledge obtained by the Human Terrain System with the intelligence necessary for carrying out the military mission is also crucial. Recognizing the importance of cultural intelligence led the American military to develop its Human Terrain System, which is composed of professional teams of social scientists who are embedded in forces at various levels and whose role is to help the forces in the combat theaters gain an understanding of the culture and the society.

Commanders and team members who took part in the program widely agreed that the Human Terrain System contributes to the relevance and success of the military mission; alongside the importance attributed to the system, however, its operation also sparked criticism, both in military and academic circles. Despite

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the methodological, operational, and organizational developments of the Human Terrain System in the American context, gaps still exist, and in many cases, the deliverables are inadequate. Gaps in knowledge of human terrain and its assimilation in the combat doctrine and in the intelligence methodology also exist among the security and intelligence agencies in Israel.

Keywords: intelligence, cultural intelligence, human terrain, military, the IDF, the US military, culture, methodology, intercultural competence

Introduction

The concept and the term "human terrain" developed in the American military back in 2006, as a result of difficulties with which the military forces contended in the Iraqi and Afghani theaters.[1] Human terrain relates to the social, ethnographic, cultural, economic, and political elements in a densely-populated arena in which a military force operates and is premised on the belief that the key to a mission's success is to focus on understanding the people.[2]

Military and intelligence doctrines, which place emphasis on the operation of the military force, its firing capabilities, and precise technologies for hitting the targets and achieving military victory are not enough to efficiently quell an uprising or engage in peace-keeping operations. In such operations, the fighting force is dealing with a civilian population, whose cultural and political characteristics are usually strange and different from those of the fighting force.[3] Therefore, the task force and its commanders need a different

1 Within the Israeli context, this term was referred to for the first time in an article by Ohad Laslevi, "The Human Terrain as a Basis for Operating Forces: Contending with the Bedouin during the Campaign in the Negev Desert during the War of Independence," in "*Bein haqtavim"* vol. 1: *Frontier – Study of the Challenge Emerging on the Borders* (Dado Center for Interdisciplinary Military Studies and Maarachot Publishing, February 2014): 7–27 (in Hebrew), https://www.idf.il/media/6790/בין-הקטבים-1-התכסית-האנושית-אהד-לסלוי.pdf.

2 Roberto González, "Human Terrain: Past, Present and Future Applications," *Anthropology Today* 24, no. 1 (2008): 21–26.

3 Kobi Michael and David Kellen, "Cultural Intelligence for Peace Support Operations in the New Era of Warfare," in *The Transformation of the World of War and Peace Support Operations*, ed. Kobi Michael, David Kellen, and Eyal Ben-Ari (Westport: Greenwood, 2009).

kind of intelligence that can widen its understanding and narrow the cultural differences between them and the local population—gaps that detract from the mission's relevance.[4]

General Rupert Smith discussed the importance of the cultural issue and defined contemporary war as "war amongst the people."[5] This type of war is characterized by a blurred distinction between the civilian and the military fronts during intensive military activity in densely populated urban areas, and with increasingly significant involvement of non-state actors in the form of terrorist and guerilla organizations operating from within the population and under its protection. These characteristics affect the type of intelligence necessary to understand the importance of the civilian population and environment as the battlefield, the target during the fighting, as well as the pawns during the fighting. At the same time, emphasis should be placed on weakening the patronage of the rebel forces—whether terrorist or guerilla—while increasing support for the fighting militaries and leveraging the influence of local leaders and forces to help promote the objectives of the fighting. These, coupled with the moral necessity and the international legal imperative of protecting the civilian population, led the US military to internalize the understanding that it needed to deepen its knowledge about civilian populations in those theaters.

This article describes and defines the concept of "human terrain" that developed in the American military and elaborates on the reasons that led to developing this concept. Focusing on the theoretical foundations, its definitions, and characteristics, the article analyzes the correlation between human terrain, cultural intelligence, and intercultural competence. It discusses the characteristics of implementing the Human Terrain System in the confrontation theaters of the United States and Israel and presents the key lessons learned, which could also be relevant to the combat challenges facing the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

4 Ibid.

5 Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (New York: Knopf, 2007).

Human Terrain—Background, Characteristics, and Theoretical Definitions

Human terrain is defined as "characterizing cultural, anthropological, and ethnographic information about the human population and the interactions within the joint operations area." Human terrain analysis is "the process through which understanding the human terrain is developed. It integrates human geography and cultural information."[6]

The Human Terrain System project is a US military program that recruits, trains, and deploys human terrain teams, comprised of military and civilian experts, who are embedded in military units in the combat theater.[7] The project began in 2006, given the difficulties encountered with the new combat theaters in Iraq and Afghanistan. As a result, in 2007, the US Department of Defense approved and funded professional support for providing American military forces with a needed understanding of the local sociocultural issues in Iraq and Afghanistan.[8]

The US Army Training and Doctrine Command manages the Human Terrain System. Teams of five to nine civilian and military personnel are deployed to support brigade, division, and theater-level staffs and commanders and prepare them for contending with a civilian population. They do this by providing meticulous instruction before deploying them, and they continue to provide professional support after their deployment, using a support and analysis center and providing software tools to enable sociocultural analysis.[9] The teams are comprised of experts in both the social sciences and

6 Ministry of Defense, "Joint Doctrine Note 4/13-Culture and Human Terrain," (Swindon, Wiltshire: Ministry of Defense, 2013), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/256043/20131008-_JDN_4_13_Culture-U.pdf.

7 Montgomery McFate and Steve Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System during the First 4 Years," *Prism* 2, no. 4 (2011): 63–82, https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/19701/uploads.

8 Christopher A. King, Robert Bienvenu, and T. Howard Stone, "HTS Training and Regulatory Compliance for Conducting Ethically-Based Social Science Research," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (2011): 16–20, https://fas.org/irp/agency/army/mipb/2011_04.pdf.

9 Yvette Clinton, Virginia Foran-Cain, Julia Voelker McQuaid, Catherine E. Norman, and William H. Sims, "Congressionally Directed Assessment of the Human Terrain System" (Alexandria, VA: Center for Naval Analysis, 2010), p. 15, https://info.publicintelligence.net/CNA-HTS.pdf.

military operations, who collect knowledge and gain understanding about the populations residing in the regions of the fighting, aided by interviews and interactions with individuals from those populations.[10] The teams conduct socioscientific analyses of the local population to help the deployed military forces increase their situational awareness, improve culturally-informed decisionmaking, enhance operational effectiveness, and preserve and share sociocultural knowledge.[11]

Between Human Terrain, Intercultural Competence, and Cultural Intelligence

What is culture?

"Culture" is defined as the customs, concepts, ideas, and social norms that are shared by a group of people and guide their beliefs and behavior. Characterization of a culture requires answers to questions such as: How are the people organized? What are the people's beliefs and values? What are the ways in which the people interact with each other and with outsiders? As a rule, people do not behave randomly, but rather, they behave in a way that appears logical to other people in their group. Their behavior is accepted and understood within the group due to their shared ideas, which define normative behavior.[12] Culture is layered with multiple meanings, based on language, society, economics, religion, history, and other fields. These layers are expressed by tangible characteristics that form one's cultural identity, such as physical appearance, attire, architecture, gestures, social laws, style of communication, and beliefs.[13]

Between intercultural competence and cultural intelligence

The word "intelligence" has two different meanings: intelligence in the sense of an individual's aptitude or competence and in the sense of military information-gathering. Consequently, the term "cultural intelligence" refers to two related but different concepts: intercultural competence and cultural intelligence. Intercultural competence relates to "a cognitive

10 King et al., "HTS Training and Regulatory Compliance," p. 16.

11 McFate and Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System," p. 63.

12 Ministry of Defense, "Joint Doctrine Note 4/13 – Culture and Human Terrain."

13 CADS Staff, "Cultural Intelligence and the United States Military," (Washington, DC: Center for Advanced Defense Studies, 2006), https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/26999/14_cult_int_us.pdf.

and psychological capability of individual or group's ability to adapt to, select, and shape a culturally-different environment."[14] Inkson and Thomas defined intercultural competence as "being skilled and flexible about understanding a culture, learning increasingly more about it and gradually shaping one's thinking to be more sympathetic to a [different] culture and one's behavior to be more fine-tuned and appropriate when interacting with other cultures."[15] Intercultural competence is one of the most important tools for developing cultural awareness. Cultural intelligence also relates to the military operational functions of collecting and analyzing information about an arena and an opponent, the interpretation of which is influenced by cultural aspects. Intercultural competence is an essential precondition for cultural intelligence, due to the need to understand the context and the differences between adversaries, and it is even more critical in the context of a "war amongst the people."[16]

Intercultural competence facilitates engaging in a set of behaviors that includes language, interpersonal skills, and more. The acquisition of intercultural competence is not a prescribed or defined process; rather, it is a perpetual learning process through education and experience, combined with the individual's aptitude for comprehending the needs of different environments. These enable individuals not only to learn about other cultures but also to develop the capacity to understand these cultures. Understanding other cultures allows individuals to anticipate needs and take necessary actions, recognize minute cultural cues, facilitate communication, conduct negotiations, and arrive at solutions.[17]

Cultural intelligence

Cultural intelligence engages in a rational organization of local politics, as well as in understanding cultural codes, needs, and the internal order of social networks. This intelligence is used to not only identify threats but also opportunities to promote political change. Therefore, cultural intelligence needs

14 Michael and Kellen, "Cultural Intelligence for Peace Support Operations," p. 170.

15 David C. Thomas and Kerr Inkson, "Cultural Intelligence: People Skills for a Global Workplace," *Consulting to Management* 16, no.1 (2005): 5–9.

16 Michael and Kellen, "Cultural Intelligence for Peace Support Operations," p. 170.

17 Todd J. Clark, "Developing a Cultural Intelligence Capability" (master's thesis, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, US Army Command and General Staff College, 2008).

to be based on a broad understanding of the political and social dimensions of the confrontation theater.[18] In the context of international relations, cultural intelligence is defined as "an analysis of social, political, economic, and other demographic information that provides understanding of a people or a nation's history, institutions, psychology, beliefs and behaviors." Today's conflicts in locations such as Iraq and Afghanistan require the military to place an emphasis on the local populations, which constitute the key terrain in the war against terrorism and in global wars.[19] In order to produce high-quality cultural intelligence, the information-collection and research professionals must free themselves of ethnocentric attitudes that attribute universal value or meaning to the values of their home countries, and instead, they must practice openness and sensitivity to other cultures.

In a critique written by Dina Rezk about deconstructing the ethnocentric mindset of Western intelligence agencies over the past decades, she explained that, to this day, Western intelligence researchers still have a hard time relating to particular cultural behaviors in Arab-Muslim societies, such as the role of Islam in society, the dominant use of rhetoric, political motivation, and the primacy of the sense of honor.[20] According to Rezk, the alternative to cultural knowledge is a state of Western-influenced universalism of values, doctrines and beliefs—one-dimensional notions such as "democracy," "freedom," and "rationality"—to which all are expected to conform on an ideological and perceptual level. Rezk argues that the dangers of such universalism reinforce how necessary and important it is for intelligence communities to devote further efforts to making progress in cultural studies.[21]

The urgency for intelligence agencies to gain an understanding of the opponent's culture receives more meaningful expression in the contemporary theater of "war amongst the people." In this conflict theater, there are restrictions on the use of force, and the quality of the cooperation between the military actors and the civilian ones (the civilian population, non-government organizations, and international organizations) is both reciprocally affected and mutually exclusive. Since all actors in the theater are considered producers

18 Michael and Kellen, "Cultural Intelligence for Peace Support Operations," p. 162.

19 Clark, "Developing a Cultural Intelligence Capability."

20 Dina Rezk, "Orientalism and Intelligence Analysis: Deconstructing Anglo-American Notions of the 'Arab'," *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 2 (2016): 226.

21 Ibid., pp. 244–245.

of intelligence, there must be a shared language among everyone to achieve fruitful cooperation. At issue, inter alia, are non-state organizations, the police, and the private sector, which collect and produce information that is needed for intelligence purposes, but they are still not full partners in today's arenas.[22]

Military forces that are working to achieve their goals are compelled to understand the political and cultural context and to adapt the military doctrine and means to this context and to the conflict theater in question. One of the most important operational tools for this purpose is intelligence. Therefore, intelligence means and methods must be adapted to conflict theater's political context and its dynamic nature. Factors that military commanders anticipate in a traditional military theater are unlike those that the military must consider when operating within a civilian population.[23]

Intelligence professionals must understand the culture, language, and environment in the conflict theater and that information-gathering in this type of theater requires intensive engagement with the local population. The local population is a group of people who are simultaneously the arena (the military operating theater), the target (for the goals of subverting their support of terrorist and guerilla groups that are operating under their shelter and support and for establishing legitimacy and the conditions for their cooperation with the military forces against these insurgents), as well as a key source of intelligence.[24]

Insurgents, including terrorist and guerilla organizations, understand the local culture better than any foreign military force. Therefore, they have an enormous advantage over the foreign military force in assimilating into the population and carrying out their activities with the population's assistance and protection. To ensure that the military force successfully gains the support of the local population, the military must understand the local people and its culture so that it can operate the mechanisms for intervention and cooperation with the population in order to weaken the guerilla and terrorist groups. It must minimize the insurgents' support base among the local population

22 Michael and Kellen, "Cultural Intelligence for Peace Support Operations," p. 162.

23 Kobi Michael, "Doing the Right Thing the Right Way: The Challenge of Military Mission Effectiveness in Peace Support Operations in a 'War Amongst the People' Theater" in *Cultural Challenges in Military Operations*, ed. Cees M. Coops and Tibor Szvircsev Tresch (Rome: NATO Defense College, October 2007), pp. 254–263, https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/381/uploads.

24 Ibid.

by undermining their propaganda that justifies the insurgents' actions as solutions to the population's grievances;[25] and design a sociopolitical structure (a collaborative effort with the military and the local population) that will change the local population's perspective and enable them to independently cope with these forces over time.

Eran Zohar, who analyzed the functioning of the Israeli military intelligence prior to and during the "Arab Spring," argued that any attempt by intelligence agencies—such as the IDF Intelligence Corps—to understand the enemy cannot succeed as long as the intelligence investigators do not understand Arab culture and language: "The difficult and exhausting work of learning about the enemy and the attempt to comprehend its intentions should not be pushed aside because it is easier to define the enemy's rationale."[26] Zohar states that "an intelligence agency profits from intelligence researchers who amass a thorough and intimate understanding of the target country and are familiar with its history, culture and traditions. These qualifications may be helpful in predicting revolutions."[27]

American experiences in Iraq and in Afghanistan exposed the problematic nature of the cultural encounters between the task forces and local populations, as the locals perceived the American task forces as foreigners and as invaders.[28] Robert Mihara also maintained that the American invasions into Afghanistan and Iraq exposed the Bush administration's lack of understanding of the political developments in the world and of the prerequisites for state-building in those two countries. As far as Mihara is concerned, the American policy and strategy embraced a belief that democratic and liberal ideologies are compatible for remaking societies in various countries, including Iraq and Afghanistan. However, large segments of the local society were not interested in partaking in the Bush administration's state-building dreams and objected to the democratic and liberal values that the Americans were

25 US Department of the Army, "Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies," FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5 (May 2014), http://www.marines.mil/Portals/59/MCWP%203-33.5_Part1.pdf.

26 Eran Zohar, "Israeli Military Intelligence's Understanding of the Security Environment in Light of the Arab Awakening," *Defense Studies* 15, no. 3 (2015): 20.

27 Ibid., p. 26.

28 Richard Burchill, "Jihadist Insurgency and the Prospects for Peace and Security," *Small Wars and Insurgencies* 27, no. 5 (2016): 958–967.

trying to promote.[29] The United States' limited success in recent years battling uprisings and terrorist attacks by radical Islamic groups in Afghanistan and in Iraq, and also the recent fighting against the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria derives from inadequate knowledge and a lack of understanding of the belief systems (mainly religious beliefs) that motivate Islamic terrorist attacks (Salafi-jihadism) and of the reasons for their success in recruiting activists, local support, and resources.[30]

The absence of a religious foundation in the modern Western political ideology does not negate the importance of religion in other cultures. A religious ideology is, apparently, the most important factor that the West needs to focus on —or at least, to try to understand better—when jihadist insurgency movements are the issue. Fighting against an insurgency does not always end with a clear military defeat of the insurgents and their supporters; nevertheless, it is necessary to ensure significant achievements during this fighting, which would enable the restoration of order and prevent additional future attacks by the insurgents.[31]

An efficient battle against a jihadist insurgency indeed requires the West to formulate a military strategy and to use military force; at the same time, it must also direct its efforts against the ideology that is driving terrorist groups. In addition to focusing on the strategic issue, it is important to understand the people who are engaging in Islamic terrorism, and what attracts them to join the battle. The challenge that the West faces during confrontations of this kind is developing its ability to "conquer" the hearts and minds of the population.[32] This competition to capture the hearts and minds of the population—particularly the young—was met by a major rival in the form of terrorist organizations, such as the Islamic State, which are exploiting the internet age and social networks for cultural intelligence activities. The

29 Robert Mihara, "The Inutility of Force," *Infinity Journal* 5, no. 3 (Fall 2016): 25–28.

30 Burchill, "Jihadist Insurgency and the Prospects for Peace and Security."

31 Ibid.

32 Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force.*

objectives of this activity are not only to recruit activists through public opinion but also to make terror a popular, desirable, and imitable way of life.[33]

Moreover, a significant share of the images and video clips used by the Islamic State to entice the young population in the Arab and Muslim world to support the organization or join it and take part in its activities is directly inspired by contemporary Western culture, which is well known by young audiences from the cinema, video games, and popular music video clips. Paradoxically, the terrorist organizations use modern Western culture and brands for promoting anti-Western values and culture.[34]

Understanding the culture of the local population is critical, and it contributes significantly to contending with attacks by "lone wolves"; that is, terrorist attacks by individuals who are not officially affiliated or associated with a specific terrorist organization, or who sometimes claim to belong to such an organization before, during, or after a terrorist attack, as they identify with the ideology espoused and with the aim of increasing the resonance of their act of sacrifice and its impact on public opinion.[35]

A lone terrorist, who has been influenced by radical ideas and messages, decides to commit a terrorist attack independently and usually quite spontaneously, which makes it extremely difficult to thwart. Nevertheless, it is still possible to identify clues that individuals or small groups might commit a terrorist attack, such as visits to countries where terrorist organizations are active, involvement in criminal activities, previous arrests, or high-profile suspicious activity in social networks. "In order to attempt and enter the minds of potential terrorists, technological resources are not enough and the intelligence service must understand moods, 'habitats,' socio-economic backgrounds and environmental factors. This requires cultural, linguistic and mental understanding."[36]

33 Javier Lesaca, "On Social Media, ISIS Uses Modern Cultural Images to Spread Anti-Modern Values," *TechTank* (blog), Brookings Institution, September 24, 2015, https://www.brookings.edu/blog/techtank/2015/09/24/on-social-media-isis-uses-modern-cultural-images-to-spread-anti-modern-values/.

34 Ibid.

35 Col. (res.) Shlomo Mofaz, "Intelligence Challenges in an Era of Terrorism," *Israel Defense*, July 28, 2016, http://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/content/intelligence-challenges-era-terrorism.

36 Ibid.

A military organization—being a disciplined, hierarchic organization—operates according to principles that differentiate it from other organizations, mainly civilian organizations. The military's aloofness from the civilian society in a foreign and hostile environment becomes a significant obstacle in their ability to develop and augment their cultural intelligence. As stated, overcoming this obstacle requires the military to mingle and closely interact with the local population so that it can acquire a deep familiarity and understanding. Achieving these targets is necessary to reach optimal efficiency in completing the military missions, particularly in a complex arena like that of a "war amongst the people." This type of combat requires openness to diverse strategic military means, including a variety of sources and types of intelligence—like cultural intelligence— some of which is found outside the military milieu.[37]

The Natural Links between Intercultural Competence and Cultural Intelligence

Military forces operating in the contemporary conflict theater contend with terrorist or guerilla organizations that operate within the civilian environment and use civilians as human shields. The emergence of this complex type of warfare compels Western military forces to adapt their doctrines and modes of action to the new challenges so that they can cope effectively.[38]

The changes in the battlefield and in military activities have highlighted how essential it is that the various military forces familiarize themselves with the local population and with their needs as a means of achieving a successful military mission. Intelligence gathering is supposed to supply this need. An essential precondition to obtaining reliable and high-quality intelligence is the improvement, development, and assimilation of intercultural competence within the military—primarily among the forces in the conflict theater—in order to generate cultural intelligence.

In the tense and complicated situations that characterize contemporary combat, intercultural competence becomes an essential skill among commanders and senior officers operating in the conflict theater. Intercultural competence, which enables effective interactions with people from another

37 Michael and Kellen, "Cultural Intelligence for Peace Support Operations," pp. 262–263.

38 Ibid, p.168.

culture, becomes the cognitive platform for understanding and internalizing information and for communicating with the local population and institutions, as well as with civilian organizations operating in the area.[39]

One of the major cultural challenges that Western military forces have contended with has been their encounters with societies and populations (mostly Muslim) in Arab-Muslim countries and in non-Arab Muslim countries (such as Afghanistan). Religion and ethnicity play a far more important role in Muslim societies than in the Western world. The fact that, unlike the Western world, the Arab and Muslim world has not undergone a secularization process, and that the importance of religion has even intensified in most Middle Eastern countries over the last generation, makes it extremely difficult to assess the behavior of Arab and Muslim society and culture in terms of realpolitik and according to Western logic.[40] A foundation of knowledge derived from cultural intelligence will enable higher competence in assessing "religious edicts, the motivation that they generate, and the tension between religious dictates and the constraints of reality." In the absence of a developed methodology of cultural intelligence and an adequate relevant foundation of knowledge, the West "lacks sufficient comprehension of the political and social functions of religious, ethnic and tribal affiliations which affect the political order and sometimes undermine it."[41] The West is having a hard time contending with Arab and Muslim populations, as evidenced by the American imbroglio in Iraq as the United States failed to grasp the role of ethnicity in the vanquished country as well as the state's instability since its establishment.[42]

Development of Human Terrain System: The American Experience

The Need for the Human Terrain System

The Human Terrain System in the US military broadly refers to the organizational structure and work processes needed for conducting ethnographic field research and for developing the knowledge base that helps the military forces during security operations and in managing or resolving disputes. The ethnographic research is based on data collected in the field by small

39 Kobi Michael, "Doing the Right Thing the Right Way," pp. 259–260.

40 Ephraim Kam, "The Middle East as an Intelligence Challenge," *Strategic Assessment* 16, no. 4 (January 2014): 89-101.

41 Ibid., p. 94.

42 Ibid., p. 98.

teams of social scientists who intermingle with the local population and investigate its characteristics. They do this by conducting interviews and by various types of interactions with the local population.[43] More than 1,000 personnel were deployed during the years that the Human Terrain System was in operation. The overall cost of operating the system from 2007 to 2014 reached nearly USD 750 million, making the Human Terrain System the largest investment in a single social science project in the history of the US federal government.[44]

The American forces that contended with the local population in Iraq and Afghanistan needed to understand the force structure within the population and to map the potential influential leaders in the community. They also had to gain the trust of the local population as a means of reducing its support for the rebel organizations, while responding to the population's needs and improving its safety and welfare.[45] Debriefings at the Pentagon by commanders who returned from a tour of duty recounted the difficulties and limitations the forces encountered in navigating the conflict theater and contending with the rebel forces, which were caused, inter alia, due to the lack of requisite sociocultural knowledge.[46] The need for the Human Terrain System increased especially after the United States' major combat operations in Iraq ended in May 2003, when the main challenge became achieving postwar stability in the civilian arena, which required revising military operations and its preparedness.[47]

Characteristics and Organizational Structure

The Human Terrain System in the American military is organized into two main categories: the deployed teams and the professional teams. The professional teams, comprising eight divisions, are headquartered in the

43 Richard M. Medina, "From Anthropology to Human Geography: Human Terrain and the Evolution of Operational Sociocultural Understanding," *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 2 (2014): 137–153.

44 Christopher Sims, "The Life and Death of the Human Terrain System," *Foreign Affairs*, February 4, 2016, https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/afghanistan/2016-02-04/academics-foxholes.

45 McFate and Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System," p. 65.

46 King, et al., "HTS Training and Regulatory Compliance," p. 16.

47 McFate and Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System," p. 65.

United States and provide logistic, operational, training and research support to the various deployed command levels.[48]

The human terrain teams in the field perform their roles at four levels:

- Providing support to brigade-level commands;
- Providing support to division and higher-level commands;
- Coordinating the social science research and analysis between in-theater personnel and human terrain teams stationed at the theater headquarters and providing social science support to the theater headquarters;
- Professional accompaniment of operations.

Development of the Human Terrain System

After an initial test of the concept in 2006, five human terrain teams were formed and deployed to support American military brigades in Afghanistan and Iraq. In the first evaluation report of the first team deployed to the Salerno forward operating base in Afghanistan in early 2007, the brigade commander and his staff credited the human terrain team with significantly improving the deployed forces' capacity to understand the local population, which enabled them to interact more successfully with it. The outcome was that, even before all five pilot teams had been deployed, the American military already requested the deployment of additional teams.[49]

Following the success of the initial teams, the Human Terrain System progressed from the "proof-of-concept" stage, which was carried out by external contractors, to the stage of "enduring capability" operated by civilian government employees and experts employed by the military and financed by a federal budget (from the Department of Defense).[50] The American General Staff recognized the significance of the requirements expressed in both the Operational Needs Statements and the Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statements[51] and responded by establishing a Human Terrain System at all command levels in the theater, from the brigade to the division levels.[52]

48 Clinton et al., "Congressionally Directed Assessment of the Human Terrain System," pp. 15-17.

49 Clinton et al., "Congressionally Directed Assessment of the Human Terrain System," p. 15.

50 King et al., "HTS Training and Regulatory Compliance," p. 16.

51 Ibid, p. 67.

52 Steve Chill, "One of the Eggs in the Joint Force Basket: HTS in Iraq/Afghanistan and Beyond," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (2011): 11–15.

Within four years of its establishment, the experimental Human Terrain System evolved from an abstract concept to an institutionalized military program. It expanded from five teams to thirty; its annual budget was increased to USD 150 million; and it became an organization comprised of 530 professionals. Concurrently, the Human Terrain System's mapping software, the MAP-HT Toolkit, was developed and implemented in Iraq and Afghanistan, and an instruction and training program was developed and implemented to prepare the human terrain teams for deployment.[53]

The Human Terrain System was operated in forward and tactical "Village Stability Operations," alongside Special Operations Forces, all the way up to the strategic level. "Military and civilian personnel, regardless of rank or position, benefitted from the higher degrees of understanding, awareness and interpretation that social sciences frameworks offer." However, the efforts of the human terrain teams exacted a price when four of its members were killed while deployed in the field.[54]

The Tension between Military Intelligence and the Human Terrain System

Following the development of the Human Terrain System, a debate ensued within the US military about the question of the placement and integration of the human terrain teams in the military's organizational structure. The debate focused on the uncertainty about stationing the teams together with the intelligence cells or the nonlethal cells (which are comprised of psychological operations and civil affairs units). Towards the end of 2008, it was decided to station the teams in the nonlethal cells.[55] The decision to not include them in the intelligence cells did not blur the intelligence purpose of the Human Terrain System. Cultural information, which is collected, input, processed, and analyzed by the human terrain teams and can contribute to the safety of the units and the local population, is considered military intelligence for all intents and purposes.[56]

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53 McFate and Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System," p. 64.

54 Myron Varouhakis, "Challenges and Implications of Human Terrain Analysis for Strategic Intelligence Thinking" (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Political Studies Association, Sheffield, 2015).

55 Cristopher Sims, *The Human Terrain System: Operationally Relevant Social Science Research in Iraq and Afghanistan* (Carlise, PA: US Army College – Strategic Studies Institute, 2015), pp. 239–240.

56 Ibid.

Counterinsurgency tactics in a densely populated theater amplified the tensions between intelligence and human terrain research. These tactics, which rely on cooperation with the local population in the confrontation theater and recruiting its support in the task force and for its objectives, have been described as "at least as important to our success as combat operations." Counterinsurgency operations, which require an in-depth understanding of the population and its culture, caused the conventional intelligence pyramid (strategic, systemic, and tactical) to become inverted. Information collected at the tactical level for the sake of carrying out the military mission among the civilian population became more important than intelligence at higher levels.[57] This inversion reflects the importance of developing human terrain intelligence at the tactical level for the purposes of generating high-quality intelligence at the systemic level and of formulating a relevant overarching strategy.

The clear link between intelligence and cultural research turned the work of the human terrain teams into a gray area, between the intelligence channel and the sociocultural information channel. The operational planning and the need to protect the safety of both the coalition forces and the civilians in the theaters of confrontation necessitated high-quality intelligence cultivated by a deep understanding of the human terrain.[58] In essence, the correlation between professional expertise, military intelligence, and sociocultural research may be defined as "cultural intelligence."

Test Cases in Iraq and Afghanistan

In Iraq, the conflicts between the Yezidis, the Iraqi government, and the Kurdish forces exacerbated regional tensions in 2008. The Yezidis lived in an area of conflict between the Kurds and the Iraqi government. Topographically, this area extended over a region rich in oil; oil resources and their allocation were the subject of disputes and economic-political battles between the Iraqi central government and the Kurds.[59] Furthermore, English-language literature on the Yezidi culture was limited and rare, due to reluctance of social scientists to engage in this topic during the Ba'athist regime in Iraq,

57 Ibid, pp. 240–241.
58 Ibid.
59 Ibid.

which intensified after the regime's downfall.[60] The social scientist Jennifer Clark identified and understood the characteristics of the dispute—which was being waged in an area without any military presence—and its complexity. Her sociocultural research led to a decision to separate the hawkish sides by deploying US Marines; this force sought to reduce the level of friction between the populations and curtail the violence.[61]

In Afghanistan, a social scientist from the Paktika district, who was researching the agricultural system in the region and understood the complexity of the region's water issue, recommended that the American military take part in supervising the irrigation system, which constituted a critical component of the local agricultural system.[62] As a result of this research, the State Department began implementing water management projects in Afghanistan. The projects aimed to improve the agriculture, raise the standard of living, and increase the employment of the male population, which was liable to join the rebels if the crisis in the agricultural system persisted.[63]

Conclusions from Implementing the Human Terrain System

A decade of fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan led American military commanders and the human terrain teams to reach a broad consensus about the advantages of having access to sociocultural experts, sociocultural information, and the analysis thereof. These experts and information help the military to plan how to deal with the civilian population, carry out military operations, and evaluate their repercussions.[64] For example, the brigade commander of the 56th Stryker who served in Iraq in 2008, said the following about his human terrain team (HTT): "If someone told me they were taking my HTT, I'd have a platoon of infantry to stop him . . . The HTT has absolutely contributed to our operational missions. We succeeded in changing some situations that we would have resolved using lethal means, to situations where we use nonlethal means, on the basis of the HTT information."[65]

60 Sims, *The Human Terrain System*, pp. 278–280.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid, p. 282.

63 Ibid.

64 Mark Bartholf, "The Requirement for Sociocultural Understanding in Full Spectrum Operations," *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 37, no. 4 (2011): 4.

65 McFate and Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System," p. 64

Despite the appreciated contribution of the human terrain teams, it was still insufficient. The Afghanistan and Iraq Joint Urgent Operational Needs Statement reported gaps in operational capabilities: "US Forces continue to operate in Afghanistan lacking the required resident and reach-back sociocultural expertise, understanding, and advanced automated tools to conduct in-depth collection/consolidation, visualization, and analysis of the operationally-relevant sociocultural factors of the battle space."[66] The command in Iraq stated that "detailed knowledge of host populations is critical in areas where US forces are being increased to conduct counterinsurgency and stability operations in Iraq. US forces continue to operate in Iraq without real-time knowledge of the drivers of the behavior within the host population. This greatly limits Commanders' situational awareness and creates greater risks for forces."[67]

In response to the critique by Cristopher Sims on the Human Terrain System in the US military,[68] Thomas Mahnken proposed a number of recommendations to the decision makers in the US government and military, based on the experience amassed through the use of the Human Terrain System: first, recruit more immigrants and foreign-language speakers; second, strengthen the cultural and social expertise by increasing the number of officers who specialize in the social sciences, as opposed to the current emphasis placed on technology, engineering, and other math-based disciplines; third, obligate cadets to learn foreign languages during their military studies; fourth, offer military inductees additional opportunities to learn and work throughout the world with the aim of engaging with different cultures and acquiring important information and knowledge about them.[69]

Criticism of the Human Terrain System

The Human Terrain System was the subject of controversy between some members of the military and the intelligence community in the United States and among some academics. The debate inside the military and within academic

66 Ibid.

67 Ibid.

68 Sims, "The Life and Death of the Human Terrain System."

69 Thomas G. Mahnken, "The Military and the Academy," *Foreign Affairs*, May 6, 2016.

and public circles generated substantial media coverage and prompted a discussion about the use of social sciences for national security purposes.[70]

Criticism in the Military Establishment

The criticism of the human terrain project within the military came mainly from the lower echelons in the American military[71] and from some social science researchers who had participated in the system's activities. They argued that the military had failed in implementing the project due to a "lack of professionalism, organization and general competence on the part of the staff, contractors and administrators [of the project]."[72] In response to the professional criticism, Pikulsky, Orton, Lamb, and Davis offered some observations and conclusions about the design, development, and implementation of the Human Terrain System:

a. The Pentagon was slow to set up a program for providing ground force commanders with sociocultural knowledge. The first human terrain team was deployed more than five years after the start of Operation Enduring Freedom, which began in October 2001, against the al-Qaeda organization in Afghanistan.
b. The Human Terrain System survived only because a new organization, the Joint Improvised-Threat-Defeat Agency,[73] had the flexibility to allocate resources to promising, new ideas and defined its mission broadly for launching a personnel-intensive program in a system focusing primarily on new technology.
c. The US Army Training and Doctrine Command had trouble meeting the high demands for human terrain teams from commanders in the field.
d. The Human Terrain System lacked a theoretical foundation, which was validated by field experience, and that could have been used to update

70 McFate and Fondacaro, "Reflections on the Human Terrain System," p. 64.

71 Ben Connable, "How the Human Terrain System is Undermining Sustainable Military Cultural Competence," *Military Review* 89, no. 2 (2009): 57–64, https://www.wired.com/images_blogs/dangerroom/files/MilitaryReviewConnableApr09.pdf.

72 Zenia Helbig, "Personal Perspective on the Human Terrain Systems Program," (Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, DC, November 2007), https://www.wired.com/images_blogs/dangerroom/files/aaa_helbig_hts.pdf.

73 The threats referred to here are improvised explosive devices, roadside bombs, and so forth.

its training program and instruct commanders how to utilize the full potential of the human terrain teams.

e. The Human Terrain System survived because commanders valued the contributions of the teams who operated it. The commanders' evaluations attested to the sparsity of the sociocultural knowledge amongst the American military forces, so that even the limited contribution of the Human Terrain System was considered vital.[74]

Sims added that the Human Terrain System was "a victim of its own success." Instead of forming five teams over two years, as originally planned, the American military formed more than twenty teams. As a result, many teams were deployed with inadequate equipment, and only a small number of them succeeded in completing their tasks reasonably. For example, in many instances, academics failed to conduct methodical research and were forced to make do with superficial PowerPoint presentations. According to Sims, the methodological and cultural gaps between academia and the military caused disruptions in the communications between them.[75] Furthermore, some social science researchers complained about the lack of adequate access to the local populations, as the military did not share its transport schedules to keep them safe from exposure. Some academics succeeded in acquiring information before the start of the mission, but the fast pace of the military operations constrained their ability to plan.[76]

Criticism in the Academic World

Many in academic circles considered the Human Terrain System as problematic and nebulous, in ethical and academic terms, and some described it as neither research nor intelligence.[77] The majority who argued against the use of sociocultural information during a war focused on its potential use for controlling populations, for psychological warfare, or for targeting people

74 Christopher Lamb, James Douglas Orton, Michael Davis, and Theodore Pikulsky, "The Way Ahead for Human Terrain Teams," *Joint Force Quarterly* 70, no. 3 (2013): 25–26, http://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-70/JFQ-70_21-29_Lamb-et-al.pdf.

75 Sims, "The Life and Death of the Human Terrain System."

76 Ibid.

77 AAA Commission on the Engagement of Anthropology with the US Security and Intelligence Communities, "Final Report on The Army's Human Terrain System Proof of Concept Program," 2009.

for incarceration, assassination, or other forms of violence, while being aided by academic methodologies and researchers. Some of its opponents drew comparisons between the Human Terrain System and controversial projects and operations previously carried out by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in eastern Asia and Latin America. Furthermore, those opponents claimed that the Human Terrain System caused disastrous results among the local population, which included acts of violence, redistribution of populations, and agricultural poisoning, even though no evidence corroborated that the system was operated or was configured to operate in this manner.[78]

The American Anthropological Association (AAA) had reservations about the use of anthropologists in the Human Terrain System because of what it perceived as militarization of an academic/scientific discipline and as "unacceptable application of anthropological expertise."[79] In March 2010, the AAA sent a protest petition to the US Congress and Senate, which included four key arguments against the Human Terrain System. First, there is no proof that the Human Terrain System is effective. Second, it is a dangerous system—three social scientists were killed in the field (correct to 2009)—while others complained about deficient training, and the military personnel complained that protecting the human terrain teams jeopardized soldiers' lives. Third, it is a waste of public funds; and lastly, anthropologists and other social scientists believe it is unethical, because it contravenes scientific research standards and federal standards that prescribe the obligation to obtain the consent of the research subjects.[80]

The Human Terrain System in the American Military—Looking Ahead

In 2015, reports were published about the supposed termination of the Human Terrain System project.[81] Despite this, the American government approved an allocation in its 2015 budget for an experimental human terrain program for the US Pacific Command, which was scheduled to end on September 30,

78 Medina, "From Anthropology to Human Geography," pp. 142–143.

79 AAA Executive Board, "American Anthropological Association's Executive Board Statement on the Human Terrain System Project," 2007.

80 Ibid.

81 Tom Vanden Brook, "Army Kills Controversial Social Science Program," *USA Today*, June 29, 2015, http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2015/06/29/human-terrain-system-afghanistan/29476409.

2016.[82] Moreover, in March 2016, a senior official in the US Department of Defense announced that it is unclear why the American military claimed that the human terrain project had ended; not only is the project still underway, but the military will be able to expand it if an additional budget becomes available.[83]

The Perception of Human Terrain and Cultural Intelligence in the Israeli Context

Israel makes use of the Human Terrain System similarly to the way the American military uses it, when contending with similar actors and arenas in the Middle East—radical Islamic groups and terrorist organizations. Besides the similarities, however, there are significant differences between the two countries. First, the United States is fighting on distant continents, and the daily lives of its citizens are almost never affected by these wars. In contrast, Israel's battle is intensive and more tangible as it is waged in arenas either inside the State of Israel itself or along its borders, and, by its very existential nature, involves the nation's survival. The Israeli civilian society is involved in these wars and is affected by them—together with the IDF—far more than their counterparts in the United States.

Secondly, the American agencies' and institutions' handling of the subject of the culture of the enemy is a relatively new field. In contrast, the institutions and bodies in Israel that engage in the various aspects of the daily lives of the Arab population in the State, in the territories of Judea and Samaria, and in the Gaza Strip are very experienced, maintain intensive contact with this population, and have been familiar with its culture and characteristics for decades. The nature of the challenges that Israel faces, with its western lifestyle, obligates the country—as an existential compulsion relating to its very survival—to deeply familiarize itself with the various cultures in the region and their mindsets. The objective is for Israel to better understand who it is dealing with, militarily and politically, and to efficiently prepare itself to provide a suitable response.

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82 Roberto Gonzalez, "The Rise and Fall of the Human Terrain System," *Counterpunch*, June 29, 2015, http://www.counterpunch.org/2015/06/29/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-human-terrain-system.

83 Tom Vanden Brook, "$725M Program Army 'Killed' Found Alive, Growing," *USA Today*, March 9, 2016.

The Importance of Understanding the Culture and Characteristics of the Local Population by the IDF and the Security Forces in Israel

The document "the IDF Strategy," which was published in August 2015, states that, among the challenges facing the IDF are "a diminishing threat from state-standing armies and a rise in the threat from quasi-state, irregular, or semiregular organizations that are striving to become government entities," and the "deployment and assimilation of the enemy in settled civilian regions."[84] These challenges have compelled the IDF to contend with combat situations in densely-populated areas and to be familiar with the culture of that population, which spawn the terrorist organizations that it is fighting; superficial and inadequate familiarity with the enemy's culture is liable to cause strategic and operational errors.

The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Major-General Yoav Mordechai, referred to the change in nature of the battlefield, stating that

> Today, according to the IDF's approach, the population is a key component of any field analysis. In the past, it would analyze the enemy and the topography. Today, understanding the population, familiarization, understanding the infrastructure and the possibilities of evacuating it, are key factors in any operation. Before any operation, we map the sensitive sites . . . this does not mean that it cannot strike any location if it feels threatened. The component of civilian assistance is, first and foremost, a moral consideration, because we have no intention of hurting innocent civilians, but another task is to allow sufficient time for the military to complete its operational objectives.[85]

The chief of staff, Lieutenant-General Gadi Eizenkot, spoke about the importance and criticality that the military learn about the local population's culture and their environment, stating that "the initial tendency is to deal with the new acts of violence by pouring them into molds from the past. But we must realize that this is a new situation, and in order to deal with it, we need to understand the currents at work within the Palestinian society." He

84 Chief of Staff's Office, "IDF Strategy" August 2015, http://www.idf.il/sip_storage/files/9/16919.pdf.

85 Yiftach Carmeli, "The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Unit: 'The Civilian Population is a Key Component of the Pre-combat Field Analysis,'" *IDF website*, December 2, 2014.

added that "militaries and intelligence organizations usually focus on two axis poles: one pole includes the opponent's decision-makers and command systems, and the other pole—its capabilities. The undercurrents at work on the opponent's side are a subject that is difficult to understand, and they are actually the most disturbing."[86]

Changes in the Palestinian arena in recent years have underlined even more the importance of acquiring cultural knowledge, especially about the structure of the sociopolitical power and the affiliations between the various population groups and their characteristics. Underlying the changes is the political and institutional weakness of the Palestinian Authority, which has failed to successfully manage the territories under its authority.[87] This weakness is expressed by internal power struggles—including violent ones—and by the development of alternative power structures, which have different and distinct characteristics in each geographic and/or demographic segment of the territories under the Palestinian Authority.[88]

In addition to changes in Palestinian society and politics, the events of the "Arab Spring" also led to geopolitical transformations in various Middle Eastern countries. These changes led to a new situation for Israel, in which it was forced to adapt to a reality in which most of the threats against it are not from countries but rather from ultra-national and sub-national systems and camps. These threats derive from the fragmentation, diversity, complexity, and multiplicity of interests of the various actors in the region. This situation requires Israeli intelligence to study the map of the Middle East differently than it had before. Moreover, Israeli intelligence must prepare itself for

86 Gadi Eizenkot, "IDF Challenges 2015–2016," *Military and Strategic Affairs* 8, no. 1 (July 2016): 5–16, http://www.inss.org.il/uploadImages/systemFiles/ArmyStrategics8-1.01LtGenEizenkot.pdf.

87 About the patterns of the Palestinian Authority's state failure, see Kobi Michael and Yoel Guzansky, *The Arab World on the Path to State Failure* (Tel-Aviv: Institute of National Security Studies, 2016), pp. 111–122.

88 Pinhas Inbari, "The Palestinian Authority Continues to Crumble," *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (blog), June 26, 2016, http://jcpa.org.il/2016/06/הרשות-הפלסטינית-ממשיכה-להתפורר/; Pinhas Inbari, "Is a Pro-Jordanian Political Power being Formed in Mount Hebron?" *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (blog), June 1, 2016, http://jcpa.org.il/2016/06/האם-מתגבש-כוח-פוליטי-פרו-ירדני-בהר-חברו/; Pinhas Inbari, "The Refugee Camps—Growing Threat to the Stability of the Palestinian Authority," *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs* (blog), August 9, 2015, http://jcpa.org.il/2015/08/מחנות-הפליטים-איום-גובר-על-יציבות-הרשו.

additional changes that are liable to occur, since the arena is dynamic and unstable.[89]

Yaakov Amidror emphasizes that the transformations in our region require "weighing the possibilities, thinking, and attempting to understand what needs to change in order to better cope with the new situation that has emerged." According to Amidror, the old frameworks, countries, ideologies, alliances, and rules have disappeared, and the new reality is being shaped largely by sociological processes that derive from the behavior of the masses and not from decisions by any leadership in a hierarchic entity; that is, a significant share of Israel's enemies are not countries. Added to this are the difficulties posed by the development of new technology: the new world is built on internet and cyberspace, creating a new intelligence universe with many opportunities and challenges.[90] According to Amidror, "The outcome, in terms of intelligence, is that a significant portion of the vast experience amassed in the system is irrelevant. For example, it is important to really understand the battle between the Shia and Sunna when Islam was first created, more than the battle between Egypt and Syria thirty-four years ago. New phenomena require a different perspective."[91] These developments reflect the complex reality in arenas of confrontation in proximity to Israel and the importance of creating a broad knowledge base about Arab societies, their power structure, political culture, and the prevailing attitudes so that Israeli forces can ensure operational relevance.

COGAT and GSS

Two main bodies in Israel are in contact with the Palestinian population and with institutions of the Palestinian Authority and constitute centers of knowledge about pertinent issues: The Office of the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) and the General Security Service (GSS).

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89 Yossi Kuperwasser, "Outline of the Current Threats," in "IDF Challenges," *National Security Discussions,* no. 30 (August 2016): 9–15 (in Hebrew), http://besacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CSD30web.pdf.

90 Yaakov Amidror, "The Intelligence Challenges," in "IDF Challenges," *National Security Discussions*, no. 30 (August 2016): 23–28 (in Hebrew), http://besacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/CSD30web.pdf.

91 Ibid., p. 23.

COGAT is responsible for coordinating activities of government ministries, the IDF, and the security agencies vis-à-vis the Palestinians, while ensuring that the relevant government civilian affairs policy is being implemented. COGAT also engages in promoting humanitarian issues, as well as infrastructural and economic projects in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.[92] In addition, COGAT focuses on foreign relations, including with international organizations, and has a public inquiries department, a spokesperson's office, and the Office of the Advisor on Palestinian Affairs. COGAT trains the next generation of coordination and liaison officers and provides courses in Arabic to various units in the security establishment.

The Civil Administration operates in Judea and Samaria under COGAT's authority and coordinates the activities vis-à-vis Palestinians and the Jewish settlements there. A Coordination and Liaison Administration office also operates in the Gaza Strip and is responsible for civilian, economic, and security coordination with the Palestinian side.[93]

The officers' training program in the Civil Administration includes many lectures on Islam, Palestinian society, the fundamentals of the dispute, the roles of the international organizations operating in the region, and an Arab language course. The training program also imparts an in-depth understanding of the rules of war and international law, which often constitute a basis for the IDF's activities in the territories.[94] Civil Administration officers in the various arenas maintain ongoing contacts and dialogues with Palestinian Authority officials as well as with unofficial sources from within Palestinian society. These channels of communication help Israel to develop its knowledge base about the local population, and these communications help both sides to maintain and deepen the coordination between them and adapt to changes and developments.[95]

The former director of the Civil Administration in Judea and Samaria, Brigadier-General David Menachem, spoke about the importance of cultural

92 Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories website, http://www.cogat.mod.gov.il/en/Pages/default.aspx.

93 Ibid.

94 Anshel Pfeffer, "The IDF is Trying to Improve the Handling of Palestinians," *Haaretz,* November 5, 2010, http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/politics/1.1228496.

95 Liran Ofek, "Security Coordination is (Still) Here," *Shorty, Security at Eye Level* (blog), Institute for National Security Studies, October 12, 2015 (in Hebrew), http://heb.inss.org.il/index.aspx?id=5193&Blogid=10749.

knowledge and its contribution to the IDF's operational effectiveness in the context of Operation Brother's Keeper, during which the military was deployed throughout Judea and Samaria with the mission of locating three kidnapped Jewish teens who later were found to have been murdered by Palestinian terrorists. The realization that Hebron is considered one of the most important strongholds of the Hamas movement in Judea and Samaria derived, according to Menachem, from the understanding that "the Arab population in Hebron is more traditional, religious and less liberal than what you will find in Ramallah, for example, and the connection to the Islamic movement and to Hamas is natural . . .This does not mean that Hebron's residents are terrorists, but rather, that the cultural-religious-ideological platform in Hebron is closer to what Hamas is offering."[96]

This cultural knowledge assisted the IDF in deciding not to disrupt the daily lives of the Palestinian population in other areas in Judea and Samaria during Operation Brother's Keeper, and it continued to issue work permits there. The deputy director of the Coordination and Liaison Administration in Hebron, Major Moshe Tatro, explained that if an incident of the scale of Operation Brother's Keeper had occurred a few years earlier, the IDF's mode of operation would have been different.[97] This change may be attributed to the contribution of the cultural knowledge amassed over the years.

Another source of cultural knowledge in Israel is the General Security Service (GSS). A key portion of the training of field officers in the GSS begins in *ulpan*, the GSS's language school, which has been operating for forty-five years. During their training, the field officers acquire high proficiency in Arabic and are exposed to different dimensions of the cultural context, including the religious dimension of the Palestinian society.[98] The field officers' cultural knowledge is developed and enhanced due to the operational experience that they acquire in the field, although in recent years, it has been "remote learning," due to the limited access to Palestinian population centers, mainly in the Gaza Strip. During Operation Protective Edge, GSS field officers were deployed alongside the Nachal Brigade officers during the take-over of territory in northern Gaza. The Nachal Brigade officers were

96 Yiftach Carmeli, "One Year After Operation Brother's Keeper: How the Operation Affected the Palestinian Population in Hebron," *IDF website*, December 6, 2015.

97 Ibid.

98 Amir Bohbot, "Exposé: The Secret World of the Shadow Forces Fighting Terrorism," *Walla*, April 24, 2015, http://news.walla.co.il/item/2843137.

impressed by the level of expertise that the field officers demonstrated and commended them for their scope of knowledge and command in the field, despite having never set foot in Beit Hanoun.[99]

A similar contribution may be attributed to the interrogators of captives, who are deployed with the combat forces and are responsible for obtaining intelligence by questioning captives in the theater and by interrogating captives who are transferred to prisoner camps in the rear. The professional training processes of interrogators of captives impart them with a relatively deep understanding of cultural aspects, which is important for engaging interrogees. The former head of the GSS, Yaakov Peri, explained that

> You must have an in-depth understanding of the territory under your purview. You need to be a professor of your particular territory and you must be well versed in the socioeconomic, economic, political, and social aspects of the diverse populations that live in it—you must be familiar with the influential clans and organizations, you must know the streets and every detail that will help you control your territory.[100]

Notwithstanding the growing awareness of the importance of the cultural dimension within the organizations described above, this dimension is still not enough developed and does not yet have a sufficient impact on their intelligence work processes (collection, processing, and dissemination), mainly in relation to macrosocial aspects. The materiality of cultural intelligence has not yet been assimilated in the processes of training, force-building, or in the operating doctrines of COGAT, the Civil Administration in the territories, or the GSS, and it has also not yet been translated into routine, orderly and methodical cooperation with academic researchers and their integration into the various levels of the intelligence research network.

Conclusions

The Human Terrain System in the American military was created and developed due to the challenges posed by fighting in densely populated theaters. The evolution from classic warfare to war against jihadist terrorists, to counterinsurgent operations and peace-keeping operations in other countries and on other continents compelled the combat forces to change their patterns

99 Ibid.
100 Ibid.

of activity. This change led to a need for high-quality intelligence about the non-state opponent operating from inside the civilian population and under its protection.

Acquiring a deep understanding of the local culture is a vital condition for ensuring the relevance of the military mission. It became evident that cultural intelligence, as a means of correlating the cultural knowledge created by the Human Terrain System and the intelligence needed for carrying out the military mission, is essential. In order to guarantee high quality cultural intelligence, both cultural awareness and sensitivity are needed, which together are an expression of intercultural competence.

The recognition of the importance of cultural intelligence led the American military, which has been operating in geographically and culturally remote and complex arenas in recent decades—such as Iraq, Afghanistan, and Syria—to develop the Human Terrain System. This system is based on professional teams of social scientists, who are embedded in forces at various levels and whose role is to help the forces in the combat theaters gain an understanding of the culture and the society. Commanders and team members who took part in the human terrain program widely agreed that the Human Terrain System contributes to the relevance and success of the military mission. However, alongside the importance attributed to the system, its operation also sparked criticism, both in military and in academic circles. Despite the criticism, and contrary to reports of termination of the program, the US Department of Defense announced that the program will continue and that additional resources might also be allocated to it.

Since it is reasonable to assume that the United States will continue to be involved in operations against insurgents and terrorists in the Middle East, the need to understand the society and culture in the operating theaters will be critical, particularly given the emergence and strengthening of the Islamic State, in addition to the commitment of the US-led coalition to destroy it. Such an understanding can also be important to the United States in sustaining existing alliances and developing new political relations in Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America. Cultural intelligence has become essential input in the era of "wars amongst people." Despite this, and despite the methodological, operational, and organizational developments of the Human Terrain System in the American context, gaps still exist and, in many cases, the deliverables are inadequate.

Gaps in knowledge of cultural matters also exist among the security and intelligence agencies in Israel; their assimilation in the combat doctrine and the intelligence methodology is not optimal. Given the characteristics of combat in densely populated theaters with which the IDF contends, it is recommended to develop information collection and research capabilities, alongside training methodologies and processes in the field of cultural knowledge in the various arenas, and to receive assistance from social scientists and integrate them both in the processes and in the organizational frameworks. This will facilitate the development and improvement of Israel's knowledge base about neighboring cultures.