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Civil Affairs in the Seventeenth Century: Civil-Military Relations During the English Civil War

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Abstract

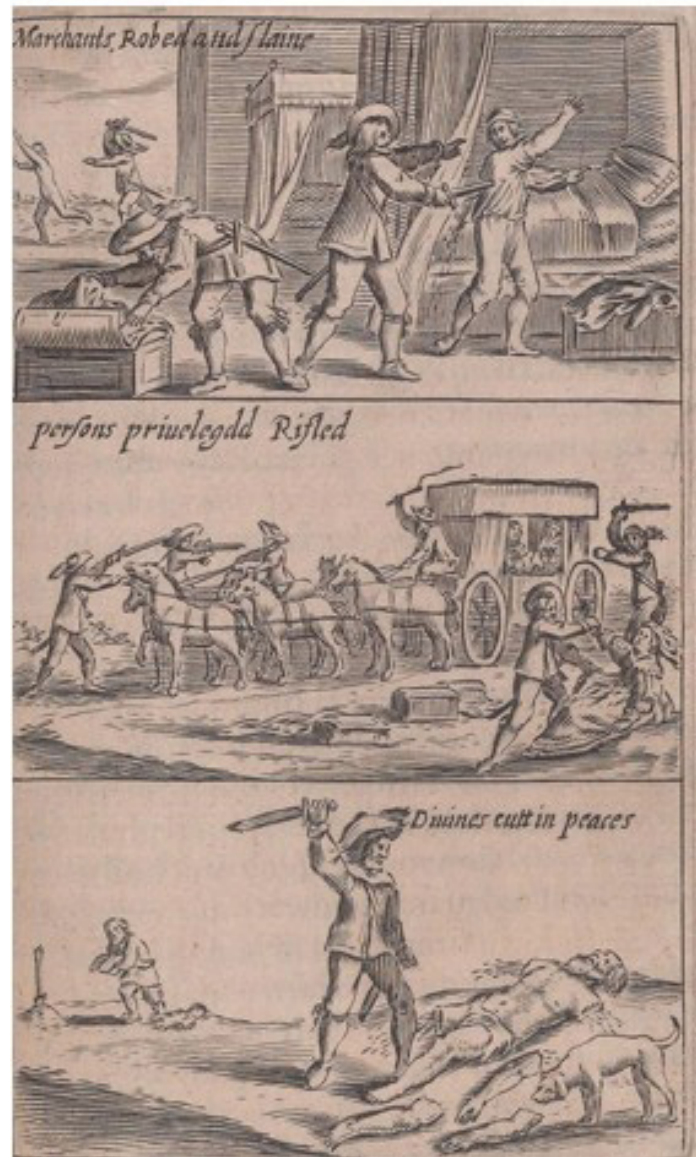
Civil Affairs is becoming an increasingly important part of the Special Operations force structure. Its development during the 20th century represents the formalization of historical trends in civil-military operations. The principles of these operations can be seen much earlier in history. This report seeks to detail examples of civil-military operations conducted during the English Civil War and tie them to current trends in 21st century doctrine and operations.

A Note on Methodology

This research conducted to compile this report consisted primarily of an analysis of archival materials. The archives visited include the East Sussex Record Office, Warwickshire County Record Office, and the National Archives UK. Numerous manuscript collections were viewed, scanned, and transcribed over the course of multiple days. Most of the material consisted of correspondence and account books.

Main Report

War in the 17th century was not a pleasant affair. While conceptions of chivalry and the civilized form of war may have been present, Germany was not an example of those conceptions. The stories of the war in Germany, which reached England, told of a brutal war against soldiers and civilians alike. The Thirty Years' War in the Holy Roman Empire was a particularly deadly, long, and unrestrained affair. England, prior to its own internal conflict which would arise in the 1640s, learned of the actions of Germany through the stories of those who had fought there and the written word. One work, *The Lamentations of Germany* by Phillip Vincent and published four years prior to the English Civil War, provided a brutal description of the war. It details robberies, burnings, famine, slaughter, and many more crimes committed against the civilians of Germany.¹ This work did much to influence the thinking of English citizens. However, as will be detailed further. The experience of civilians during the English Civil War was substantially different from the horrors of Germany. The reason for this experience can be attributed to many causes, including the demographics of the soldiery, the reliance on garrisons, or the governmental system of England. Some of these potential causes can be connected to the modern phenomenon of civil affairs.



¹ Vincent Phillip. *The Lamentations of Germany*, (London; F.G, 1638), 21.



War is a complex system with innumerable factors contributing to its outcome. Often mentioned are those involving force composition, strategic decision-making, and logistics. Of note, logistics is often mentioned in an abstract manner. Resources flow, by various means, from the economy of a particular state to the direct possession of the military. Of concern is the numbers produced by the military economy, the available means to transport the goods, and how to protect the goods while in transit. This thinking works in an expeditionary mindset. However, if the war involves the complexity of long-term civilian interactions and the installment of a military government, logistics becomes more complicated. If an army is suddenly responsible for feeding its own soldiers and a large civilian population, it can become straining. The United States Army began encountering these issues in the occupations of post-war Germany and Japan. The civilian populations had little to eat and lacked sufficient housing. However, the issue did not present as severely as there was no longer a grand army requiring the same logistical burden. The issue did reappear during U.S. occupations of Vietnam and during the Global War on Terror. In these conflicts, if the civilian population's needs were not met, it hindered the ability of the United States military to conduct combat operations. Civilians, unfed and without basic resources, turned to insurgent forces for their needs. The United States Army recognized this problem and developed formalized units within the Special Operations Forces (SOF) echelon. These units are responsible for advising commanders on the attitude and needs of the civilian population with the goal of supporting combat operations. Civil Affairs, the successor to the United States Army's military governance program, remains a key tool in the complex world of the 21st century.

The origins of civil affairs, or more generally military government, appear much earlier in history. Indeed, any instance in which an occupying army interacts with noncombatants in a nonviolent manner can be linked to more purposeful civil-military operations. Furthermore, historical armies did not have the same means of logistics as modern technologically advanced militaries. This required an army to persist in an occupied land by impressing resources from civilians. Contributions, as they were known in seventeenth century England, provided armies with their primary method for ensuring a monetary supply. Armies also needed physical locations to provide to their soldiers for lodging. Quarters was another instance that required civilian cooperation.

17th century Europe, with its drastic political upheavals, imperial wars, and religious turmoil presents a unique case study for civil military interactions. In particular, the English Civil War provides a relatively civilized example compared to the atrocities occurring on the continent. The English Civil War, occurring in multiple stages during the 1640s and causing significant political tension until 1688, was defined by a fundamental split between supporters of the King, who were generally Catholic, and supporters of Parliament, who were generally protestants. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it became increasingly necessary for armies to make a conscious effort to meet the needs of the civilian populace. This was not necessarily a moral imperative, but rather a strategic choice. It was much easier to extract resources and use property if the owners had been treated well by the members of the army. During the English Civil War this effort manifested through commander's actions against looting and the overall incorporation of civilian and military government.

The English Civil War saw the development of many garrisons commanded by senior officers. These officers were responsible for the maintenance of their garrison. They maintained their own account books, collected contributions, and organized the quartering of soldiers. While they were connected to the Royalist headquarters at Oxford or to Parliament and Sir Thomas Fairfax these garrisons were independent operations. Garrisons were primarily located in high-density population centers to capitalize on the society and economy already developed. Commanders were responsible for the fiscal order of their garrison. Furthermore, the



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monetary supply was based upon civil society. Therefore, commanders had a vested interest in the disposition of the population. Garrison administration and commander's purposeful intent to satisfy the needs of the civilian population serve as excellent examples of civil affairs principles used during the English Civil War.

An example of the Royalist method for garrison administration comes from the garrison at Boarstall. Sir William Campion, the garrison commander, receives multiple letters from the King throughout his tenure as commander. These letters primarily order Campion to impress items or extract contributions from the population.² One letter from Prince Rupert requires the impressment of a cart from every neighboring parish, another requires the demolition of a house so as not to benefit the enemy, and two other letters demand a great quantity of horses and oxen to be obtained and sent to Oxford.³ These orders demonstrate that for a commander to take actions which may cause unhappiness in the civil population the directive was from the highest authority. Furthermore, there were distinct orders from the King and his deputies to not disturb civilians. For example, in a letter from the

² East Sussex Record Office (ESRO), Danny MSS 35-140.

³ ESRO, Danny MSS 37-48.

King to the officers of his army that they are not to “demand any contributions hereafter nor do any violence or damage by plunder or otherwise” in reference to inhabitants who had already had their contributions assigned to the garrison at Boarstall.⁴ This directive demonstrates the Royalist intention to not overly strain the civilian population. The King’s intent to not upset the civilian population can be placed in the context of Parliament’s overt rebellion to his authority based upon his manner of governance and religious identity.

A Parliamentary example of garrison administration can be seen in the records of Basil Feilding, 2nd Earl of Denbigh and the commander of the army in Warwickshire. Denbigh received many petitions from civilians and soldiers alike, including some complaining of the practice of “free quarter.”⁵ The inhabitants of Cubbington sent a petition to the earl complaining of many troopers of horse who had been quartered in their town and had amassed over two hundred pounds in cost.⁶ Furthermore, another petitioner describes being robbed by soldiers and forcibly taken to another house.⁷ There are more examples of petitioners who have been imprisoned or not paid for significant services to the army. William Symonds, another petitioner, describes a debt of three hundred and thirty pounds owed by the Earl of Denbigh but also attests that the owner of a sequestered estate owes him more so if he were to take the sum out of the estate it would be acceptable.⁸ It is clear that Denbigh commanded a great number of soldiers who occasionally left civilians unpaid or committed other injustices against them. Nevertheless, the receipt of these petitions demonstrates an ability for dialogue between the civilian population and the military government. The communication present in modern civil-military operations is demonstrated in the open communication between the military government of Warwickshire and the inhabitants.



One case used the supposed actions of Royalist forces to spur the recruitment of volunteers for Parliamentary service. The notice calls for seven hundred of foot and 80 of horse to prevent plundering and rape by the King’s army on their march toward London.⁹ This notice demonstrates the power of civil-military operations. No matter the veracity of the claims, if there are rumors of adverse actions against civilians it provides the opposing force with a significant recruitment tool. Therefore, it is important for a commander to prevent lack of payment, free quarter, and violence against civilians. Even isolated occurrences can provide a strategic advantage to the enemy. This concept helps explain the meticulous accounts detailing quartering and the purchase of supplies. Parliamentary accounts demonstrate the large

⁴ ESRO, Danny MSS 45.

⁵ Warwickshire County Record Office (WCRO), CR 2017/C10.

⁶ WCRO, CR 2017/C10 Folio 68.

⁷ WCRO, CR 2017/C10 Folio 71.

⁸ WCRO, CR 2017/C10 Folio 74; A sequestration was the process of seizing the estates of royalists to advance the interests of the Parliament.

⁹ National Archives, State Papers (SP) 28/128 Part 3.

amount of money infusing into communities because of the army's presence.¹⁰ The movement of the army into new communities or the presence of a garrison added a new influx of consumers into the local market. All with houses now received funds for quartering and those with businesses received new customers. The army was its own economic engine in the somewhat stagnant rural English economic system. Thus, when the army did not pay for what it required, it caused great unrest amongst the local populace.

The English Civil War provides a unique case study for the history of civil-military operations. While the war took place between two branches of the English government it still included different cultural factors. Royalists were typically Catholic and Parliamentarians were typically Protestant. These cultural views affected the treatment of each side and the general rhetoric of the conflict. Similar to modern struggles of counterinsurgency the cooperation of the civilian population was paramount to success. The political differences between the absolutism of the King and the republicanism of Parliament also served to divide civilian views of the conflict. Modern civil affairs have to contend with different ethnic groups, religions, and political organizations with directly opposing interests. They have to advise a commander on strategies for reducing conflict and extracting information or resources from the civilian realm. This is an immense task. It was also an immense task earlier in history, particularly before the formalization of military government. The unique logistical situation in the English Civil War provides an important lesson for developing a military and transitional government in the conflicts of the twenty-first century.

Military operations that require the long-term cooperation of the civilian population, as seen in garrisons such as Boarstall, are becoming a more frequent requirement for the modern military. Over the prolonged conflict in Afghanistan, the United States and coalition forces maintained forward-operating bases (FOBs) to project power over a particular area. Similarly, the American war in Vietnam had similar firebases as well as civilian-dominated hamlets. These programs represent a continuation of the garrison model seen in the 17th century. Furthermore, these programs require the occupying forces to cooperate with the local populace over a *prolonged* time. In order for these long-term occupations to have any semblance of success, it is necessary to have a purposeful and command-driven plan for civil-military operations. These plans can be seen, although in a more primitive form, in the actions of garrison commanders during the English Civil War. Furthermore, it can be seen in the strategic directives from the overall commanders during the conflict.

Another aspect that may be less accepted is the logistical nature of garrison operations. The English garrison acted like a hormone-secreting tumor on the local community. It withdrew resources in order to survive but it also provided benefits. These benefits came in the form of a large economic boost to the community. The garrison had to pay for food and goods from the town it was located in. In addition, individual soldiers spent money at taverns and other stores. In order to facilitate a complementary relationship, this sort of operation can be adapted to modern civil-military operations.

It is the hope that this research can help connect the modern phenomenon of formalized civil affairs with its historical roots. It is important to clarify that the English Civil War is not the beginning of this practice but merely a case study in the history of civil-military operations. However, the author believes it is a particularly useful case study to help guide the future of civil affairs and military government.

¹⁰ For Accounts, see SP 28/129.

Future Work

Future research on this project will hope to create a comparative analysis with the Dutch Revolt of the 16th and 17th centuries. These conflicts have certain aspects that can be compared and contrasted in order to develop a more full picture of early modern civil-military operations.

Much of the future research will involve digitized manuscripts and correspondence as well as the current literature. The end goal is publication in a historical journal.



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The Richard S. Schultz '60 Symposium Fellowship was established in 2017 as an endowed fund in honor of "Dick" by his wife of fifty years, Myrna L. Schultz, their children, Marni and Alan, and his classmates and friends.

The fellowship enables Norwich undergraduates, from any academic discipline, the opportunity to pursue areas of inquiry and experiences that will promote and expand their understanding of the past and how it impacts the present and future. Through research, travel, and inquiry the Schultz Fellow and faculty advisor will offer perspectives for us to face the future with better understanding and confidence.

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