



ESSAY

THE FUTURE CHARACTER OF CONFLICT

DRAWING DEDUCTIONS

Establishing requirements for future operations needs analysis of all forms of conflict and competition, writes Lt Gen Paul Newton

It has taken a long time to amend military structures and habits of thinking that developed in response to the Cold War Soviet threat



"Prediction is very hard, especially about the future."

Lawrence 'Yogi' Berra

The ending of the Cold War altered – and continues to alter – the strategic landscape. In terms of 'Force Development', the design of new military instruments best fitted for the job, the demise of the Soviet Union also signalled the end of a stable framework for planning based on a known threat. The Warsaw Pact had provided a template against which to design (and, in the never-ending battle for resources, to justify) everything from the Tornado and HMS *Ark Royal* to the number of mobile bath units in our Order of Battle.

That monolithic, existential menace was removed due to (and, in part, because of) a technology-fuelled 'Revolution in Military Affairs' (RMA). This revolution represented a genuine shift in the character of conflict. But to some it also offered a seductive resolution to the constant battle for an advantage that has characterised warfare across the ages.

With the appearance of the RMA stage right and the exit of a known threat stage left, we moved in the UK to a 'capability-based approach' to Force Development. In reality, this has led to some complacent, even lazy, thinking. It has had less to do with the development of true capability (ie the integration of personnel, doctrine, training, infrastructure and other factors into a systematic whole) and more about deciding what kit we can and cannot afford as budgets come under pressure.

The threat has played a much-reduced part for the apparently logical reason that, without a clearly defined threat, our future adversaries lie in the misty realm of 'known unknowns'. We have also tended to assume that we will hold the initiative (the clue is there in terms like 'rapid effect') when the reality is that, in an expeditionary posture, we are almost bound to know less than any local actor, at least until we have created the capacity to understand.

So prediction, as the great baseball coach-philosopher Yogi Berra put it, is hard. But sometimes (and taking liberties with Mr Rumsfeld's formula), we don't know what we already know. Or, to put it another way: we have not been looking for the answers. That is what Force Development is about, and that is why the Army has established FDT – the Force Development and Training Command. Its task is to draw deductions from our analysis of conflict in all its forms, not just those that suit our preferences, and identify ways to restructure the Force and reconsider how we prepare our people for their future tasks.

ANALYSING OUR STRATEGIES

As we paid less attention to potential adversaries, paradoxically a variety of state and non-state military actors were studying the West's preferred way of warfare. They ranged from China on the one hand to Al Qaeda on the other. These are very different actors, often with totally different aims and reasons for evolving their own answers to the West's RMA. But given the connected nature of the globalised world – 'connected' being one of the five challenges that will apply to all three services, according to the MoD's recent assessment of the Future Character of Conflict, or 'FCOC'1 (see following page) – much of this analysis is widely available and being used against us.

A series of 'learning communities' has emerged in the post-Cold War era. Some have a formal doctrine and a Force Development approach that mirrors our own.² Others are informal, but nonetheless determined to anticipate, learn and adapt.

Even the way in which state-on-state warfare will be waged has changed. It is unlikely that we will face an adversary in purely traditional combat power terms again. Why would a rising or near-peer state risk their hard-won social and economic achievements to confront

us conventionally on land, in the air or at sea, when they have cheaper levers of state power with less associated risk at their disposal; and when they are able to secure their objectives semi-autonomously through cyberspace or through guerrillas and/or proxies, or in ways that they know are contrary to the West's preferred mode of combat?

FCOC assesses that the opportunities for competition, confrontation and conflict will increase as resource demands and other frictions stress the international system. This does not mean that the Army will always be the government's instrument of choice. Yet when the UK's vital national interests and risks coincide, and where we face a clever, adaptive adversary, our land forces must be up to the task.

THE LOSS OF TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANTAGE

Institutions develop preferences or 'bias' that seep deep into their DNA. For decades - even centuries - the West has relied upon technology to confer an 'edge' in conflict. As Hilaire Belloc put it, "Whatever happens, we have got the Maxim gun, and they have not." Yet there are clear signs that competitors have found ways to evade our traditional strengths and develop their own.

This will result in a rather different battle than the RMA enthusiasts envisaged - a battle often fought amid and above the 'clutter' and 'congestion' of the urban battlespace. Here we will face a blend of conventional and asymmetric adversaries concurrently, often using a mix of novel and traditional tactics. Not only will they not share our 'constraints' on the use of force, they may be adopting a strategy in which to survive is to win.

While we have been busy with our concerns, including a financial crisis and campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan, others have been learning how to wage conflicts against technologically superior enemies. Taking Hezbollah as an example; it emerged intact and confident from war

“We need to develop new capabilities to be far better balanced for operations in the urban environment”

with Israel in 2006 and, by the time of Operation CAST LEAD in late 2008, had reinvented its strategy. Hezbollah conducts a continuous process of self-evaluation and adaptation. It also evaluates its adversary's combat performance and strives to anticipate Israel's operational plans. In Nasrallah's own words: "We also learned from the July war experience, made the required evaluation and discovered the points of strength and the point of weakness on our side as well as on the enemy side, and acted based on that."

Taking a more recent example, Gaddafi's forces in Libya adapted quickly to NATO air operations (as predicted in FCOC, which described a similar Serb response in 1999). Tanks and heavy artillery were camouflaged and hidden in urban areas, for the Libyan regime learnt that to move in the open is indeed to invite precision, stand-off destruction. In an echo of the Second Gulf War, some of Gaddafi's forces took to



using fast truck units equipped with heavy machine guns and mortars, which made them indistinguishable at distance from the rebels.

As Tim Thomas reminded us at a recent FDT seminar, such learning is widespread. Chechen commanders in Grozny realised how vulnerable a centralised command-and-control system would be to Russian capabilities that were originally conceived to fight NATO, so they adopted a far more decentralised strategy: "Our tactic was to fire at the enemy everywhere without being seen anywhere. The Russians did not know where and who the enemy was. We shot, destroyed, withdrew, went home to sleep, returned to start military actions again. No organisation or planning. We were independent hunters".³

Nor should the rapidly evolving character of operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have surprised us; this dynamism was entirely representative of what we should have known about our craft. As with all



the examples used here, those conflicts are neither exact models for every possible future war, but nor are they atypical. FCOC shows us that, in some conflicts, we are likely to see concurrent inter-communal violence, terrorism, insurgency, pervasive criminality and widespread disorder, as well as ground combat. Adversaries will adapt rapidly to seek advantage and influence, including through economic, financial, legal and diplomatic means. There is unlikely to be a neat division into 'war' and 'stabilisation'.

We are now thinking about the capabilities needed for the post-Afghanistan challenge, not least by starting to grasp the nettle of urbanisation. In the 1990s, Western pundits wrote optimistically of the 'less dense battlespace', where our high-tech stand-off systems would be able to find and destroy an adversary rather like us... but only if he were less able and less cunning. Unfortunately, we might be forced to deploy into the dense urban terrain to secure our strategic objectives,

as our adversaries are unlikely to comply with our preferences. By 2029, 60 per cent of the world's 8.3 billion population will be urbanised, with six billion of those living within 100km of the coasts. Within and around the urban areas, adversaries real and potential are already turning, for example, to concealed underground facilities immune to much of our surveillance systems, and where their proximity to civilian 'congestion' may 'constrain' our rules of engagement.

Therefore, we need to develop new capabilities, and modify our existing ones, to be far better balanced for operations in the urban environment. We have a long way to go, be it in making our dispersed sub-units more robust – capable of generating local 'mass', and of clearing obstacles above and below ground with organic assault engineers, for example – or more effective – such as giving them organic surveillance and precision fires from small tactical armed UAVs, perhaps. And if, rather than a monolithic, conventional enemy that

Political turbulence in the Arab world in 2011. Ongoing instabilities in countries important to the UK's national security make it likely that there will be further calls on our Armed Forces, for which we must prepare

fighters according to a standard doctrinal template, we are likely to encounter adversaries and problems that are localised and unique, the implications are profound. Rather than a top-down 'recognised picture', we will need to build our understanding from a multitude of bottom-up local perspectives.

DEFENCE IS STILL 20TH CENTURY-FOCUSED

"Defence review that puts the Cold War to bed", to "shape Britain for the 21st century". Secretary of State for Defence, 13 Aug 10

Contested

- All geographies of operation are contested
- Sea, land, air & space, cyberspace and information

Congested

- To influence people we have to operate in, over and close to where they live. People live in urban areas in the littoral.
- There is no empty battlefield

Cluttered

- NEC* will not fully lift the fog of war
- We need to understand and to discriminate

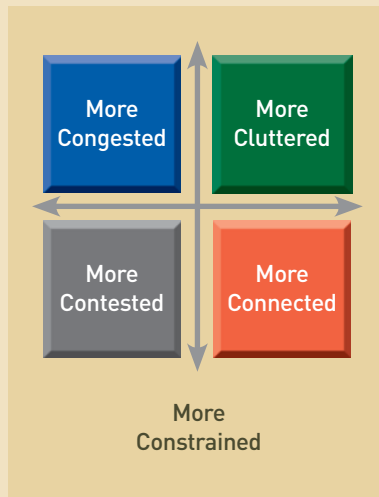
Connected

- Networks are a source of strength for friend and foe
- Nodes are also a source of weakness

Constrained

- Legal and social norms – essential to our legitimacy – will limit us, but not our adversaries

Force Development and Training Command



If this is the case, what does it tell us about capabilities such as Formation Reconnaissance? Is it the case that sub-units must be able to generate their own local Human Intelligence, and then develop the situation in contact as a core competency? Down to what level should forensic and Counter-IED capabilities be embedded as a matter of organisation rather than ad hoc regrouping? This is the work FDT is now leading: concurrently drawing deductions from the evidence, while building the 'gearing' for the engine of change; new structures (such as Capability Directors rather than traditional Arms and Service Directors) and processes (such as the Army Development Forum, held for the first time in spring 2011).

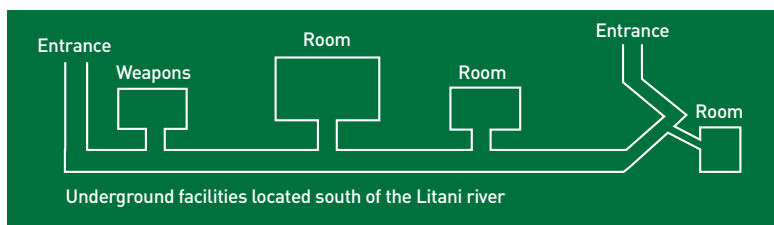
While the context has changed, the purpose of an army has not. Our armed forces hold a legitimate monopoly on the application of lethal force in pursuit of national objectives. As Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) Operations explains, the two central ideas; the Manoeuvrist Approach and Mission Command, remain applicable in the new context of 'hybrid' operations, albeit with some important shifts of emphasis, not least an expansion of the notion of 'manoeuvre'. While there might be a greater emphasis on 'understanding' rather than working out the enemy's ORBAT, and on non-kinetic influence as well as on neutralising fires, our primary purpose in the British Army remains the application of land fighting power. To quote a recent MoD strategy paper, "We must remain aware that ultimately, the Armed Forces exist to fight and to win, and that underpins our ability to influence".

LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE

So how are we deciding what forecasts to make – the acid test of Force Development? Operations have historically proven to be the catalyst for our Army's transition; indeed, it is how we learn best. And it is from operations that we like to learn – although if you look for enduring and accessible insights from the Northern Ireland campaign, it seems that we tend not to write these lessons down – to codify them in doctrine. Our more recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have generated much adaptation. We now need to ensure that we do not lose the corporate knowledge and impetus generated under Operation ENTIRETY, which puts Land Forces on a campaign footing, refocusing both their resources and operational outputs on supporting the campaign in Afghanistan. We must now lock in those changes that we assess to be indispensable. Furthermore, we have to design a system that allows us to continue to adapt when we no longer have the operational imperative of combat in Afghanistan. The Army's new annual experiment, Exercise Agile Warrior and the associated Urban Warrior exercises, are part of this new approach. We are taking the FCOC analysis and fusing it with lessons and insights from operations (termed 'Mission Exploitation') and from the rich stream of insights that can be deduced from expensive, scarce collective training; what we are calling 'Training Exploitation'. All this is why the creation of Force Development and Training Command is important; we have to find new ways to learn.

The term 'institutional agility' is much bandied around, and the notion is at the core of the FCOC paper and the Stabilisation manual (JDP 3-40). But just saying 'agility' is trite. We are finding practical ways to institutionalise the ability to understand, decide and

WAR AMONGST THE PEOPLE AGAINST A CLEVER AND DETERMINED ENEMY; A WELL-PREPARED HIDEOUT



act at tempo, ie relative to the problem. Some of this will take time and money. But some of it can be and has been implemented quickly. For example, in the past six months we have made significant changes to what we teach and how, starting with Sandhurst and working our way through the training and education continuum. Already, the junior officers' tactics course has been expanded and now uses modern command-and-control methods, with greater emphasis being put on the art of execution and rather less on the science of plans. We will shortly have a new Captains' Warfare Course and there is an urgent review of the entire officer career, training and education system starting soon, to bring greater reality to the notion that we have to make our people – especially our leaders – the 'agile edge'.

FOCUS ON INNOVATION

In order to be successful, transformation needs both top-down and bottom-up innovation. That is why we have invited comment on Army Knowledge Exchange, and directly engaged the Staff College (both Directing Staff and some of the brightest students) in the FDT project from the outset, including a major role in wargaming the urban problem operations with members of the Army Board during the first Agile Warrior season. This builds upon tactical innovation; the rapid lessons loop driving changes to Tactics, Techniques and Procedures, training and doctrine, that has become part of our culture in very recent years. We now have to take battlefield lessons and integrate them with wider army (and Joint) conceptual and doctrinal development. This is how we will shape future capability, translated into meaningful transformation of the Army across all Defence Lines of Development – going back to the original notion of the capability-based approach which got somewhat

“ We have to design a system that allows us to continue to adapt when we no longer have the operational imperative of combat in Afghanistan ”

lost in the years of hubris -after the Cold War. And in reintroducing the idea of Force Development into our Army, we will ensure that the adversary – a thinking innovative adversary, not one conveniently willing to conspire in his own defeat in open terrain – is right at the centre of our decision-making.

As mentioned above, all big organisations have a tendency towards institutional bias and inertia. This can lead to the creation of a false reality, borne mainly out of wishful thinking. The key is to actively 'hunt' the options for transformation from all available sources. Note, not just passively 'gather' insights, but actively to seek them out and then test them, if necessary to destruction. In the world of Force Development there are no sacred cows. The more challenging and rigorous approach to Force Development applies to everyone; this is not something that is being done to the Army, but done *with* the Army; 'hunting' is whole-Army business. ■

Advanced technology presents both threat and opportunity for national security. The cyber world is a new battleground – the UK is under cyber-attack on a daily basis

1. The other Cs are: contested; congested; cluttered and concealed. One might also add 'coalition'.
2. See, for example, Israeli Defence Force Brigadier General Itai Brun's article 'While You're Busy Making other Plans – the Other RMA'.
3. Turpal-ali Atgeriyev, Unit Commander in Grozny.





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ESSAY

THE PRINCIPLES OF WAR IN TODAY'S WORLD

Although laid down more than 60 years ago, Montgomery's 10 principles remain a foundation for military strategy and tactics, writes Col (Ret'd) Martin Romilly OBE



The *Principles of War*, as laid down by Field Marshal Montgomery in 1946, draw on the experience of an earlier age. However, they are still applicable to modern conflicts and deserve to be more widely studied

It was the early works of Clausewitz and Jomini in the 19th century that established the precedent for the principles of war, which were then debated and studied in Europe.

In the United Kingdom, it was Major General JFC Fuller who introduced the principles of war into the British Army after his experiences in the First World War. However, it was not until 1946 that Field Marshal Montgomery laid down the accepted 10 principles of war: Selection and Maintenance of the Aim, Maintenance of Morale, Offensive Action, Surprise, Concentration of Force, Economy of Effort, Security, Flexibility, Cooperation, and Sustainability.

The principles of war are a good foundation for military strategy and tactics, and form the premise for operational planning. The principles should act as a guide, which is what Montgomery had in mind with his aspiration that they might provide assistance "to one or two commanders in the stress and strain of modern battle". It is worth recalling that the principles of war provide guidance for deploying military force to best effect through maximising strengths and minimising weaknesses. They are enshrined in British Defence Doctrine as an appropriate assertion for all military activity.

The principles of war should provide today's leaders with a military foundation and some normality in this uncertain world. It is therefore appropriate to enquire whether these venerable principles of war require supplementing to ensure that they are suitable for today's world.

Though the nature of war is constantly changing, Clausewitz recognised that the truth is that call it what you will – 'new war', 'limited', 'asymmetric war' – in the end, there is only one meaningful category of war, and that is war itself.

SELECTION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE AIM

It is imperative not to take the first step without considering the last

Clausewitz was actually defining what is called the 'end state'. Jomini also believed that the end state had to be stated in unambiguous political objectives, so

that clear campaign objectives could be compiled. This requirement remains as relevant today as it was then.

Selection and maintenance of the aim are often referred to as the Master Principle. A single, clear aim is the cornerstone of successful military operations. In today's operations, the three Services are likely to be supported by other government departments and agencies in prosecuting a 'Collective Campaign'. In

“Enhanced capabilities due to network-centric organisations will enable rapid concentration of an appropriate force”

maintaining the aim, it is important for senior commanders and their staff to understand the political and civil, as well as the military, conditions that constitute success in relation to the strategic objectives.

Similarly, the senior commander may have non-military resources to help achieve his aim. As the Collective Campaign develops, the military aim may need to be reviewed and altered; this should be approved at the highest level.

MAINTENANCE OF MORALE

High morale is a quality without which no war can be won
Montgomery asserted that “the morale of the soldier is the most important single factor in war”.

Morale is a product of leadership, discipline, comradeship, and confidence in self and in the commander and his staff. Collective Leadership, based on trust, may be more suitable for the Collective Campaign in today's world. It is imperative that all those

conditions are maintained; once one component starts to drop, then morale will suffer.

The nation should not have to fight an unpopular war; the war must be accepted by the people, since a democracy cannot oppose the will of the majority of its citizens. Soldiers, as citizens, must therefore be convinced of the moral legitimacy of the military action. All commanders must appreciate this, for it will sustain and strengthen morale.

OFFENSIVE ACTION

Offensive action is the chief means open to a commander to influence the outcome of a campaign or a battle

Offensive action enables the initiative to be seized and then retained; it is an important principle, which links to maintenance of morale. Offensive action implies an incisive approach to exploit opportunities and to apply constant pressure against other forms of resistance and instability. A raid and a strong fighting patrol exemplify offensive action at the tactical level. In today's cyber era, it may be necessary to mount a cyber attack to seize back the initiative in that important, strategic domain.

SURPRISE

Surprise causes confusion, destroys cohesion and lowers morale

As well as seeking every opportunity to gain surprise, commanders must guard against being surprised. Surprise has a psychological dimension and may be achieved by stealth, manoeuvre, novel technology, deception or any unforeseen activity. Surprise is closely linked to maintenance of morale and security.

At every level, the commander needs an effective intelligence organisation providing him with information to enable the commander to determine when and where surprise might be effective.

D Squadron, The Household Cavalry Regiment, on patrol in Helmand. It is important to rethink and update the *Principles of War* in order that they help soldiers facing new challenges in current and future conflicts



CONCENTRATION OF FORCE

Concentration does not necessarily require the physical massing of forces

With an ever-smaller Army, it is imperative to come up with innovative ways of concentrating force. Should the situation warrant a large force, then it will probably be achieved in conjunction with NATO or coalition forces.

Technological breakthroughs, such as the microprocessor, have enabled network-centric organisations. These give the commander enhanced capabilities such as access, speed, distribution, mobility, sensing and networking; it is these enhancements that will enable rapid concentration of an appropriate force.

ECONOMY OF EFFORT

Success can be achieved with less effort through surprise

Economy of effort is the judicious exploitation of manpower, materiel and time in relation to the achievement of Collective Campaign objectives.

Exploitation of superior technology is an enabler; examples are unmanned aerial vehicles and loitering munitions, which can produce the desired outcome with the minimum of effort, given the right intelligence picture. This complies with the doctrine of Minimum Force, which is a benchmark of today's Collective Campaign and is a requisite supplement to the principle of economy of effort.

SECURITY

Security enhances freedom of action by reducing friendly vulnerability to hostile acts, influence or surprise

Securing the base areas first is a key tenet of today's operations. Security of the supply chain is essential to the successful prosecution of today's Collective Campaign. Security of data, of information and its communication are equally important. The media has been known to compromise an operation. Therefore, media briefings should always be conducted with the paramount need for the security of operations.

Security extends to the establishment of secure networks and a secure environment, which permits 'political progress' to blossom.

FLEXIBILITY

Flexibility is perceived as key to coming to terms with the diverse challenges of the 21st century

Flexibility is the ability to change readily to meet new circumstances; it comprises agility, acuity, adaptability, responsiveness and resilience.

In today's cyber era, commanders need mental agility to be able to respond to the increasing information flow. Rapid assessment and sharing of information will enable them to adapt their plans to pursue opportunities within the senior commander's intent.

COOPERATION

There is at least one thing worse than fighting with allies – and that is to fight without them

Winston Churchill's profound remark is as relevant in today's Collective Campaign as it was in his lifetime. It is highly likely that the Army will fight alongside a member



of the NATO Alliance or an ad hoc coalition. Cooperation entails the incorporation of teamwork and a sharing of dangers, burdens, risks, instabilities and opportunities in every aspect of warfare. Intelligence cooperation is as important globally as it is nationally.

Post-conflict operations, which include stabilisation and reconstruction, require careful synchronisation of effort between the lethal aspects of the Collective Campaign and the non-military and inter-agency measures.

SUSTAINABILITY

Do not start a battle that you cannot supply

Logistics may be the deciding factor in assessing the feasibility of an operation. To sustain a force is to generate the means by which its fighting power and freedom of action are maintained. Sustainability has to be effective throughout the Collective Campaign; it is inextricably linked to the maintenance of morale.

Post-conflict sustainability increasingly involves the civilian private sector working in theatre. This needs to be considered early on in the logistic planning for the Collective Campaign.

SUMMARY

This treatise shows that the principles of war, with some supplementation, have their validity in today's world. Their linkage strengthens their validity and enables the principles to evolve, as the character of conflict evolves. The correct application of these principles is a combination of sound military knowledge, built up by study and practice until it becomes instinctive. ■

Sustainability is the key to a successful campaign. Today, this requires the Army to work not only with the other Services, but also with contractors and other government departments. If they cannot do their essential part, the Armed Forces must be resourced to replace them or the campaign will fail

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

In its first year, the National Security Council faced many challenges in responding to the multiple threats that have emerged since the Cold War, writes William Nye

As I write this in mid March 2011, the National Security Council (NSC) is meeting daily to provide strategic oversight of Britain's contribution to the UN-authorized action to protect civilians in Libya. Supported by the National Security Secretariat (NSS), the Joint Intelligence Organisation (JIO), and the resources of all the major departments and agencies concerned, the Council reviews progress and, where appropriate, makes decisions on all relevant issues: diplomatic, military, consular, humanitarian – while considering all the national security issues in question: protection of the population, counter-terrorism, energy security, immigration, and others.

For the Libya campaign, the NSC forms a 'war cabinet' of the kind familiar from previous conflicts. However, it is different from previous war cabinets, in some quite significant ways.

This is not an ad hoc body thrown together to deal with an unexpected crisis. It is a relatively new, but already quickly established, part of the British state machine, capable of operating in a number of ways – in this case overseeing the day-by-day progress of a complex diplomatic and military operation – but also responsible for strategic guidance on Britain's national interest, on our National Security Strategy (NSS), and for decisions on long-term investments in defence capabilities, in energy security, and in counter-terrorism.



The NSC met for the first time on the evening of the coalition government's first day in office. Since then, it has established a rhythm of meeting every week during the parliamentary year, normally after Cabinet, with additional meetings during recess.

The Prime Minister chairs the NSC, with the Deputy Prime Minister as Deputy Chairman. The members are: the Foreign Secretary, the Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the International Development Secretary, the Energy Secretary, the Minister for Security, the Minister for Government Policy (Oliver Letwin) and the Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Other ministers are invited to attend as and when necessary. So, too, are senior official advisers – the Cabinet Secretary, National Security Adviser (NSA), the Chairman of the Joint Intelligence Committee, the Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) and the heads of the intelligence agencies are normally present, and other officials may be invited on occasion.

EFFECTIVE MEETINGS

At one level, the NSC is just another cabinet committee. There have always been cabinet committees, with a variety of names over the years, responsible for overseas and defence policy, but they have tended to meet irregularly. The rhythm and frequency of NSC meetings,



(Above, left to right) Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, Prime Minister David Cameron, Foreign Secretary William Hague and Home Secretary Theresa May being briefed by members of the security services at a meeting of the National Security Council

as well as the Council's wide scope, give it a different degree of effectiveness and professionalism. Since May 2010 it has met almost every week. It has considered Afghanistan – not just the military aspects, but all elements of the British and allied approach, as well as related regional issues – every two or three weeks. It is supported by a permanent NSA, heading a National Security Secretariat, based in the Cabinet Office, which works with departments and agencies, and the Foreign Office network of posts, to prepare issues for Council consideration and decision.

The Council's business ranges widely. The Government published its National Security Strategy, *A Strong Britain in an Age of Uncertainty*, in October 2010. That set out two strategic objectives:

- Ensuring a secure and resilient United Kingdom – protecting our people, economy, infrastructure, territory and way of life from all major risks that can affect us directly; and
- Shaping a stable world – acting to reduce the likelihood of risks affecting the UK or our interests overseas.

The major risks considered in the strategy include threats from states, from non-state actors, and from the actions of nature (hazards).

The threats may take many forms: military, espionage, terrorism, cyber, economic, or some

“The strategic context for Britain today is not one of a single, clear, overriding threat... There are multiple possible risks”

combination. The business of the Council thus includes counter-terrorism, energy security, cyber-security, countering the threat from serious organised crime – as well as the more traditional business of foreign policy and defence. Anything, in short, that can pose a major disruptive threat to our country and way of life.

If at first there was some scepticism that it would be possible to sustain a pattern of weekly meetings, now the Secretariat has discovered it can be hard to find room for all the issues that need to be covered.

The NSS sets priorities among the risks. This has been difficult to accomplish. The strategic context for Britain today is not one of a single, clear, overriding threat, as in much of the 20th century. There are multiple possible risks in 'an age of uncertainty'. But, amid this uncertainty, the nation needs to make choices. The strategy and the accompanying Strategic Defence



Today, significant elements of the UK's 'Critical National Infrastructure' that we must be prepared to protect lie abroad; the Qatar liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal is a good example. (Above) A Qatari LNG tanker en route to the UK

and Security Review (SDSR) make those choices: the NSS setting out the strategic context and the ends of our strategy; the SDSR outlining the ways and means.

In the absence of an overriding threat, the way the NSS prioritises risks is by dividing them into three tiers:

- Tier 1 comprises the risks of terrorism; hostile attacks in cyberspace; a major accident or natural hazard (on a national scale); and an international military crisis drawing in the UK and state and non-state actors;
- Tier 2 comprises the risks of attack using chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear weapons; major instability or insurgency creating an environment for terrorists to exploit or threaten the UK; a significant increase in serious organised crime; and severe disruption to satellite systems;
- Tier 3, comprises the risks of conventional military attack on the UK; a significant increase in dangerous movements across our border; disruption to oil or gas supplies to the UK; a release of radioactive material; conventional attack on an ally; an attack on a British overseas territory; and a disruption of essential resource supplies.

ASSESSING THE RISKS

This categorisation of risks provides a set of ends that the instruments of national power – including military instruments – can be devoted to tackling. The prioritisation is based on a risk assessment, taking account of potential impact and assessed likelihood, and it was considered and approved by the NSC. It helps drive both the capability and resource decisions made in the SDSR, and continuing work to implement the review.

Although the priority risks set out in the NSS are wide-ranging, almost all of the risks have some direct or potential relevance for defence responsibilities, and, consequently, for the Army.

One committee or council cannot directly manage all the issues involved in such a range of topics. Below the council, a deputies' committee at 4*/Permanent Secretary level meets weekly to prepare the Council's work, supplemented by other coordination structures. The CDS, together with the MoD's Permanent Secretary, are members, with other defence representatives, such as the Chief of Defence Intelligence, attending depending on the agenda.

The SDSR sets out cross-government responsibilities for ministerial and official leadership on each of the major areas of national security – in some cases reflecting existing structures, and in others providing new clarity on who is in charge for each area. For example, cross-government work on counter-terrorism is led by the Home Secretary and the Director General of the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism. Defence plays an important supporting role both at home and abroad through a number of military, intelligence and scientific capabilities.

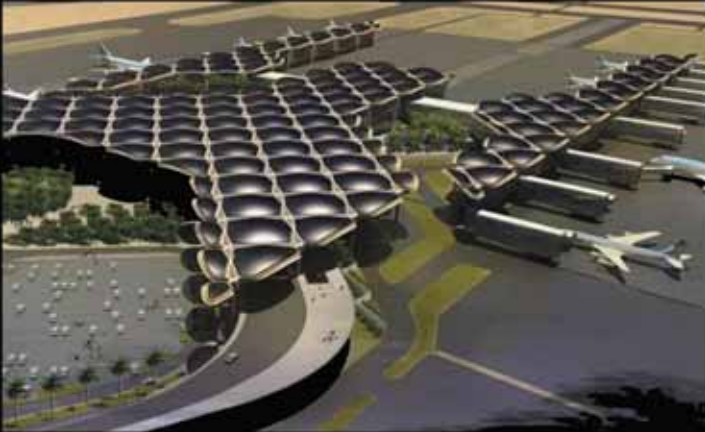
To take another example, cross-government work on state threats and counter-proliferation is led by the Foreign Secretary and the Director General for Defence and Intelligence in the Foreign Office; but again defence has a significant contribution to make – most obviously if any state military threat emerged, but also in deterrence, in intelligence, and in counter-proliferation work. Similar structures are being developed for other priority risks.

The NSC is less than a year old, but it has delivered significant results in that time. It has already produced the NSS and SDSR, overseen British policy in Afghanistan, addressed major national security risks, such as cyber-security and terrorism, and dealt with fast-moving international events such as those affecting Tunisia, Egypt and Libya. No doubt it will develop further, to address whatever new challenges are thrown up by the age of uncertainty, and to reinforce our national capabilities to deal with them. ■

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ESTABLISHING THE NATIONAL INTEREST

The government needs to provide a sharper lead on what is considered the “national interest” and how it should be pursued, writes Bernard Jenkin MP

When the new government was established, David Cameron and Nick Clegg promised to “make this coalition work in our national interest”. The words “national interest” are used ubiquitously by politicians these days: 15 times in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and six times in the Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR). But what exactly are “our national interests” and how should they be defined? An answer to a parliamentary question to the prime minister referred to paragraph 2.12 of the NSS:

“Our security, prosperity and freedom are interconnected and mutually supportive. They constitute our national interest.” It is now both timely and necessary to put flesh on the bones of those words expressing the government’s analysis of our national interests.

The national interest is, of course, not a static but a dynamic concept that needs to be constantly reassessed and questioned. This requires an ongoing process of strategic thinking both within government, across Whitehall, and with input from beyond the normal horizons of policymakers. The national interest should be the criterion against which we judge what our policies and our actions should be, rather than just a phrase to be deployed at a convenient point in a speech.

Suddenly, it is clear why there is uncertainty about British foreign, defence and security policy. The government’s commendably rapid response to the crisis of legitimacy in Arab countries has thrown it into sharp focus. Before the election, David Cameron seemed to aspire to a different kind of foreign policy from that of his predecessors. With the squeeze on resources, there would be less reliance on hard power. Instead we would see “a distinctive British foreign policy that extends our global reach and influence”.

But the challenge now is how this is to be done. How do we reconcile building up “significantly strengthened bilateral relations for Britain” while handing over more and more influence to the EU? How should we increase our freedom and prosperity in an unstable world while cutting back on the means of strategic influence and security? The Foreign Office is being

squeezed, the BBC World Service cut, the SDSR has reduced our deployable military capability. The fact is that, without a clear conception of the national interest, policy has no anchors. All is subjective. We urgently need to establish a clear understanding of the national interest as the basis on which to plan how to implement the government’s decisions effectively with the financial resources available.

DEALING WITH THE DEFICIT

To be fair, there is one overriding national interest at present, and it is championed by the most powerful government department. The government has rightly identified the massive annual deficit to be the most pressing threat to “security, prosperity and freedom”. The issue that it is now important to address is how this imperative should be balanced against other priorities.

Some government programmes have been protected from the general squeeze, such as spending on health and schools. Some programmes are being deliberately increased, such as the Department for International Development (DfID) budget and (more remarkably) the UK net contribution to the EU budget (increasing by 217 per cent/£5.5 billion over the plan period).

The chancellor made only one reference to “the national interest” in his emergency budget statement last summer, and that was to justify the increase in aid spending. It may well be so, but now is the time to make a comprehensive assessment to justify this claim. It has been said that aid spending in potentially failed states forestalls future conflicts and security threats. We now need to do the analysis to establish whether this is the case, just as we need to make the assessment that balances the advantage of such spending against, say, the advantage of maintaining carrier strike capability, or maritime reconnaissance. We need to assess how our £1.2 billion of aid to India, which is already wealthy enough to support a space programme and a build programme of missile destroyers for the Indian navy, reflects the best balance of priorities in the national interest.



Aftermath of the tsunami in Japan – one of the strategic shocks that have occurred since the SDSR. Our 'national interest' demands that the UK is able to respond effectively to natural disasters abroad, as well as man-made threats



CIMIC Patrol with 1st Battalion The Princess of Wales's Royal Regiment in Iraq as part of the Marshland Development Program. Delivering aid in difficult situations is an important role for the Army in pursuit of the UK's national interests

One of the reasons why some politicians reject the idea of a national strategy and prefer to rely on their own strategic thinking is that an objective assessment of spending priorities against coherently assessed national interests would open up all kinds of questions – which politicians of all parties might prefer to avoid. The chancellor made no mention at all of the increased EU net contribution. Public spending priorities obviously reflect politically driven considerations. That may well be justified. Political considerations should certainly count, particularly in a democracy. But such decisions should not be made blind to the national interest, or on no more than a hunch that it feels or sounds right when it is announced.

It should neither alarm nor dismay us that the NSS and the SDSR have been overtaken by events. There have now been several strategic shocks since the SDSR: a currency collapse, two earthquakes, a tsunami, a nuclear meltdown and five Arab insurrections among them. This volatility is now the natural state of affairs because our generation is living through a period of intense global instability unmatched since the 1930s. It is fuelled by overpopulation, competition for resources, resurgent Islamism, nationalism and extremism, by technology and by global communications and networks. We now need to progress the NSS from its current basis on the assumption of “known knowns” and “known unknowns”, to a basis where it can reflect the increasingly frightening world of “unknown unknowns” in which we now live.

FORMULATING A NEW STRATEGY

Assessing Britain's national interest and refreshing our national security strategy accordingly is now a matter of some urgency. This will involve introducing the proper infrastructure with the capacity for sustained strategic thought. The National Security Council (NSC) is a good architecture, but it still lacks the capacity to fulfil its potential. It is good that the prime minister does require it to sit and also personally chairs most meetings. It is now important to develop it into more than just another cabinet committee, limited to brokering between the usual departmental agendas. It needs the necessary expert staff and the institutional capacity

to carry out strategic analysis to provide continuing assessments and challenge to existing policies, as events unfold. PASC (the Public Administration Select Committee), which I chair, recommended that the government establishes a ‘community of strategists’ across Whitehall to support the NSC in its work. In its current form, the NSC is unable to deliver this.

The UK is one of the few countries that can muster both political will and public support for decisive global action in a crisis, drawing on our historical experience and influence for the benefit of our own national interests and for global stability. The implications of the Libyan crisis suddenly confronted Mr Cameron with an existential question about the UK's national purpose and identity, to which he instinctively responded quickly, firmly and positively. Yet his government's recent policies have significantly reduced our ability to implement such a response. If the British left the global stage, who or what would fill the void?

Whitehall now needs to develop the capability to deal with such questions. To this end, Whitehall needs to be better informed and challenged to appreciate what

“Assessing Britain's national interest and refreshing our national security strategy accordingly is now a matter of some urgency”

our national interests truly are, rather than relying on political memory. The Foreign Secretary told the PASC inquiry that there are two ‘givens’ of British foreign policy. They are as they have been for the past 50 years: the security alliance with the US, and our economic and political relationship with Europe. But when the US is becoming politically and economically more absorbed with the Pacific than the Atlantic, and when the EU has become wholly preoccupied with its own internal crisis over the euro, we need the capability to assess how to refine our interpretation of these two givens. Where do the UK's trade and investment opportunities lie in the next 50 years? How best should we play to our strengths, with unrivalled cultural, political and historical links with so much of the world?

Finally, we must all appreciate that there are difficulties with provoking such a fundamental debate about “our” national interests, which presupposes that we all know who “we” are. Our nation is being changed and challenged by relative economic decline, continuing loss of pre-eminence in industry, science and education, the after-effects of devolution and continuing, if slowed, mass immigration. Are “we” still the United Kingdom? If so, how should that be articulated?

To be able to identify our national interest, the government also needs to be able to articulate a clear view of the identity of those for whom it speaks and acts. The fact that this will be a challenging issue is all the more reason to address it. We cannot expect the government alone to answer this question. This is an issue that demands our collective effort as a society. This is where we must now take the debate. ■



Army students learning the Pashto language. Understanding other cultures is essential for effective strategy-making

STRATEGIC THINKING AND STRATEGY-MAKING

Many key military figures were strategic thinkers or strategy-makers. We would do well to learn from their example, writes Cdre (Ret'd) Steven Jermy

The curious thing about the phrases 'strategic thinking' and 'strategy-making' is that they are often used interchangeably, and yet they are, in reality, quite different things.

To be a strategy-maker, you don't need to be a strategic thinker. The simple point is that strategy can be made through taking action, rather than thinking. In other words, strategy can be made by adopting an approach that the corporate sector would call 'learning strategy'. That said, I believe that, if you are a strategic thinker, your chances of a successful learning strategy-making approach will be improved, in that the actions taken will be driven by thought.

Similarly, not all strategic thinkers are strategy-makers: some are theorists, others commentators

and, indeed, very few are actually strategy-makers. This is because the simple mathematical truth is that only a few at the top, of governments and organisations, are actually engaged in real strategy-making.

Both activities – strategic thinking and strategy-making – come to bear, though, on our ability to be successful in operations and war. General Andre Beaufre once wrote: "In war, the loser deserves to lose because his defeat must result from errors of thinking, made either before or during the conflict."

I agree, so let us examine strategic thinking and strategy-making, through the example of outstanding individuals in these areas, to see what we might learn of the qualities that enabled their success. It is not possible, in such a short analysis, to do justice to all of



Churchill (centre) showed he knew his own strengths and weaknesses when he chose Alanbrooke (second from left) as Chief of the General Staff

“ Clausewitz’s innate intellectual complexity provided the drive to compel him to get to grips with war’s complexity ”

the ‘greats’, so I will select, rather arbitrarily, from those that I admire: of the strategic thinkers, Clausewitz and Corbett; of the strategy-makers, Templar and Kennedy; and of those capable of both, Moltke and Slim.

Carl von Clausewitz was a sensitive man with a richly endowed mind. His masterpiece, *On War*, was published by his widow, Maria, after his death in 1831, yet remains the gold standard of strategic thinking about war. Although he was experienced at all levels of war, perhaps the key qualities that stand out in the man were a penetrating and immensely powerful intellect and, also, an innate intellectual complexity that would provide the essential drive to compel him to get to grips with war’s complexity.

By contrast, Sir Julian Corbett lacked any personal experience of war, and came to the subject via, firstly, history and, secondly, naval strategy. His great work, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, published in 1911, remains a point of reference in the narrower

area of naval strategy, but it also brilliantly interprets Clausewitz. Also, in this work we see clear evidence of those same qualities that mark out Clausewitz: a first-class mind and driven intellectual curiosity, but also a desire to educate.

In contrast, neither of my two chosen strategy-makers – Templar and Kennedy – could be described as great intellectuals, but both men possessed other important qualities.

Sir Gerald Templar found himself thrust into the limelight in Malaya in 1952, arriving after the assassination of his predecessor, Sir Hugh Gurney, at a time of great anxiety for the British colonial rulers, as the Maoist insurgency seemed to be taking hold. Templar conducted a quick analysis of the so-called ‘Briggs strategy’ that was in place, judged it fit for purpose with some adjustments, and then set about implementing it with exceptional vigour. By the time of his departure, the campaign was largely turned, with a free, democratic and independent Malaya the outcome in 1960.

John F Kennedy’s moment of truth was surely the Cuban Missile Crisis, with the superpowers perched on the edge of the precipice of mutual nuclear destruction. In the critical 13 days of the crisis, he would delegate the strategic thinking to his key subordinates. But, eventually, as the various courses of action were refined and then narrowed down, it would be his final decision – helped, perhaps, by the experience that wartime sea

command gave him – to plump for the blockade, and pull the world back from the brink. What were the qualities that stand out in these two candidates? Leadership, certainly, but also judgement and the willingness to delegate to, and to trust, key subordinates.

It is, though, when the different qualities mentioned come together in an individual that we come across the even rarer beast – the great strategic thinker who is also a great strategy-maker. For these precious few, the evidence is usually available in their writing and their actions, and Generals Moltke and Slim are, in this respect, important candidates. It is a simple, but interesting, observation that both appeared to combine the qualities of strategic thinker and strategy-maker, but also that their qualities were apparent because of their being in the right geopolitical place and the right historical time.

Helmuth von Moltke was, with Bismarck's support, the main strategic architect of the three successful Prussian Wars fought between 1866 and 1871. But he was also the key intellectual force behind the German General Staff, a system that solved the problem of span-of-command as industrial war grew beyond the scope of the individual general, and would, by the start of the First World War, be widely adopted by the world's leading armies. In his writing, he would leave us with the key observation, building on Clausewitz's thinking, that in

The next two qualities, which could be improved, were – and are – interrelated: the ability to rise above the minutiae of immediate matters and see the strategic wood from the tactical trees, and the self-discipline required to make the time needed for thinking and strategic reflection.

Finally, a quality that I cannot conclusively attribute to the men in my list, but that nevertheless I suspect they and other great strategic thinkers and strategy-makers shared, was that of personal insight. This is the capacity to know yourself, to understand your personal strengths and weaknesses, together with a conscious intent to capitalise on the former, and put protections in place to ensure that the latter do not play negatively into your strategic thinking and strategy-making. Winston Churchill's choice of Alanbrooke as his Chief of the General Staff seems to reflect this. It was to Churchill's great credit that he had the courage and good sense to appoint an officer who would provide a tough, analytic counterpoint to his master's occasional flights of intuitive fantasy and fight his corner when he was right – as he very often was.

To conclude, I believe that the ability to think strategically, and effectiveness in the strategy-maker, are essential attributes in those who aspire to the highest echelons of government. If, however, the strategic setbacks that Britain has suffered in these

General Slim epitomised the one quality essential to all strategic thinkers – the self-discipline required to make the time needed for thinking and reflection

“Moltke observed that in war no plan survived first contact with the enemy – so flexibility in thinking would be key”

war no plan survived first contact with the enemy – and, by deduction, flexibility in thinking would be key.

William Slim is, perhaps, less well recognised as a great strategic thinker or strategy-maker, but his record is faultless. Taking over a defeated army in Malaya and conducting a fighting retreat into eastern India, he would turn the 14th Army into one of the finest fighting forces of the Second World War. He would go on, with this Army, to defeat a Japanese Army *mano-a-mano* in the field. He would then record this outstanding achievement in the wonderfully pragmatic and honest book, *Defeat into Victory* – a book that is, in my view, the outstanding narrative of the Second World War.

The big question for those of us who aspire to be effective strategic thinkers or strategy-makers, or both, is “Can we do anything to improve our capacity?” The possession of a first-class intellect is a gift of nature rather than a result of nurture but, this aside, there seem to be ways of improving.

A common feature of the great strategic thinkers – and, often, the best strategy-makers – was that not only were they clever, but they also worked to expand their intellects. Moltke was multilingual with an abiding interest in the arts and politics, and Slim was a highly accomplished author. They also had an appetite for history which, in my view, helped in two ways: providing catalytic fuel for strategic thinking and a past reference against which to compare and contrast one's current situation.





Sandhurst officer cadets take part in the Sandhurst Cup at the US Military Academy, Westpoint. Officer training needs to be more than just action and adventure – it must include learning how to think

past 10 years are anything to go by, we seem to have ignored this thought. Strategy is the product of thinking, and thinking is the product of people. So these setbacks are, in effect, a commentary on our ability not only to think and act strategically, but also to select those who are able so to do. We need to do better. We must recognise several key points.

First, war is inherently political, and strategy must be made by politicians and diplomats, as well as military officers. Second, by deduction, politicians and diplomats – as well as generals and admirals – need to be capable of strategic thinking. Third, it is too late to try to become a strategic thinker when you arrive at the top; the qualities need to be identified and nurtured much earlier – indeed, arguably, through all stages of the education of politicians and senior officers. Fourth, again, by deduction, formal training is needed, in the form of a concerted programme. Fifth, and finally, if we are to improve on the disorganised and ill-disciplined activities that we currently use for strategic thinking and strategy-making, the right structures and processes are also needed. A national strategy, including a clear view on such structures and processes, would be an important first step on this journey. But we must recognise, too, that strategy is not words set out on paper, but rather something that is organic and lives. It is the ideas, judgements and decisions of men and women formed in a coherent whole that explain how we will approach an operation or, in the worst case, fight a war.

“When we send our young people abroad, we must do so in the knowledge that we have thought things through as best we can”

When we send out our young men and women abroad on our behalf to foreign lands to pursue Britain’s interests, we must do so in the knowledge that we have thought things through as best we can at the strategic level, and that our people will be working in support of a coherent strategy. This will not, I am afraid, prevent the use of our national treasure, nor the spilling of our national blood – such is the nature of operations and war. But knowledge that the cause is worthy and the strategy well thought through will minimise the expenditure – and help us to be sure that our strategic consciences are clear, which is perhaps not the case for those of us who look back on Afghanistan and Iraq. ■

Commodore Steven Jermy RN flew from HMS Invincible in the Falklands War in 1982 and was the Strategy Director in Afghanistan in 2007. He retired in 2010, and his first book, Strategy for Action: Using Force Wisely in the 21st Century, was published in February 2011

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ESSAY

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

Everybody's business

The information space offers a combination of opportunities and threats, requiring the Armed Forces to rethink their Communication policy, writes Col Jon Hazel

The MoD has just published Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 1/11, *Strategic Communication: the Defence Contribution*. This does not direct what one should communicate or how to do it, but rather it opens a debate that argues that everyone has a role, whatever the rank, in the nation's strategic communication.

JDN 1/11 contends that conflict is about competing and prevailing in more ways than just the application of force; that the success of our current and future campaigns rests on the ability of our collective words and deeds to inform, persuade and motivate others.

The Note points out that we may be confident about competing in the physical domain, but that we are disinclined to prepare and apply ourselves with equal gusto or understanding to the arena of competing global communications. It concludes that the UK's armed forces have yet to appreciate the full extent of the information revolution and its long-term impact on our ability to counter the influence of the nation's opponents. Whether we see ourselves strictly as students of the application of force or more broadly as students of conflict, the strategic communication debate is for us; it will determine how quickly and effectively we change in light of the dramatic and ongoing shifts in information technology and their human consequences.

It is five years since Rupert Smith presented his theory, *The Utility of Force*, that war among the people is best practised as an intelligence and information operation rather than one of attrition. It is also five years since Professor Sir Lawrence Freedman wrote a seminal Adelphi paper, *The Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, on the impact of new information and other technologies on strategic security affairs. And two years ago, Nik Gowing described, in *Skyful of Lies*, the challenge of the contemporary information environment for the traditional practice of state communication. These examples of experience and thinking in

command, academia and journalism have helped to lead the debate that JDN 1/11 now addresses on a formal footing for all defence personnel. Though initiated by defence, it invites responses not only from its whole body, but also from the wider community interested in our position in the world.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

The key characteristics of the so-called "age of democratic information" look like being ubiquity and immediacy – a world in which a mass audience will be able receive and judge news and data very rapidly. As new information technologies



Cool operator: those opposed to the West have often beaten it at its own information game

“Our collective strategic narrative and how it is perceived must come to dominate our thinking and our actions”

spread and those people born into the digital world replace generations who were not, the deluge of competing information received by the global citizen will intensify. Governments are increasingly seen to have no advantage over unregulated voices.

In this new political terrain an accelerating flow of information allows any minority with a seductive argument to connect rapidly with the majority. At its best this social revolution is a happy marriage between liberal democracy and information, where the citizen keeps a close eye on the state. At its most destructive this is a world in which extremism connects with the mass politics of the aggrieved.

GAME ON

As part of any campaign, whether stabilisation or otherwise, the British Armed Forces must prevail in a freewheeling, global information environment, where countless voices from the press, citizen journalists, extremists and other governments, all try to promote their narratives over any others.

JDN 1/11 asks whether the Armed Forces are adapting to this fast enough. For instance, it suggests that we should learn from the speed and confidence shown by competing non-state actors, especially extreme Islamists, in the new information environment. They have recognised the opportunity provided by the advent of global, instant media reporting and the arrival of cheap interpersonal media devices to gain an advantage over us – their enemies.

Since the beginning of our involvement in Afghanistan, we have watched how the Taliban has developed from an organisation that was suspicious of modern technologies and the media to one that runs a sophisticated information campaign. However reprehensible we find their pronouncements, they have provided a seductive strategic narrative to local contested Muslim audiences: that Islam is under attack from a Christian foe; that the Taliban is a continuation of the Mujahedeen

struggle against the invader and its puppet government. This narrative exploits cultural and religious values and some media images of our own, making to “explain” falsely, but convincingly, the presence of coalition troops to many isolated Pashtuns. The Note suggests that we have not paid enough attention to formulating our own strategic narrative as it is received and understood among the populations who host our deployments.

DELIVERING THE MESSAGE

Two contentions in JDN 1/11 will set the pace of debate above any other. First, that strategic communication must be integral to our strategy-making and our operational and tactical planning. Future campaign strategies must be as much about the art of formulating compelling strategic narratives and living by them at each level of command as about integrating other more traditional ends, ways and means to meet national policy goals. Strategy-making needs an early appreciation of which strategic narrative is likely to provide campaign success, including an estimation of whether and how the UK can sustain such a narrative by its words and deeds. How and what the Armed Forces communicate should be seen by planners as a strategic means in its own right, with influence as its product. Our planning and operational structures and culture will need to reflect the art of communication competition as an important tool of conflict that directs how its other constituents, including force, should be used. Our collective strategic narrative and how it is perceived must come to dominate our thinking and our actions at every level of a campaign.

Second, if we are to compete well against our nation’s opponents, as many of our government servants’ voices as possible need to be heard in support of our national security goals. In future, not only will our junior commanders and their people need to be empowered to compete with our opponents’



communications, but in doing so they will need to display the same discipline, sense of responsibility and initiative that is expected of them in the physical conduct of operations.

The Note predicts a time when the ability to counter the opposition’s narrative convincingly in the minds of a sceptical and culturally very different audience will be as important a test of military leadership as the ability to manoeuvre combined arms groups under fire. It argues that if our junior military leaders are educated to engage confidently, but respectfully, with the global information environment, they could add a



The battle waged in the information space is increasingly important in deciding the outcome of modern conflicts: Combat Camera Team interview a soldier on an IED clearance patrol in Afghanistan

credibility to our strategic narrative that often eludes the official spokesperson facing a doubting international audience.

They also have the potential to a create a 'mass' of voices to better fill the formal and informal digital information space with truth and provide a proactive engagement with the media of all backgrounds all the time, including an instant response to extremist propaganda.

ESTABLISHING THE NARRATIVE

Such a philosophy will encourage the development of military personnel who will seek to understand the UK

strategic narrative, contribute to the analysis that creates, and use it as direction for their planning and activity, aligning their actions convincingly in support of our national story.

Our personnel must come to view learning about how to compete in the global information environment as being equal in importance to the knowledge of more traditional "kinetic" aspects of conflict.

In conclusion, JDN 1/11 claims that the Armed Forces have neglected to understand strategic communication in contemporary conflict; that only by matching all our words, images and actions

with other instruments of national security in the transmission of a compelling strategic narrative do we grant ourselves the best chance of reaching our strategic objectives. The implications of the Note, if it becomes accepted as doctrine, are that we will need to make significant changes in our structures, education and training as well as in our approach to conflict and communication. JDN 1/11 is an invitation to think, talk and write in a debate that will, in a large part, determine our future performance in support of our nation's security goals. It is an invitation that none of us should refuse. ■

ESSAY

ALLIES ARE STILL CENTRAL, BUT ARE ALLIANCES?

As the military adapts to changing patterns of conflict and the advent of new threats, we need to reconsider how alliances fit into the picture, writes Jamie Shea, Deputy Assistant Secretary General for Emerging Security Challenges, NATO

KFOR: A Russian BTR-80 gets ready to lead a joint patrol with British soldiers in Saxon personnel carriers



Alliances have often been damned with faint praise. “If I have to fight, let it be against a coalition,” proclaimed Napoleon. On a slightly more positive note, Churchill concluded that the “only thing worse than fighting with allies is fighting without them”.

Alliances have always embodied a delicate balance of interests, where the contribution of an individual nation to the collective purpose has to be measured against the benefits thereby obtained. As organisations such as NATO have expanded to take in nations with different histories and threat perceptions, alliance management has become more complicated. Some see NATO as acting mainly outside Europe; others see the strategic point of gravity inside Europe, with collective defence coming before lengthy stabilisation and reconstruction missions.

THE NEED FOR LONG-TERM COLLABORATION

Paradoxically, to resource one mission, individual allies find themselves forced to contribute to all the others. What one puts into an alliance increasingly determines what one gets out of it. The UK has always been a strong member of NATO and the British Army a major player in NATO operations, along with the Royal Navy and RAF. Current developments in NATO have significant implications for the UK’s armed forces, and their contributions to current and future Allied campaigns.

Notwithstanding the difficult balances, alliances such as NATO have proved remarkably durable.

The quest for legitimacy through international organisations and for some form of burden-sharing has long made

collective approaches to security inevitable. More recently, the financial crisis and the sharp reductions in defence budgets have driven nations – no matter how reluctantly – towards the role-specialisation, pooling of resources and development of common capabilities that alliance structures are best designed to manage. Lengthy overseas deployments also create the need for permanent political consultation and coalition management, not to mention operational planning, regional diplomacy and intelligence-sharing, that again alliances can best organise. At the same time, alliances use the cultures of cooperation that they help to establish to progressively persuade individual member nations to align their national plans, forces and budgets to the alliance’s collective priorities. National operations will always take place, but anything major immediately reverts to the alliance as the default option.

Alliances these days have five major functions: to ensure the coherence of national plans with alliance priorities, as well as each other; to reduce duplication; to maximise coordination; to promote the most efficient and effective use of resources; and to foster common solutions, which is not just a way of rationalising defence investments, but also a means to bind individual nations into alliance structures and objectives.

In the past, the test of alliance effectiveness was to leverage the efforts of its own members. Partners were desirable supplements, but not essential. Today, by contrast, coalitions extend well beyond formal alliances. The ISAF operation in Afghanistan currently exceeds by two the number of countries in the allied coalition against Nazi Germany. In order to co-opt these partners, NATO has had to share consultations, intelligence, and planning and decision-making in a way that would have been unthinkable just a decade ago.

“What one puts into an alliance increasingly determines what one gets out of it”

In crisis-management tasks (as opposed to collective defence), this has largely blurred the distinction between member and non-member states. Moreover, operations these days are not only multinational, but also multi-institutional. The anti-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden has four different multinational structures, and the NATO-EU-UN-plus regional organisation matrix is now a standard feature of many peace-support missions. Given the political sensitivities in relations among these institutions, officials and military commanders on the ground need ingenuity to work out pragmatic liaison and support arrangements and workarounds.

The informal culture of international organisations is often more impressive bottom up than the formal positions and declarations operating top down. At all events, the increasing involvement of partners and other institutions in the central, rather than the peripheral, business of an alliance means that it is no longer a self-standing organisation, but rather a network. The



ability to plug into other networks – to contribute to them and to be reinforced by them in return – increasingly determines an alliance’s utility in the modern world.

The British Armed Forces, as are all allies committed to an alliance such as NATO, now have to fulfil three simultaneous functions. The first of these is collective defence. In the Cold War, that meant keeping a real adversary at bay. Now, increasingly, it means preventing a potential future adversary from emerging by regulating the European security environment. Collective defence through contingency planning, exercises and regional commands, is also as much about reassuring one’s own member states as about deterring those on the outside.

In the past, deterrence was ensured through nuclear weapons, with conventional forces on hand to defend if deterrence broke down. Now the issue will be the capacity of conventional forces, together with missile defence, to provide this level of security in order to reduce the salience of nuclear weapons. Defining the mix will be a delicate task for NATO’s upcoming Deterrence and Defence Posture Review.

Collective defence will also need to be expanded in order to cover new types of threat. Cyber-attacks are the most pressing, not just because of the threat that they pose to vital communications, command-and-control and management systems, but also because cyber reopens the debate on the principles of war. For instance, cyber abolishes the traditional distinction between defence and attack. Nations have to access the information networks of others to discover if they are being attacked and by whom, as well as to make an assessment of the damage.

The weaponised document can be as destructive to military operations as missiles or landmines. Moreover, although we anticipate that most military campaigns will

“We enter a period in which a major war is improbable, but real security seems also unobtainable”

now have a cyber dimension – whether to paralyse an opponent or acquire information superiority – it is far from clear whether cyber-warfare will be only a short prelude to kinetic operations, or something that will strongly affect or even be a substitute for those kinetic operations.

In short, the ease and virtual anonymity of cyber-attacks – whether for espionage, disruption or as preparation for future warfare – means that state-to-state conflict is back, even if we are still a very long way from declaring open hostilities. Governments will inevitably shift their priorities and their budgets away from land forces and expeditionary operations towards cyber-defence, counter-terrorism and homeland security as we enter a period in which major war is improbable, but real security seems also unattainable. The internet brings the like-minded together – whether it be the pro-democracy activists on Cairo’s Tahrir Square or religious fanatics seeking to radicalise each other.

Alliances will struggle to acquire the spectrum of capabilities to deal with these threats, as investments



THE VIRTUES OF PLANNING AND INTEGRATION

The second added value of alliances lies in crisis management. The current fatigue with the Afghanistan mission has fostered a sense of “never again”. But, if history is a guide, there will be more interventions before too long. Indeed, a desire to avoid long-term engagement on the ground may well lead to more preventive deployments, such as we have seen with debates over the arms embargo enforcement, AWACS monitoring and a no-fly zone during the Libya crisis.

The lessons learned from Afghanistan point to better capability for planning, and better integration of civilian and military efforts. NATO needs to know in advance whether the civilian actors will be there in abundance, so that it can plan either to support those civilian actors or compensate for their absence. NATO has to be able to generate civilian, as well as military effect, either by coordinating with independent civilian actors in support of a common strategic plan, or deploying its own civilian experts on the basis of national databases and reserve lists.

“The Afghanistan mission has fostered a sense of ‘never again’. But, if history is a guide, there will be more interventions”

An alliance structure is best placed to integrate these civilian experts or diplomatic representatives (including in the consultation and command structures) and to redistribute them in a theatre of operations according to where the civilian need is most urgent, or civilians can work most productively. Civilian force goals should, henceforth, be part of NATO’s defence planning process.

Transition from an alliance to local authority and control inevitably means the training of indigenous forces, as we have seen in the Balkans, Iraq and Afghanistan. All land forces will now need a standing, training organisation. We have seen how long it takes to generate these assets from scratch in Afghanistan, and the waste of much effort for many years due to lack of qualified trainers, as well as not having a training concept suited to Afghanistan’s army and police. Again, allies are useful for training, as even those intending to leave ISAF (such as Canada and the Netherlands) can be persuaded to stay on in a training role. It is also a good way (as in Bosnia, Kosovo or Iraq) of signalling a long-term commitment to a country after the combat forces have been withdrawn.

Another thing an alliance can do is to negotiate legal agreements, such as Status of Forces Agreements (SOFAs), to provide for transit, supply or disposal of prisoners. We have seen three NATO missions in the recent past that have been stymied due to a lack of legal agreements. The first was the deployment of the NATO Response Force to Kashmir in the aftermath of the earthquake; the second was the basing of NATO AWACS aircraft in the Gulf; and the third is NATO’s Ocean Shield counter-piracy operation in the Gulf of Aden, where much military hard work has been undermined by the absence of agreements with



Above: Developing the capabilities of the Afghan National Army is now the key task of ISAF troops

Left: the Iraq war to topple Saddam was a ‘Coalition of the willing’

in NATO command structures are increasingly in competition with national force structures and headquarters. This is true of NATO’s new command structure, which is being pared down to just six HQs and fewer than 9,000 full-time personnel. With less standing capabilities of its own to mobilise, NATO will need to validate and work with national force structures to provide the backbone for its missions. Security policy will, therefore, be more and more about the management of risk, as well as more rigorous prioritisation of scarce personnel and resources.

Making these judgements – and getting them right – will be a key credibility test for alliances in the future. This will be all the more challenging in an age when adversaries are more likely to use a range of capabilities – conventional and non-conventional – in hybrid combinations that target the vulnerabilities in our own force posture. Cyber is, in this connection, the ultimate asymmetric weapon in terms of both cost ratios and impact.



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Kenya and the Seychelles on the handover and processing of captured pirates. Given the enormous cost of such deployments, it is essential that alliances conclude legal arrangements as far as possible in advance on a contingency basis, while being able to offer incentives, such as cooperation programmes or security consultations to the countries concerned.

A third, and final, function of alliances is to promote cooperative security. The financial crisis has not only placed a premium on prevention, but also on capacity-building in regional organisations on “a training the trainers” model. It is often easier politically for organisations such as NATO to provide transport, equipment, reconnaissance or communications for regional frameworks, such as the African Union, than to put Western boots on the ground. The hybrid operation, whereby Western allies play a supporting or extraction role, will increasingly be the order of the day, as we have seen with the various CFSP missions of the EU in support of the UN in Zaire.

EDUCATION AND COOPERATION

Military liaison missions or advisory teams have long been a feature of countries wishing to join NATO, but in future they will also feature in partner countries alongside ad hoc trust funds that can be used to finance specific projects, such as the destruction of surplus arms or ammunition. NATO can even set up (and finance, where necessary) regional military academies along

“The British Army has an excellent track record of reforming, educating and training foreign armies”

the lines of the NATO Defence College or the SHAPE School in Oberammergau, which can encourage regional contacts and cooperation. This capacity-building can equally foster interoperability to turn these partners into future troop contributors for NATO operations.

The post-crisis situation in the Middle East and North Africa will throw up a number of specific challenges in the field of security-sector reform, to help bring local forces under democratic, or at least constitutional, control. Land forces, which have often been considered (and have considered themselves) as an instrument of last resort, will need to reprogramme themselves for these educational and training roles, where lack of quantity or money for operations will not be such a handicap – and where quality, niche capabilities and specialist skills will have the edge. The British Army has an excellent track record of reforming, educating and training foreign armies in both professional skills and democratic behaviour.

Yet the test of alliances also has to be in their ability to deliver the required capabilities, and not only to formulate strategies and targets, or output indicators. Alliances tend to be good at the second, but bad at the first. The requirement is clearly for a single set of forces that can cover the full spectrum of missions and where allies do not only invest at the lower end.

Three factors have made this difficult to achieve of late: the first is the fragmentation of effort across a range of different bodies (EDA, ACT, CNAD, NATO-EU Capability Group, OCCAR, EU Ghent Initiative, NATO Lisbon Capabilities Commitment) that do not necessarily use the same terminology or concepts in defining capability requirements. A plethora of initiatives stalls, rather than invigorates, common standards and programmes, and leads to more bureaucratic overheads without new capabilities. It also promotes duplication in research and development, and competing routes towards the same universally needed assets, such as heavy-lift helicopters, counter-IEDs or medical support.

The second challenge lies in the area of what is now being called ‘smart defence’. This age of austerity inevitably puts the spotlight on waste and duplication in defence spending. Europe still has 17 different training institutes for helicopter pilots, 13 different armoured personnel-carrier projects, and 16 different shipyards. Yet it is far from reaching, on average, the NATO targets of 50 per cent usable ground forces and 10 per cent deployed, and 20 per cent of defence budgets to be devoted to equipment modernisation. Solutions have long been identified: pooling of key assets such as air transport, role specialisation, more common capabilities, logistics and common funding of short-notice deployments.

Yet these solutions are not likely to be implemented if the European Allies are not able to reach a clear

Kazakh soldiers on Exercise *Steppe Eagle*, where they were trained by British Territorial Army soldiers from Lancashire



understanding on which capabilities they wish to own and operate nationally; which they are prepared to give up, knowing they can rely on their allies; and which they are willing and able to finance, develop and operate in common. Achieving this structured vision will be a key test for NATO and the EU, but the vision must be a common one – as must the implementation.

COMBATING SCEPTICISM

At the same time, the role of the NATO alliance and the EU in the development of capabilities is changing. Nations are now sceptical regarding complicated and long-duration multinational programmes, such as the Airbus 400M transport aircraft, the Eurofighter jet or NATO Allied Ground Surveillance. The trend today is more towards the “90 per cent solution”, using off-the-shelf commercial technology and bilateral agreements between similar-sized and like-minded partners, such as the recent UK-France treaties or the Nordic and Benelux cooperation in air defence, naval operations and light, armoured vehicles.

Consequently, the role of alliances will be less to manage multinational programmes and more to act as clearing houses for lessons learned, and best practice in the pooling and sharing of more modest and pragmatic projects. That said, multinational cooperation will work best where partners are politically willing to act together. The experience of Afghanistan has left its mark in making some Allies sceptical about the wisdom of investing in capabilities that they cannot use optimally in a crisis, because of resistance from other contributing Allies. So strategic alignment is ultimately the prerequisite of ‘smart defence’.

Finally, as nations come to grips with painful strategy and defence reviews, their willingness to consult on these reviews (and implementation) ahead of time with their allies, and to submit to a peer-review process, will be an important indicator of their faith in their alliances. Otherwise, alliances have to adapt to their national preferences, rather than the other way round.



In conclusion, the record thus far of alliances is that they are better at crisis management (when the push to cooperate is at its height) than at long-term planning and capability development. Alliances also tend to favour the interests of the small countries (who can piggyback on the security and capabilities of the larger members) than the interest of the big allies (who tend to contribute disproportionately).

One statistic in this regard is telling: in 2000, the US contributed 48 per cent of the collective NATO defence budgets; by 2010, this had risen to 75 per cent. As the big countries also face cutbacks, they will inevitably scrutinise more closely the complementary added value of their alliances as force multipliers. As alliances become more necessary in theory, managing the many expectations of their member nations will become much more demanding and difficult in practice. ■

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