

Why we will fight in cities

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1. The Urban Imperative

Virgil's Aeneid (29-19 BC)

Here's a great battle indeed, as if the rest of the war were nothing, as if others were not dying throughout the whole city, so we see wild War and the Greeks rushing to the palace, and the entrance filled with a press of shields.

Ladders cling to the walls: men climb the stairs under the very doorposts, with their left hands holding defensive shields against the spears, grasping the sloping stone with their right.



Ancient Jericho, 8000 BC

Mogadishu 1993

Grozny 1994-5

Sarajevo 1994-5

An Najaf, Al Nassariyah, 2003

Bagdad 2003, 2004-08

Fallujah 2004

Ramadi 2006

Donetsk 2014

Aleppo 2014-16

Mosul 2016-7

Last front Gulf War 1991 and Kargil War 1999.

‘Warfare, like everything else, is being urbanized. The great geopolitical contests – of cultural change, ethnic conflict, and diasporic social mixing; of economic re-regulation and liberalization; of militarization, informationization and resource exploitation; of ecological change – are, to a growing extent boiling down to violent conflicts in the key strategic sites of our age: contemporary cities’.

Stephen Graham *Cities under Siege: the new military urbanism*. (London: Verso, 2010); Stephen Graham, ‘Introduction: cities, warfare and states of emergency’ in Stephen Graham (ed). *Cities, War and Terrorism*, 4.

2. Why Urban?

a) Demography

Population Growth

Urbanization

Littoralization

Connected

Urban populations 3.2 bn = world population in 1960. 0.5 billion in cities.

2020. World population 7bn: 3.5 bn urban.

The rise of megacities



Mexico City: Population – 20 million

b) Insurgent Asymmetric Strategy:

e.g. Aidad's SNA in Mogadishu

LeT in Mumbai

Rise of urban ungoverned spaces: Mike
David *Planet of the Slums*



Destruction of Ukrainian 24th and 72nd Mec Brigades and 79th Airmobile Brigade, 11 July 2014 Zelonipilya



The Battle of Homs, 2012

City	Pop in 2000/million	Pop in 2010/million	Percentage Increase
Homs	0.5	0.7	40
Damascus	1.9	2.2	6.8
Aleppo	2.2	3	36
Lattakia	0.4	0.6	50
Baghdad	4.1 (1990)	4.5 (2000)	7.3
Najaf	0.4 (1990)	0.6 (2000)	50
Ramadi	0.2	0.2	0
Fallujah	NA	0.19	0
Nasariyah	0.3	0.38	26
Mosul	0.6	1.1	50
Luhansk	4.8	4.2	-12.5
Donetsk	1	0.8	-20

c) Force Densities:

Wherever the sources permit, a military-historical study does best to start with the army strengths. They are of decisive importance not simply because of the relative strengths, whereby the greater mass wins or is counterbalanced by bravery or leadership on the part of the weaker force, but also on an absolute basis.

Hans Delbrück *History of the Art of War within a Political Frame* (London: Greenwood Press, 1975), p. 33.

‘Fortresses were predominant because, according to a rough rule of thumb, we find the smaller the forces engaged on a theater of war, the more importance attaches to the available strongpoints’.

Christopher Duffy *The Fortress in the Age of Vauban and Frederick the Great, 1660-1789*, Volume II, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 292.

Country	1991	2018	Percentage reduction
US	700,000	500,000	28%
UK	160,000	82,000	50%
Germany	266,000 (Bundeswehr)	56,000	80%
	566,000 (with National Volks Armee)		90%
France	296,480	110,000	60%
Russia	3,400,000	395,000	90%
PLA	3,000,000	975,000	70%
Iraq	382,500	64,000	84%
Syria	300,000	178,000	40%
Israel	141,000/645000 (with reserve)	176,000/641,000 (with reserve)	+24%/0%

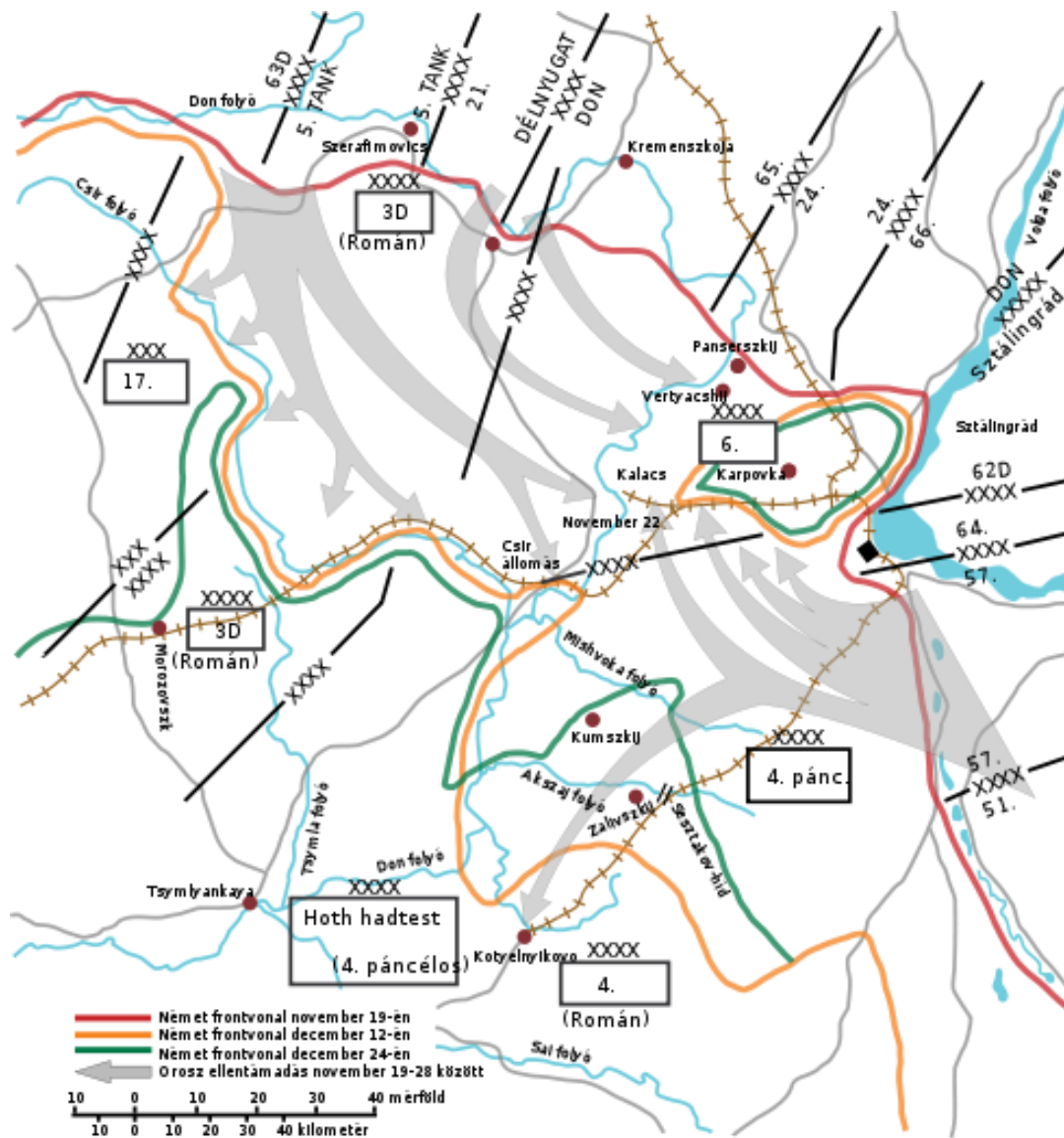
Army size: 1991-2018

4. Disappearance of Fronts

Eg Stalingrad:

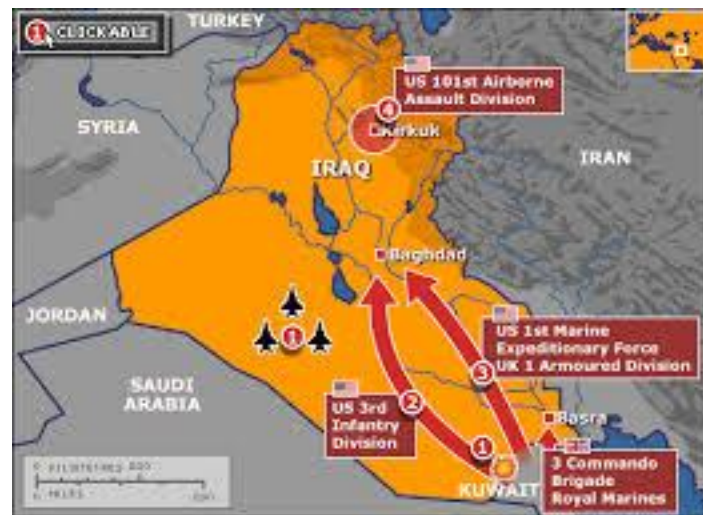
Army Group South – 27 Divisions

Only 6th Army with 11 Divisions in the city; of those only 5 committed into city itself at any one time.





Gulf War 1991: 16 Coalition Divisions (400,000) vs 42 Iraqi Division (800,000)



Iraq Invasion 2003: 5 Coalition
Division (143,000) vs 4 Iraqi
Divisions (122,000)

5. 20th Century Urban Insurgency

Israel, Jerusalem: 1946-8

Malaya: 1948-1958

Kenya, Nairobi, Operation Anvil: 1954

Cyprus, Nicosia: 1954-8

Algeria, Algiers: Feb-Oct 1957

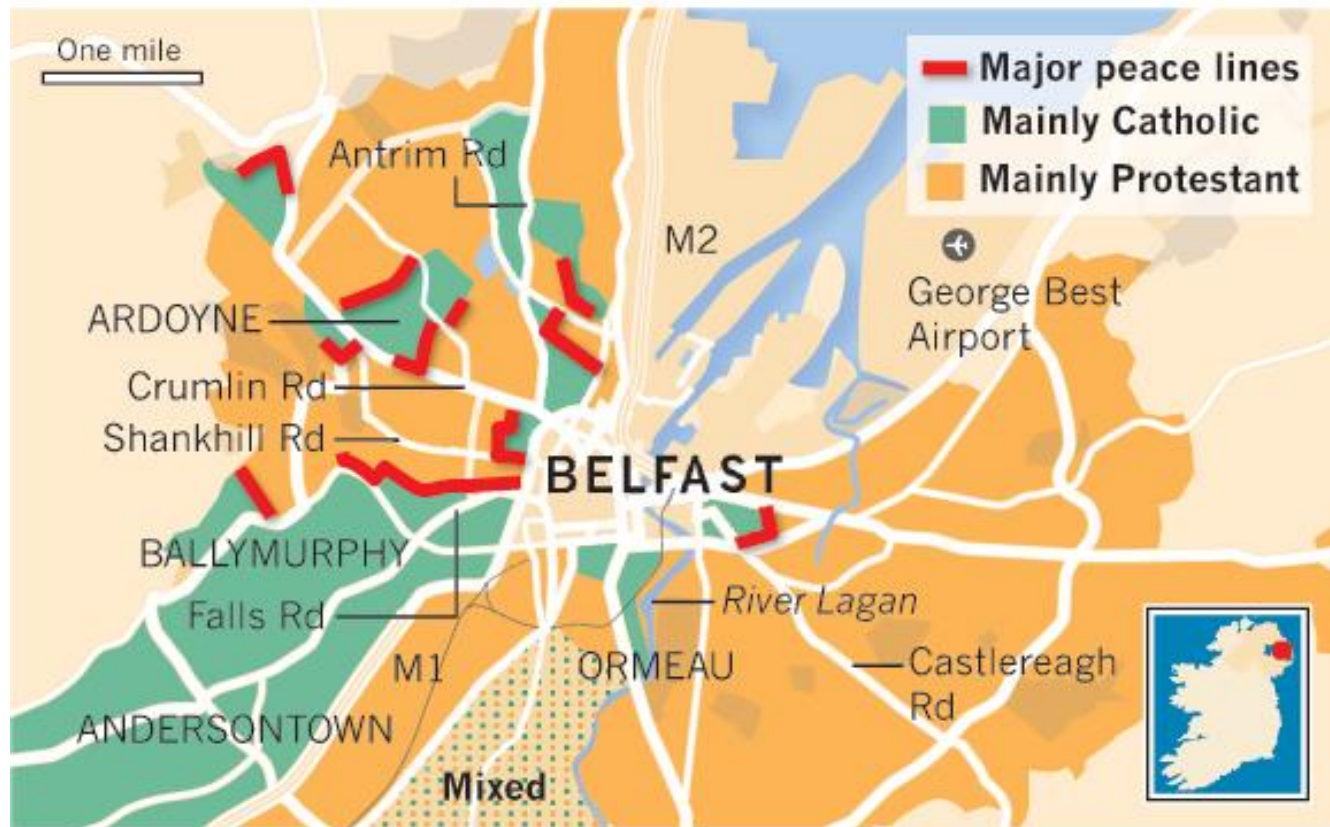
Aden, the Crater: 1967

Vietnam, Hue: 1968

**Mini-Manual
Of The
Urban Guerrilla**
Carlos Marighella



The Battle of Belfast: 14 August 1969-30 July 1972





Belfast, 1972: Divis Flats, Lower Falls.

6. 21st Century Urban Insurgency

a) Syrian Civil War:

Counter-insurgents:

Syrian Army: 65,000 to 80,000 (the Republic Guard, the 4th Armoured Division and Special Forces)

National Defence Forces and Shabbiyah: 50-60,000.

Hezbollah and Iran (IRGC) provided significant additional forces. Total: **150,000**

Insurgents:

Islamic Front (November 2013) : 55,000

Free Syrian Army (Liwa Al Tawheed (Aleppo), the Syrian Revolutionary Front, Jaysh al Islam (Damascus) and Khaled ibn Al Waleed (Homs)).

Jihadist groups, Al Nusra, Saquour al-Sham, Liwas al-Haqq, the Kurdish Islamic Front and ISIS. Total: **100,000-200,000**

b) ISIS estimates:

The Kurds: 200,000 fighters

Russians: 70,000

Syrian Observatory for Human Rights: 80-100,000.

ISIS: 100,000 fighters.

US: 20,000-30,000

Total: 80-100,000?

Conclusion

The reduction of forces increases the chances of urban warfare.

Instead of fighting outside cities for them, the armies of the future will fight in cities for them.