

# THE MILITARY AS A CONTRIBUTOR TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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In the last two decades there has been a marked increase in the involvement of military forces in development activities that have traditionally been outside the military sphere. This trend has been particularly evident in Third World countries, where the need for social development is most pressing.

This article aims to examine the contribution that the military may make to national development in contemporary societies. Attention will be focussed on two subjects: in particular — the arguments that have been advanced for and against the principle of military involvement in national development, and the spheres in which military forces in other countries have made a positive contribution to development.

## **Participation by the Military: Arguments For and Against**

Whenever the question of military participation in national development schemes has been raised, a number of arguments have regularly been put forward, both for and against this kind of involvement.

The argument that has been advanced most often against participation by the military in this field is that it interferes with the primary task of a military force — the effective defence of the country which it serves. According to this point of view, the involvement of an armed force in development schemes inevitably results in the diversion of scarce resources of manpower and materials

away from their use for vital defence purposes. Even in Israel, where the defence force now has a highly developed social role, there was considerable resistance to the idea of the military fulfilling a social function at the time of the state's establishment in 1948, particularly since Israel was facing a grave threat to her survival from neighbouring Arab states.<sup>1</sup>

Yet in Israel, and elsewhere, such viewpoints have tended to be outweighed by the arguments in favour of a developmental role for the military. One of the main reasons for this is that experience has shown that armed forces can play a significant social role with few or no harmful effects on their military effectiveness.

In the first place, it has been pointed out by those who support military participation in development work that there is considerable justification for their views on economic grounds. In developing countries, which are particularly short of funds, scarce resources such as trained manpower must be utilised as fully as possible. In such a situation it is not thought to be sufficient merely to employ military personnel and resources in a standby role ready to defend the country should it become necessary: when the country is not involved in military hostilities, they should also be used as fully as possible for other purposes as well. This argument applies particularly strongly in countries such as Israel and Turkey, where compulsory national service deprives the economy of skilled young labour for extended periods.<sup>2</sup>



**Bushman Child bandaged by doctor in operational area.**

A further argument for military involvement on economic grounds is that projects which would otherwise be too costly become possible if carried out by members of armed forces. This is so because certain expenses, such as pay and outlays on accommodation, are already being met anyway if members of military forces are used for this work.

In severely underdeveloped countries there is also a strong argument in favour of employing the military in development work since they may be one of the few sources of administrative skills in the country, for senior officers necessarily receive instruction in the administrative field in the course of their military training. Furthermore in countries with a strong religious tradition, the military may be one of the few sections of the community with a sufficiently progressive outlook to be capable of tackling development schemes effectively. The case of Iran, a country with a strong Islamic tradition, may be cited here. During the 1960's, the Iranian military was a major force in the implementation of extensive development schemes in their country.<sup>3</sup>

Considerations about public relations may also encourage the military authorities to play a broader social role, thereby improving the image of their country's armed forces. Although the military actions of a country's defence force may be in the national interest, it may be difficult for the local population to appreciate this, particularly if the military is acting merely in a stand-by capacity, and there is no obvious threat to the country: or if it is attempting to counter insurgency within the country it serves, and the local population are caught in the cross-fire.

The advantages that the military can gain by improving its public image with development work were particularly clearly illustrated in the Philippines in the 1950's. Here the contest between Huk guerilla insurgents and the Phillippine government moved dramatically in favour of the government when an enlightened Secretary of Defence put a halt to the army terrorising the local population in their attempts to stamp out the guerillas, and initiated wide-scale military involvement in development schemes in the educational and agricultural spheres.<sup>4</sup> This change in policy, along with certain reforms demanded by the population, was enough to render the Huk insurgents ineffective.

Another inducement to the military to participate in social programmes arises from the fact that

often the problems which exist among their own soldiers may originate in the problems of society. It may therefore be wise for them to assist in dealing with social problems before they become a serious impediment to combat effectiveness.

This was evidently the reasoning behind the Israeli Defence Force's programmes to deal with the gap in educational standards between Jews of Western and Oriental origin. This discrepancy is a problem for the defence force as well as for the country, for it means that Oriental Jews, who have a considerably lower level of education than Western Jews on average, have less potential as soldiers in a modern army than Western Jews. Furthermore, Oriental Jews may suspect they are being discriminated against if Western Jews are promoted more frequently than they are, even if this is the result of the Western Jews' superior educational levels, and tensions between Jews of different origins may result.

To lessen the risks of such tensions, as well as for other reasons, the Israeli Defence Force has had an intensive programme in operation for the last fifteen years to provide educational courses for servicemen with low educational qualifications.<sup>5</sup> Naturally this programme benefits not only the defence force, but also Israeli society, since it means that young Israelis entering the labour market are better qualified educationally, and the potential for tension between Oriental and Western Jews is considerably reduced.

Lastly it has been argued that, in the context of 'total war', which is increasingly the form of conflict between nations, it is insufficient for a military force to defend the country it serves merely by preparing itself for conventional warfare. If a war is 'being conducted simultaneously in all spheres — political, economic, diplomatic and military', as one definition of 'total war' puts it,<sup>6</sup> it would seem logical that the military authorities who have been entrusted with the task of defending a country should try to contribute as much as possible to countering this threat, not only on the battlefield, but also in other fields of activity.

Of course, the military cannot be expected to counter all the different types of onslaught entailed in a 'total war' on its own: the proponents of this view concede that the government of a country must take overall responsibility for co-ordinating the campaign to counter the total threat. Nevertheless the military authorities in

many countries have evidently thought it advisable for their forces to make a contribution to national development, in order to ensure that their preparations for defence in the traditional military sphere are not in vain.

### **Spheres of intervention**

Now that the reasons why the military has become involved in development projects have been examined, it is possible to go on to consider the spheres in which they have made a contribution to development in other countries.

### **Education and Training**

Clearly the military can make an important contribution by playing a part in raising the level of education among a country's population, as this should lead to further development in the economic, social and political fields. As this

section will show, the military can play an educative role both towards those in its ranks and towards civilians.

In a number of underdeveloped countries with conscript armies, the military has significantly raised the standard of education among considerable sections of the population without any clearly formulated educative programme. This is so because conscripts must necessarily receive some degree of training in verbal and technical skills in order to fill military posts competently. Thus, when they are released from the army after their period of national service, not only have they had their general educational level raised, many of them have also become qualified to perform skilled or semi-skilled civilian jobs such as those of mechanics or clerks.



**Teachers and Bushman children at primary school in operational area.**

Moreover, particularly in countries with low levels of development, the military can inculcate the attitudes necessary for work in modern occupations as well as providing training in specific skills. 'Just as the army represents an industrialised organisation, so must those who have been trained within it learn skills and habits of mind which would be of value in other industrial organisations.'<sup>7</sup>

But the armed forces in certain countries have not been satisfied with a situation where the levels of education and training within the military are raised merely as a by-product of training for military duties. Most notable amongst these is the Israeli Defence Force, whose special courses for those with low educational levels have already been mentioned above.

These highly intensive courses may take up as much as a year of an Israeli male's three year period of national service if he has received little education previously. They are organised by the Education Corps and take place within the confines of the Israeli Defence Force.<sup>8</sup> On completion of this course, the serviceman receives a certificate attesting to the fact that he has attained a school-leaving standard. In addition to the technical skills he may have acquired during his training, this certificate is of considerable use to him in gaining employment once he has completed his service.

A special system of apprenticeship has also been introduced into the Armoured Corps of the Israeli Defence Force to cater for young Israelis who have records of juvenile crime or delinquency.<sup>9</sup> On entering the corps, each youth in this category is allocated to a senior mechanic who is to act as his personal mentor. This programme has met with considerable success in its attempts to reform individuals. Not only does it increase the supply of trained mechanics to Israeli society; it also has the beneficial effect of reducing the number of potential members of street-gangs and of those who might become involved in more serious crime.

In addition to these programmes directed at those who are educationally below par, every Israeli serviceman is subject to a continuing programme of education throughout his period of service. The individual platoon commanders are responsible for conducting educational sessions with their troops once a week.<sup>10</sup> These sessions cover such topics as current affairs and Israeli culture and history, and serve to promote

national consciousness. The platoon commanders receive special training so that they can fill their educational role competently, and educational officers are attached to units to assist them in their task.

Apart from raising the levels of education and training within the armed forces, the military can also play a part in the education of the civilian population. The question immediately arises of which military personnel can be used in a teaching role of this kind without interfering too greatly with a military force's defensive function. It seems generally to have been the case that the military authorities have attempted to utilise those who have had formal academic training as teachers in an educative role as far as possible, where this can be reconciled with the military's requirements for personnel for active duty. A second major source of teaching personnel is those who are attached to the armed forces yet are not considered suitable for combat duty for one reason or another. The most note-worthy groups that fall into this category are males who are not medically fit, veterans and, in most societies, women. In different countries, members of each of these categories have been used at various times to perform an educative role, once they themselves have received the necessary training.

In El Salvador, for instance, veterans who have retired from active service are paid a small salary to act as teachers in their home villages, and also to train others as teachers.<sup>11</sup> In Israel, almost the entire educative function of the defence force is carried out by personnel from the 'Chen' Women's Corps.<sup>12</sup> Israeli females who have matriculated are called up for two years national service, and, while many of them perform duties in support units, their major contribution is in the teaching posts they fill throughout Israeli society wherever there are shortages of teachers, which is particularly the case in newly established border settlements.

Thus the educative role of the military towards the civilian population may take the form of training and supplying personnel to teach in schools under the control of either the military or civilian authorities. Another possibility suitable for areas where little or no development has taken place is the attaching of military personnel to communities to act as advisors and co-ordinators for educational and developmental work.

This was the course adopted in Iran by the Education Corps, which was established in 1963.<sup>13</sup> National servicemen selected for this corps were sent into the field for fourteen months, after an initial training period of four months where they gained the rank of sergeant. These corpsmen, who had at least to have completed high school, were allotted to a rural community for the duration of their field service. Their objectives in the educational sphere were to organise child education and adult literacy programmes, and to promote hygiene and recreational activities.

The Education Corps also had the further broad aims of encouraging progress in the field of agriculture, promoting the establishment of village councils, and fostering national unity. Each group of twenty villages and the corpsmen allotted to them were placed under the supervision of an Education Corps inspector, who had extensive practical experience of elementary education. In addition experts in fields such as agriculture conducted regular visits to the villages to consult with and advise the corpsmen.

The activities of the Education Corps proved highly successful. In a single year (1964-1965), the number of teachers in the rural areas increased by twelve thousand, and the number of children receiving education in these areas rose by 600 thousand, a figure which almost equalled the original enrolment figure there.<sup>14</sup> The scheme was also credited with checking the drift of the population from rural to urban areas. An illustration of the degree of harmony that was achieved between corpsmen and their pupils was the fact that, on completion of their service, at least 70% of the first intake of corpsmen applied for posts in the Ministry of Education in the same villages in which they had spent their service period.

The military can also participate in the educational field by providing assistance in the construction of school buildings. An unusual scheme along these lines known as the 'Mitrapab Education Foundation' has been established in Thailand as a result of co-operation between the Thai Army and interested US officials.<sup>15</sup> This body provides aid in the raising of funds for building classrooms, supplies specialised labour and tools, and materials that are not readily available. The local population is expected to provide the site for the buildings and the rest of the materials and labour.

It is difficult to over-emphasise the importance of education and training for national development. Once an individual has acquired a particular skill through training, he can be employed in a productive post in an industrial economy, thereby contributing to the national product. Moreover, if an individual has had his general level of education raised, he becomes more receptive to training for more skilled positions, and he is also able to participate in the political life of his country in a more informed manner. Thus by participating in the process of educating and training a country's human resources, the military can make a significant contribution to the future progress of a country.

### **Health and Hygiene**

Military forces world-wide have often been used to deal with crisis situations such as floods and hurricanes which affect sections of the civilian population. They are suited to such operations because they can provide manned transport and communications equipment at short notice, and because their training has equipped them to deal with similar situations in the military context. The question arises however of in which areas of social welfare the military can make a contribution on a longer-term basis.

One of the fields in which members of military forces have proved their usefulness in certain countries is the promotion of hygiene. As such tasks as the digging of drainage trenches and the de-infestation of areas of insect pests do not require any specific skills, troops without any particular training may be used in this way. Such work may usefully be done while military personnel are in an area for purposes of defence, but are not fully occupied for the time being.

A notable instance of military work in the field of hygiene took place during the months after the founding of the state of Israel.<sup>16</sup> A number of transit camps were established in the country to deal with the large influx of Jewish immigrants, and epidemics broke out in some of them as a result of the crowded conditions. Troops from the Israeli Defence Force worked continuously for four months digging drainage trenches and rebuilding unsanitary living quarters, and the level of disease dropped considerably as a result. One of the beneficial by-products of this activity was the enhancement of the Israeli Defence Force's image in the eyes of the immigrants.

Armed forces have similarly shown that they can perform valuable work in the field of medical care. In a standing army, this role may be limited by the fact that only sufficient medical personnel are recruited to deal with members of the military, not with civilians as well. With a force that is composed partly of conscripts, it is possible that a more extensive role can be played, since more medically trained personnel may be available. Firstly more trained doctors may be conscripted than are necessary to deal with the needs of the military personnel. Secondly usually sufficient conscripts are trained in basic medical skills to enable the armed forces to cope with wartime conditions, and so these personnel are considerably under-utilised in peacetime.



**Patient transferred from one hospital to another by SA Medical Corps.**

Doctors and other trained medical personnel can be used to man clinics in areas that lack adequate medical attention. In certain countries, moreover, the military have gone beyond curative medicine to play an active part in preventive medicine. In several areas they have taken part in immunisation campaigns, and in some countries have gone even further along these lines. The military in Guatemala have used their medical clinics as centres at which to conduct research on nutrition in the rural areas, thus opening the possibility of improving the general standard of health in these areas by remedying nutritional deficiencies.<sup>17</sup> In 1965 a Health Corps was established in the Iranian Army to deal with medical matters along similar lines to those described for the Education Corps above.<sup>18</sup>

In contributing to the promotion of health and hygiene, the military can play a valuable rôle, as health is not only desirable in itself, but also on economic grounds. It is now generally recognised that improved health in conjunction with

better nutrition improves the productivity of individuals.<sup>19</sup>

This obviously has implications for economic development, which will be dealt with in the following section.

### **Economic Development**

One may classify the military's contribution in the economic sphere into two broad categories — participation in the development of a country's economic infra-structure, and involvement in developing specific economic activities such as agriculture.

Often the requirements of the military overlap with those concerned with the development of a country's infrastructure. Improved roads and communications raise a country's military effectiveness as well as improving its economic potential. The truth of this is well illustrated by the case of Turkey, where a modern highway network was developed between 1950 and 1965 primarily to deliver American weapons to the US Armed Forces.<sup>20</sup>

A highly significant by-product of this development was the integration of the subsistence rural economy into the national economy. Not only did more rural produce reach the towns, but in addition, with the increased mobility available to them, the rural peasantry became more frequent purchasers of urban goods, and began to make claims for the same educational and hygiene services that the Turkish townspeople received. In other countries such as Pakistan, road construction by the military has been planned more consciously as part of an overall development programme.<sup>21</sup>

Armed forces are well-equipped to contribute in the sphere of infrastructure development, as certain of their personnel are trained for military purposes in the fields of engineering and communications. A number of countries have become aware of the contribution the military can make in these fields, and projects that have been proposed for the military are now being planned and assessed taking into consideration not only their value for national defence but also the contribution they can make to the development of the infrastructure.<sup>22</sup>

When one moves on to examine the types of economic activity to which the military has contributed, agriculture seems to be the field where armed forces have been the most active.

The form the military's contribution takes has varied considerably. The most limited form of participation is the provision of logistical support and transport for non-military personnel participating in agricultural development activities. This type of support is found in Brazil, where the country's army aids students' agricultural schemes in this way.<sup>23</sup> The armed forces can become more directly involved by providing training on-the-spot for the local population or supplying troops as labour at busy times, such as harvest.

A longer-term form of participation is the holding of courses to train farmers-to-be within the ranks of the military. In Pakistan conscripts may volunteer for a period of agricultural training of six months or more towards the end of their national service.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly the members of armed forces may be used to pioneer agricultural settlements themselves. In Israel this work is undertaken by members of the 'Nahal' Corps.<sup>25</sup> After completing their basic training those who have volunteered for this corps work for a year on 'n kibbutz' while remaining under the control of the country's defence force. Having gained the necessary agricultural experience, they then move on to establish new border settlements and do the pioneering work needed to set them going on a sound basis. Their presence there also serves a defensive purpose, since, with their military training behind them, the 'Nahal' corpsmen are equipped to guard these settlements, which are often deliberately located on the traditional infiltration routes used by terrorists.

A similar scheme for establishing agricultural settlements is pursued by the military in Pakistan.<sup>26</sup> Those conscripts who complete the agricultural course they provide are entitled to a plot in one of the areas that have been designated for settlement by the military. An interesting feature of this scheme is that intensive laboratory and field tests are conducted to determine which are the most suitable crops before cultivation is started.

In a limited number of countries, the military has intervened directly in other types of economic enterprise, supplying the funding and management for these ventures. The Burmese military authorities, for instance, through the Burmese Economic Development Corporation control enterprises as diverse as steel production, pharmaceutical manufacture and shipping.<sup>27</sup>

Likewise the Pakistani Defence Force has established and still partly administers sugar mills and concerns manufacturing breakfast food, rubber and shoes.<sup>28</sup>

This type of intervention is usually found in countries where the military has at least a part share in the governing of the country. Certain arguments have been put forward to justify this kind of arrangement. Among these are that at a certain stage of the development of an under-developed country the military is one of the few institutions that can supply the necessary management skills for a commercial enterprise. Furthermore it is argued that the military may be dependent upon the effective functioning of certain industries — the steel industry for example — in order to gain vital supplies, and it is wiser for it to control such industries itself in order to guarantee these supplies.

In the majority of countries however the military has refrained from this type of intervention. The strongest arguments against it are that in most countries the military would be intervening in areas of production which could be conducted more efficiently by private enterprise, and that intervention in the commercial sector gives the military excessive power, placing it in competition with the civil authorities. Finally while it may be true that officers in the military acquire certain management skills through their training and experience, there are considerable differences between the management of military resources and commercial concerns.

## Conclusion

Consequently one can conclude that modern armies no longer operate in the 'security-belligerency dimension' and there are a number of areas where the military can make an effective contribution to national development. Yet, as emerged from the discussion of military participation in commercial enterprises above, there are occasions where there can be strong arguments against military involvement in development work. It was suggested in the first section that the military might decide against participation if a project's drain on manpower and other military resources was excessive. A further factor discouraging military involvement comes into play when a defence force's public image is already so unfavourable that any development scheme in which it took part would immediately be discredited.

It therefore seems there are a number of questions which should be weighed before those in charge of a military force decide to participate in any particular development scheme or programme. When one examines the military's experience in the spheres covered in this article, it seems that the most important of these questions are the following — To what extent can military participation be reconciled with the use of military manpower and resources for defence activities? Next, have the military the necessary skills and resources in the areas in which involvement is being considered? And lastly, will the military's planned intervention enable the section of the population being aided to achieve self-sufficiency within the foreseeable future, or will it result in continued dependence on military aid and an accompanying long-term drain on manpower and resources?

#### FOOT-NOTES

1. T. Bowden: *Army in the Service of the State* (Tel Aviv, 1976), p 37.
2. M. Janowitz: *The Military in the Political Development of New*

- Nations*, (London, 1964) p 82.
3. T. Bowden: *op cit*, p 44.
4. R. Taber: *The War of the Flea*, (New York, 1965), pp 138-141.
5. E. Luttwak and D. Horowitz: *The Israeli Army*, (London 1975), p 443.
6. A. Beaufre: *An Introduction to Strategy*, (New York, 1965), p 11.
7. L. W. Pye: "Armies in the Process of Political Modernisation", in J. J. Johnson: *The Role of the Military in Underdeveloped Countries*, (Princeton), p 82.
8. E. Luttwak and D. Horowitz: *op cit*, p 443.
9. *British Army Review*, No 49, Apr 1975. (T. Bowden: The Education Programme of the Israeli Defence Force) p38
10. *Ibid*, p 37.
11. *Militaria*, 8/2, 1978 (H. R. Heitman, The Potential Role of the Military in National Development), p 9.
12. T. Bowden: *Army in the Service of the State* (Tel Aviv, 1976) p 75.
13. *Ibid*, pp 39-45.
14. *Ibid*, p 43.
15. H. R. Heitman, *op cit*, p 71.
16. T. Bowden *op cit*, p 71.
17. H. R. Heitman, *op cit*, p 9.
18. T. Bowden, *op cit*, p 44.
19. South African Journal of African Affairs, No 2, 1978. (J. L. Eloff, "Difficulties encountered in the development of health services in developing countries"), p 148.
20. J. C. Hurewitz: *Middle East Politics: The Military Dimension* (London, 1969) p 433.
21. *Ibid*, p 432.
22. *Ibid*.
23. H. R. Heitman, *op cit*, p 8.
24. *Ibid*, p 10.
25. T. Bowden, *op cit*, pp 150-152.
26. H. R. Heitman, *op cit*, p 10.
27. M. Janowitz, *op cit*, p 76.
28. H. R. Heitman, *op cit*, p 10.