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THESES

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Antiterrorist Operations in Egypt from the Nasser era

to the present day

Ph.D. dissertation

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1. Background and Relevance of the Topic

As the topic of my thesis, I chose to define the theoretical framework of various principles of warfare and terrorism.

Terrorism is the most significant global problem of our time. From the point of view of the security policy, we can talk about a permanent problem that requires continuous research. The terrorist groups are constantly able to evolve and multiply themselves. New terrorist groups are constantly appearing, whose regional activities are a global problem. In addition, today they are active, to a significant extent, only in the so-called developing world (Africa and Asia, as well as the Middle East). In these areas, modern statehood took root later, -it appeared only from the end of the 19th century- and the newly formed states are not really able to cope with the problems arising from the statehood.

They couldn't do this, because terrorism is constantly evolving and uses new methods in addition to old ones. These groups moved their headquarters to crisis zones, and now they are using both the principles and methods of so-called asymmetric warfare. Furthermore, the states, formed during the 20th century, were burdened with significant tribal and ethnic tensions, so they are unable to act effectively against terrorist groups. Although there have been groups using similar political violence throughout history, they can only be classified as terrorist groups if we are using current concepts.

I consider terrorism as a new name for a previously existing form of activity. However, since the modern theory of the state is not in accordance with the conception of the state of earlier ages, it encounters great difficulties when it has to delimit an older form of action. On the other hand, technological development and strategic realities have both influenced the targets chosen by terrorism and the tools and methods they use. Therefore, the examination of new tools and different methods also provides an opportunity to determine the development of terrorism. I chose Egypt for the practical investigation of terrorism. After the Arab Spring, the country served as the centre of several terrorist groups, so I had the opportunity to investigate several groups using different methods in parallel.

Also, I consider it important to examine how a Middle Eastern country is able to act against terrorist groups and what methods it uses. I believe that since Hungary is part of the Christian-Jewish culture, we therefore examine the activities of terrorist groups through Western eyes. Thus, we try to develop our own tool system, based on Western solutions, and we also examine anti-terrorist activity through the rules and tool system introduced there. Thus, the methods that Egypt use may possibly not be suitable for us. While in Western terminology, terrorism is a comprehensive problem that implies a broad approach, in Egypt it typically involves political-military solutions.

However, this does not necessarily mean that these solutions are outdated and inadequate. After all, it was mainly because of the solutions applied within these two security sectors that the Egyptian army was able to achieve significant success in the fight against terrorist groups. On the other hand, the Egyptian solutions included tools that may not be used in Europe or used rarely. Utilising the practical examples provided by the Egyptian anti-terrorist operations, I try to establish how well the different concepts, applied to asymmetric conflicts, are able to describe the reality.

The investigation of it is significant because the Egyptian security services used tools that are considered unacceptable according to a counter-insurgency manual (use of significant force, indiscriminate arrests, violent measures against civilians). All of these were solutions that the principles of new (asymmetric) warfare do not consider suitable for achieving success.

Examining the anti-terrorist operations in Egypt may also be suitable for me to create a new definition of terrorism. After all, in our country, and even in the world, terrorism is usually understood as the achievement of political goals through violence. However, the examination of the contemporary operations of terrorist groups has already confirmed that terrorist groups commit assassinations during conflicts for military, rather than political reasons. I believe that the definitions of terrorism that we have come to know reflect our Western worldview. Because terrorist groups are unable to carry out effective operations against Western states, so they choose tactics of intimidation. One of my goals is, therefore, to create a new definition of terrorism that can effectively respond to new problems.

The study of anti-terrorist operations in Egypt is also relevant because terrorism is a global problem, and the results of this thesis can offer new solutions against it. Furthermore, in my examination, the time factor also plays a pivotal role. The insurgency and the activities of the army took a long time; therefore I could examine the processes that play a key role in the success of military forces. It can be considered that the tools, which were used by the military, can be fit for other countries as well. Religion can be such a tool. After all, in Egypt, religion was considered one of the tools with which the state was able to discredit terrorist groups. And it was used to discourage members from further participation in the different terrorist organisations. Although religious ideology is useless in some respects (mainly because of the role played by the Al-Azhar mosque in state politics previously), religious persuasion is not necessarily in use in the West.

In my thesis, I also analyse the cyber operations used against terrorist groups. So far this tool has not been the subject of any investigation. The cyber operations have been assigned a subordinate role in the fighting against terrorism. It was used also rarely in the military operations of the Egyptian army against terrorist groups. However, we can also determine other useful solutions that can be used during anti-terrorist operations. We cannot ignore the effects of international politics either. Since international politics also plays a significant role in the operations against terrorist groups, its investigation cannot be bypassed.

From Egypt's point of view, one of the most important international actor is Israel, which plays an active role in Egypt's anti-terrorist operations. Egypt also relied on the United States of America, which provided important aid to it. We can refer to the Russian Federation as well, because it also plays a significant role in Egypt's security. So this country's activities can also be examined from the point of view of the anti-terrorist operations of Egypt.

2. Hypotheses and Research objectives

In my dissertation, I formulated the following hypotheses for the examination of the scientific problems described above:

1. During the elimination of terrorist groups, the Egyptian security forces used methods contrary to those that were normally used in counter-insurgency operations, and to a significant extent, they attempted to resolve the conflict with military force, successfully.
2. Another important factor was the government's 2013 closure of the sources of information regarding the Sinai peninsula. In addition, we can highlight the use of strategic communication, which could have given a positive image regarding the success of the anti-terrorist action.
3. Mass arrests also played a significant role in the elimination of terrorist groups. Furthermore, the use of high-level violence (as well as the brutal action of the Algerian army against extremist forces) discouraged terrorist organisations from further attacks.
4. Among the actors, which helped the military, the role of the tribes can be examined. The violence, they experienced from the terrorist groups made them side with the army and provided essential assistance to the state against the terrorist groups.
5. Asymmetric/fourth generation/hybrid principles cannot be applied to the Egyptian anti-terrorist fight. The activities of Egyptian terrorist groups raise significant questions in terms of the definition of terrorism. A significant part of the assassinations mainly affects members of the state violence apparatus.

Considering my hypotheses, I formulated the following research questions:

1. In order to understand the activities of Egyptian terrorist groups, it is important to know the theories of "asymmetric" warfare. How did guerrilla forces evolve? What principles do they fight for? How are they able to achieve success?
2. I intend to examine terrorism and terrorist groups as basic concepts. I intend to conduct the research along the following questions. What concepts did the various international actors create? To what extent can terrorist groups correspond to the conceptual framework? Were these attacks always conducted against the population? Do individual assassinations constitute terrorism?

3. During the examination of the Egyptian terrorist groups, I would like to answer the following questions: How were these organisations formed? What types of assassinations were committed? Based on the way the attacks were carried out, can we talk about a terrorist group, or should we use the definition of a political resistance organisation or guerrilla force? How did the government eliminate them?
4. To examine the activities of security organisations, I have created the following research questions: To what extent can the assassinations of terrorist groups comply with the principles of "asymmetric" warfare? Did the army apply solutions based on the principles of the anti-insurgency operations? What are the means by which terrorist groups have been suppressed? Were these more traditional tools, or did they use new methods in order to eliminate terrorist groups? What opportunities did the international actors have to influence the processes? Were the tools of "asymmetrical" warfare properly applied?

And also to prepare my thesis I formulated the following research goals;

- Comparison of the different theories based on the so-called asymmetric warfare (asymmetric warfare, fourth-generation warfare, hybrid warfare, unconventional warfare, gray-zone conflicts).
- Examination of the different concepts of terrorism and comparison them with the implemented attacks.
- Investigation of the formation and development of terrorist groups in Egypt from the Nasser to the Mubarak era. When analysing the activities of terrorist groups, efforts should be made to examine the different types of attacks in more detail.
- During the research, the causes of the outbreak of the uprising in the Sinai Peninsula and the methods used by the tribes should be investigated.
- It is necessary to analyse the activities of terrorist groups and the responses of the security apparatus along the lines of the demarcation of different eras.
- It is necessary to separate the attacks taking place in the interior of the country and in the Sinai Peninsula and examine them separately to learn from the experience.
- The main focus is based on the operations of the Islamic State in the Sinai Province, the parallel analysis of the various attacks and the countermeasures used by the army. This is important in order to assess the efficiency of the antiterrorist operations.

- Examining the tools used by the state and security agencies and comparing them with the methods used by previous presidents.
- At the end of the thesis, after comparing the theoretical and practical aspects, a new theory of warfare will be developed, as well as a new concept of terrorism will be created.

Terrorism is a global problem that has a significant negative impact on security in many parts of the world. The study of Egyptian counter-terrorism operations not only provides practical experience with the various attacks, but with its help, new types of tools will be examined. The new definition of warfare and terrorism developed at the end of the dissertation provides an additional opportunity to facilitate the analysis of future attacks.

3. Research Methods

The thesis examines the practical applicability of various theories of guerrilla warfare and currently available concepts related to terrorism through a detailed analysis of Egyptian terrorist groups and counter-insurgency. I have therefore divided the thesis into four parts, thereby separating the different analytical frameworks from each other and thus attempting to simplify the research process.

In the first major chapter, I define the different concepts. The studied country is in the Middle East, which has fundamental security policy dynamics, unique challenges, risks, and political processes. Since the second half of the thesis deals mainly with the terrorist groups that appear in the region and carry out attacks there, it is important to define the Middle East appropriately.

Since terrorist groups have largely settled in conflict zones, where they carry out organised violence, it is important to examine the theories of guerrilla warfare. I will try to examine them separately, and I will analyse the theories using practical examples. On the one hand, practical examples help to better understand the different theories and to decide how useful they are in the analysis of the events in Egypt. I examine a total of five theories in the thesis; these are asymmetric warfare, fourth-generation warfare, unconventional warfare, hybrid warfare, grey-zone conflicts. Although the concepts are often used synonymously, they describe a given phenomenon based on different characteristics and emphasise different factors. Therefore, it is important to use practical examples, through which we can justify or reject them.

I also intend to examine the different definitions of terrorism, which are essential for a better understanding of both the formation and activities of terrorist groups. Also, their examination allows us to gain preliminary knowledge about their operation when analysing the activities of different groups. I will examine the concepts developed in the field of asymmetric conflicts and terrorism by analysing the operations of Egyptian terrorist groups and the army. I will divide the second larger unit, which examines Egyptian counter-terrorism operations, into two larger parts. The first half deals with the analysis of the processes from Nasser to Mubarak. Here I mainly deal with the analysis of the formation of terrorist groups and their activities, since several characteristics can be observed that also appear in modern counter-terrorism struggles. Exploring these characteristics can help us understand the mindset of different terrorist groups and resistance organisations, and this also facilitates the analysis of various actions. At the same time, examining the counter-terrorism operations of the pre-Arab Spring era can help determine whether the security forces acted effectively against terrorist groups based on the tools they used.

The second major unit analyses the uprisings in Sinai and the interior of Egypt that emerged after the Arab Spring. At that time, several smaller and larger terrorist groups and insurgent organisations were active throughout the country, whose activities intensified after the takeover in 2013. In this part, I examine the development in the activities of terrorist organisations, the methods of committing different types of attacks, and the response activities used by the state and security forces. My goal is to analyse the concepts explained in the first part based on the experiences drawn from practical activities. With this, I support one of the so-called asymmetric warfare principles, and I also examine which concept of terrorism I consider acceptable based on practical experience. Furthermore, I also examine how and with what means the Egyptian security services were able to act effectively against terrorist groups.

4. Results of the research

In my thesis, I examined counter-terrorism operations in Egypt. I was curious to see how the terrorist groups operating in the country and how their operations fit the definitions of terrorism and asymmetric warfare. Therefore, I first clarified these concepts and then drew on practical experiences.

My findings during the research can be summarised as follows. On the one hand, the various concepts of asymmetric warfare were unable to adequately model the activities of Egyptian terror and resistance groups. One of the main reasons for this, in my opinion, is that effective resistance movements can only function effectively against weak states. Since the state in Egypt did not fundamentally fail, the army was able to eliminate the various terror groups after a long time.

Another important reason was that the terrorist groups found themselves facing the most significant political, economic and military actor in the country, the Egyptian army. The army was able to mobilise significant resources, capabilities and manpower and was practically insensitive to losses. They blocked various news sources and, through effective communication, made the population believe that they had everything under control. Therefore, the terrorist groups (especially the Islamic State Sinai Province) practically withered away, and, despite their effective operations and high adaptability, they could not achieve victory.

In the thesis, I attempted to introduce a new concept, which I named Adaptive Warfare. The essence of this is that the weaker side is able to adapt to the constantly changing political-military-economic situation, thereby having a continuous advantage over the enemy fighting with traditional principles. I found the theory of Adaptive Warfare to be justified in studying the operation of Egyptian terrorist groups and insurgent groups. However, the groups I examined were not able to achieve victory due to the reasons analysed above.

I also examined the concepts related to terrorism, which, in my opinion, were not able to adequately describe contemporary processes, so I introduced a new concept. Terrorist groups are now mainly active in war zones, and a significant part of their means are mainly aimed at fighting an armed conflict. In addition, atrocities against civilians can also be observed, as an example of which are the attacks committed by the Islamic State's Sinai Province against the civilian population of the peninsula. The Egyptian terrorist operations that I examined fully justified my new theory regarding the operation and description of terrorism.

5. Summarized results

In my thesis, I formulated four hypotheses, which I summarise as follows:

Based on my first hypothesis, I assumed that the Egyptian forces used methods contrary to the means specified in the use of counter-insurgency operations during the elimination of terrorist groups and tried to successfully resolve the conflict largely with military force. The examination of the Egyptian operations showed that the Egyptian security forces generally carried out traditional search and rescue operations. The army generally tried to hinder the movement of terrorist groups with checkpoints.

In the event of attacks, the army relied on helicopters or bombings to repel terrorist attacks. Domestically, the various organisations were able to be quickly eliminated, as they had small numbers. It happened that the different cells joined forces with each other, and their members were known to the security forces. The intensity of attacks on the peninsula decreased from 2016 onwards, which was due to a lesser extent to the decline of the Islamic State and to a significant extent to the assertion of superiority by the army. The security forces relied on large-scale operations by the air force, which proved surprisingly successful in suppressing the terrorist groups. Thus, I confirmed the first hypothesis.

The second hypothesis is that the government-ordered news blackout also played a crucial role in the successful operations. My research showed that the security forces used information operations tools, such as distributing newspapers and ordering a news blackout around the Sinai Peninsula. This was accompanied by the use of cyber operations, which mainly aimed to shut down websites used by terrorist groups. In addition, the Egyptian army emphasised the continued success of its counter-terrorism operations to the public, thus managing to reassure the population. My research therefore confirmed my second hypothesis.

When formulating the third hypothesis, I assumed that mass arrests also played a significant role in eliminating terrorist groups and that the Egyptian military achieved great success through the significant use of force. I have already touched on the second part of the hypothesis in the first point. So now I will only evaluate the first part. The military launched extensive search and elimination operations against terrorist groups.

During their implementation, many people who had no connection with various terrorist organisations were arrested. Moreover, the arrested persons were placed in common cells with the extremists and were subjected to torture. Although this method did indeed strengthen extremist ideologies and terrorist activities in the short term, it caused a significant loss of human resources to the terrorist groups in the long term. Thus, in fact, the arrests contributed significantly to the suppression of terrorism, so the third hypothesis can also be verified.

The fourth hypothesis can be summarised as follows: the tribes switched sides to the army mainly due to the violent activities of the terrorist groups. The role of the tribes was essential in order to eliminate the activities of the terrorist groups. In the thesis, I examined the relationship between the tribes and the terrorist groups. The terrorists carried out several significant attacks against the tribes; their members were tortured and executed. The tribes together issued a manifesto in 2015, in which they protested against the treatment of the terrorist groups and sided with the government. From then on, they participated in the army's anti-terrorist operations and facilitated their success with their information. Thus, I consider the fourth hypothesis to be justified.

When formulating the fifth hypothesis, I believed that the principles laid down by various definitions of asymmetric warfare were not applicable to the Egyptian counter-terrorist struggles. The activities of Egyptian terrorist groups raised significant questions in terms of the definition of terrorism. This was due to the fact that a significant part of the assassinations mainly affect members of the security apparatus of the state.

To answer the question of the activities of terrorist groups, I examined the asymmetric operations of our time. The different theories have shown the means and principles by which each group fights, but they have not revealed much about their development. The main reason for this is that these groups must constantly adapt to the political-economic-military situation if they want to win. This adaptation influences the development of the groups and makes/has made it impossible to properly analyse their activities. However, the theory of Adaptive Warfare can effectively support further investigations related to modern conflicts from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

The analysis of the concepts of terrorism highlighted that this threat is still assessed as a domestic security problem by various experts. There were some statements in the concepts with which I agreed. These statements include the possibility of attacks against civilians or the threat of them, as well as the emphasis on links with organised crime circles.

However, the concepts created do not take into account the significant changes affecting terrorism. Due to global counter-terrorism operations, various groups have established new bases in the periphery and in third world countries burdened with internal conflicts. These groups have adapted to the existing conditions and can be considered more like guerrilla forces that use the means of terrorism in order to achieve a favourable military end state for them. However, we can see a difference between terrorist groups and guerrilla forces conducting so-called adaptive operations in that the number of civilian victims in the former may exceed the level that is justified by military goals.

A guerrilla group interested in taking power or achieving military victory seeks to minimise casualties, as it is important for it to win the sympathy of the population in order to gain success. In contrast, this aspect is less valid for terrorist groups since they can achieve the ideological end state they want by causing a large number of civilian casualties. This distinction may be important if it is necessary to separate terrorist groups from guerrilla groups in the future. Based on my investigations so far, I believe that I have also succeeded in confirming the fifth hypothesis.

6. New Scientific Results

Based on the hypotheses, I formulated the following research results:

1., I created a new concept of warfare, Adaptive Warfare. Its essence is that adaptive forces continuously adapt to circumstances, thereby achieving success against traditional forces. I proved the validity of the theory by analysing the Egyptian anti-terrorist operations.

2., By analysing the activities of Egyptian terrorist groups, I revealed that terrorist groups are largely involved in armed conflicts against other non-state actors and Egyptian and Israeli security forces, and their activities also result in a high level of civilian casualties.

3., I have shown that Egyptian forces were able to eliminate terrorist groups using a high level of violence. Their success depended on the significant violence used by the terrorist groups, which discouraged the tribes/civilians from these organisations. At the same time, the Egyptian forces had resources that they could put to use in counter-terrorist operations, which the terrorist groups could not counter.

4., I analysed the development of the tools used by the three presidents (Nasser, Sadat and Mubarak), and then, since the Arab Spring, by President Sisi. I explored the development cycle that can be seen in the creation of terrorist groups and their elimination. The security forces initially used mainly violence, but over the years they replaced these with more subtle tools (financial and informational), followed by the elimination of the activities of terrorist groups, as we saw with Mubarak and Sisi.

7. Practical Applicability Of Research

- For the armed forces, to better understand the functioning of insurgencies, to eliminate their operations, during counter-terrorist operations, and to analyse and eliminate the activities of terrorist groups
- For the police forces, mainly during counter-terrorist operations, to determine the organization of terrorist groups and the types of various attacks
- At the political level, in connection with the measures applied during the introduction of a state of emergency, during the coordination of the activities of the army and security forces, and in relation to economic measures taken after uprisings
- It can be a basis for research institutes in the analysis of crises and armed conflicts, and in determining the nature of modern conflicts
- In higher education, in doctoral training for educational and research purposes.

8. The Author'S Related Publications

1. Majorosi Ádám, 'Terrorellenes Műveletek a Sínai-félszigeten', Hadtudományi Szemle, 2019/4.,81.-99.
2. Majorosi Ádám, 'Olaszországi Muszlim Szervezetek', Hadtudományi Szemle, 2019/3., 61.-75.
3. Majorosi Ádám, 'Aszimmetrikus Hadviselés Egyiptomban', Szakmai Szemle, 2020/3., 45-68.
4. Majorosi Ádám, 'Az egyiptomi és török hadsereg politikai hatalmának összehasonlító elemzése', Hadtudomány és a 21. Század konferenciakötet, 2020/3., 192-208.
5. Majorosi Ádám, 'Az Iszlám Állam Gazdaságpolitikája', Szakmai Szemle, 2021/1,35-46..
6. Majorosi Ádám,' Terrorellenes fellépés Nasszertől Mubárákig', Hadtudomány és a 21. Század konferenciakötet, 2022., 163.-177.
7. Majorosi Ádám,' Overview of the Antiterrorist Operations of the Arab Republic of Egypt between 2011 to 2022', National Security Review, 2022/2., 165-189.
8. Majorosi Ádám,' Asymmetric Warfare in Egypt', Lélektan és Hadviselés, 2022/1., 43-67.
9. Majorosi Ádám,' Öngyilkos Merényletek Egyiptomban a 2004 és 2020 közötti időszakban- Az öngyilkos merényletek elkövetési módjainak vizsgálata szervezettség alapján, s vallás szerepének figyelembevételével', Külügyi Műhely, 2021/2., 109-137.
10. Majorosi Ádám,' Az egyiptomi terrorellenes műveletek áttekintése a 2010 és 2020 közötti időszakban, Válságtól válságig, Válogatott tanulmányok az észak-afrikai és közel-keleti régió országairól az „arab tavasz” és a Covid-19 pandémia közötti időszakban', Külügyi Műhely Alapítvány, Budapest, 2022., 67-91.

9. Biography of the Author

The author studied international security and defence policy and international public relations at the National University of Public Service. After graduating from university, I was employed by the Hungarian Defence Forces in the then Civil-Military Cooperation and Psychological Operations Centre. At the unit, I was mainly involved in preparing analyses and giving lectures. At the same time, I became a member of the Mohács 500 Battlefield Research Association, and I am involved in battlefield research, preparing studies, and giving lectures.

In addition to the Mohács 500 Association, I prepare military history studies, which have been published in several scientific journals. During my doctoral studies, I gave several lectures. From 2022, I will work as a Senior Lecturer at the Defence Policy Department of the Ministry of Defence. I am involved in preparing analyses, compiling background materials and performing office work. I have an advanced level of English and an intermediate level of Italian, and I am currently studying Arabic.