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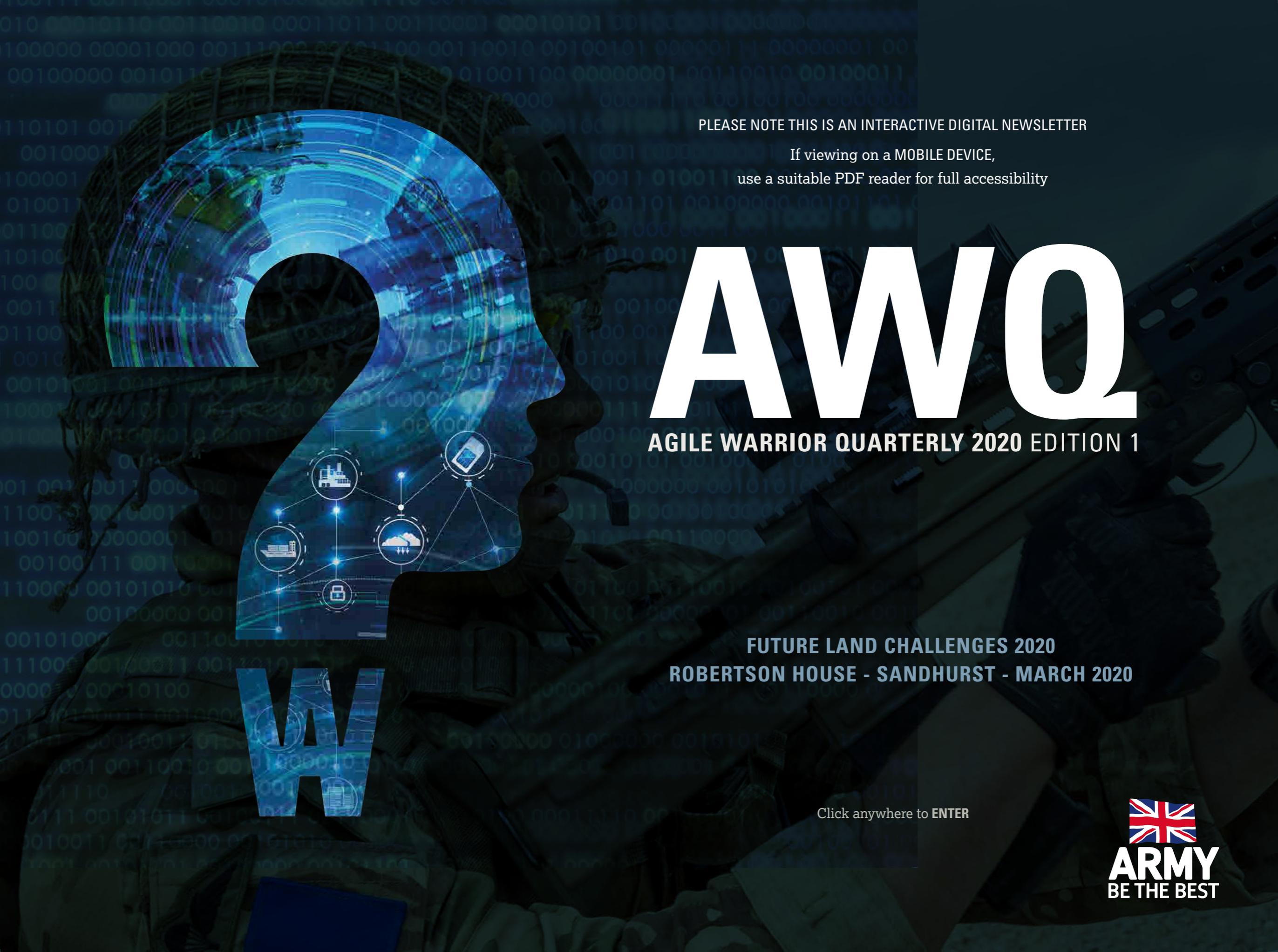
AGILE WARRIOR QUARTERLY 2020 EDITION 1

FUTURE LAND CHALLENGES 2020
ROBERTSON HOUSE - SANDHURST - MARCH 2020

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PREFACE

Agile Warrior (AW) is the Army's intellectual examination of current and emerging threat and opportunities for land capability. It generates an evidence base to inform the continual transformation of land forces and force structures across all lines of development.

It aims to be both reflective and progressive, challenging current assumptions where necessary. While many of us routinely focus on the near-term future, it is critical that we extend our gaze beyond the short-term horizon to inform our experimentation and modernisation agenda, so that our land forces can continuously adapt to successfully meet future challenges. AW has a horizon of approximately 20 years. As such, it is aware of current policy, budget and equipment – however, AW is not constrained by these factors and should encourage conceptual exploration and exploitation of trends and emerging technologies.

From 9 – 11 March 2020, just before COVID-19 severely influenced public life, the British Army's Concepts team organised the annual Agile Warrior symposium; Future Land Challenges 2020 (FLC20) in Robertson House, Sandhurst. During these three days, threats, challenges and opportunities were discussed amongst the audience and presenters from RUSI, FCO, US Special Assistant to CGS, DSTL, QinetiQ, Chatham House, IISS, Pembroke

College Oxford, Stabilisation Unit, Space Capabilities, CHACR, Oxford Research Group and Exeter University.

We are moving from an Industrial to an Information Age, with a pace of technological change that is rapidly broadening and deepening the threat spectrum. We face threats from resurgent and developing powers, state and non-state actors and a continuing threat from violent extremism; a dynamic and fluid security context that will most certainly be affected by climatic changes.

Big data, machine learning and artificial intelligence (AI) will further complicate the competition. At the same time, the distinction between war and peace, home and away, and clear boundaries between the frontline and rear areas have been eroded. In the new 'theatre of war' one seeks to convince people in the battle of the narratives, both at home and in remote areas abroad.

At the heart of the British Army is its people. In the (near) future our soldiers will be enabled more and more with technical support, in order to gain and assess information and in decision making processes. Technical and pharmacological enhancements will improve the physical capabilities of our soldiers. But technology alone 'will not save us.' A shift in mindset will be necessary to understand, accurately interpret and effectively influence human behaviour. It also demands a different view of

Command and Control, that is agile and fully exploits the human capabilities, enhanced by simple models and modern technology.

The British Army must evolve rapidly to address this new reality. To realise this philosophy, we must start 'imagineering' the Soldier as a Platform and find new approaches to fight and win the nation's battles, both in the old domains and in the new; Space and Cyber.

The intention of this digital and unclassified edition of the Agile Warrior Quarterly (AWQ) is to encourage a wide audience debate, based on articles written by presenters and panellists from FLC20.

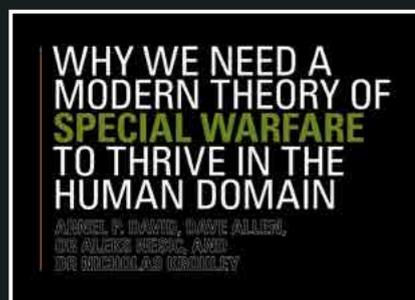
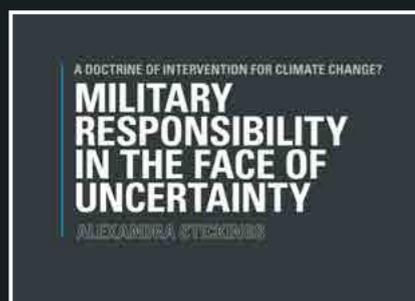
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Finally, we are confident that the articles in this edition of AWQ will provide food for thought. We hope you enjoy reading it and are looking forward to your contribution to future editions.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In addition to the Army personnel from CHACR, for their substantive contribution to the FLC20 symposium, the AGILE WARRIOR team would like to thank the following organisation and individuals who have made this event to a success;

- British Army Infantry Trial & Development Unit
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- Defence Science & Technology Laboratory (DSTL)
- Directorate Capability, UK Army HQ
- Exeter University
- HQ Air Command – Space Capabilities
- King's College London
- NATO C2 Centre of Excellence
- Oxford Research Group
- Pembroke College, Oxford
- 2nd Battalion The Royal Anglian Regiment
- Royal Gurkha Rifles
- Royal Netherlands Army
- Royal United Services Institute (RUSI)
- Stabilisation Unit
- QinetiQ
- US Army

A DOCTRINE OF INTERVENTION FOR CLIMATE CHANGE?

MILITARY RESPONSIBILITY IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

ALEXANDRA STICKINGS



In considerations of the impact of climate change on conflict and the military, the majority of discussions focus on the ways in which militaries will need to react and respond to a changing operating environment. They will face alterations in the geographical locations of operations, as well as the nature of these operations. Denying the repercussions of climate change will only make response more difficult. There is, however, another important angle to this debate: how militaries might positively impact both the fight against climate change and its more severe effects through proactive action. This article will consider the potential for a ‘doctrine of intervention’ in response to climate change.

CURRENT DEBATE

The effects of climate change are already impacting military operations around the world, and all evidence suggests that this will only keep increasing. Militaries need to understand how changes in the climate will affect both where they will need to operate as well as how. For example, the climate crisis may see the outbreak of conflicts in areas that at present do not see a great deal of military activity, or where adversaries may look to take advantage of the situation. Similarly, how militaries will need to operate ranges from the environmental conditions (such as extreme heat) to the nature of operations (such as humanitarian relief rather than conflict). Both of these considerations will also impact future capability requirements; the ‘where’ will,

for example, affect the requirements for maritime assets, and the ‘how’ for equipment that allows personnel to better operate in desert environments.

While the climate debate within defence is maturing, it is possible that it is still not at a level that allows it to ask and respond to all of these questions. Climate change is a complex problem that requires a complex response. As well as confronting the challenges outlined above, militaries will need to think about the impact of their own activity as well as the responsibility that may be placed upon them in the future in terms of mitigating emissions and preventing the worst-case scenarios from emerging.

IMPACT OF MILITARY OPERATIONS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

The relationship between climate change and military operations is not one way. Defence represents a significant proportion of national carbon emissions. In many countries, this is recognised and military and civilian leaders are pushing to reduce emissions, looking at everything from energy saving lightbulbs to the heating on estates to electric vehicles. There is a growing body of evidence relating to the environmental effects of conflict, particularly that over an extended period of time. It has been **estimated** that an enduring civil war or insurgency could create as much as 600 million tonnes of CO₂, approximately **the same** as a limited nuclear exchange. This is nearly **double** the entire British CO₂ emissions of 2018.

There is a sense, therefore, that as well as working on decreasing carbon emissions relating to everyday activity and becoming more environmentally friendly organisations, militaries also have a responsibility to reduce the ways in which their wartime activities are harmful. On the surface, this may be taken to mean a moving towards less environmentally damaging platforms, highlighted by the debate for electric tanks. Of course, these

types of changes may indeed contribute to a decrease in the carbon footprint of a given conflict, provided such platforms provide the required capability. Yet a focus on such changes does not allow for appreciation of a way to more drastically reduce emissions – the prevention of, or reduction in the length of, a conflict. If militaries are genuine in their goal to be responsible environmental actors, to what extent should they focus on conflict prevention or shortening, even if this would require escalation that may seem heavy handed in the short term.

To provide some context, one can look at the situation in Sierra Leone between 2000 and 2002, when the **actions** of British forces can be said to have ultimately prevented a civil war that would likely have lasted for years and caused long-term environmental damage, putting further pressure on a volatile situation. This example supports the concept of early and hard intervention, even though in this case environmental protection was not a major consideration in the decision-making process. For this to be realistic in the future, militaries will need, at minimum, the capabilities they currently have.



A NEW RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT?

There is a series of levels of military activity as response to climate change, ranging from humanitarian relief to intervention that prevents environmentally damaging activity. How different militaries employ these activities will depend on a variety of factors. States will have differing views of their roles as global actors as well as differing levels of military capability and capacity. Activities involving some level of intervention may be less popular in certain states because of historical cases. Nevertheless, the global nature of climate change and the severity of the potential impacts means that all states should at the very least consider these different activities, and indeed may be forced to as the situation becomes more uncertain.

The first level concerns activity that is already taking place, that of humanitarian missions. Such activity is of course not new, but the expected worsening of events

such as flooding and bushfires as a result of the climate crisis means that militaries will see themselves increasingly expected to become involved in humanitarian missions. The potential for the mass migration of hundreds of millions of people globally because of food and water insecurity will lead to a situation beyond anything previously seen, with a response requiring an effort involving multiple states and militaries.

Although there is some debate as to the exact causes of some events it is generally accepted that the scale and duration are both influenced by climate change, usually for the worse. It is therefore probable that such instances will become more commonplace and militaries will see an increased need to respond, either in the rescue of civilians or in the repurposing of capabilities, such as military aircraft involvement in tackling fires. An important question relating to this is how militaries will balance these activities with conflict

operations. Much activity currently takes place either in home countries (see, for example, the British military assisting with flood relief or the Australian navy **rescuing** civilians stranded by bushfires), or in areas with historical links. To what extent will militaries engage in humanitarian activity in regions in which they historically have little connection or are considered to be within the sphere of influence of an adversary?

The second level relates to the impact of conflict on the environment and its role in contributing to carbon emissions. The evidence suggests that long-term conflict should be avoided not just because of its short-term impacts on human life, economies and infrastructure but also those that will impact the future, such as damage to agricultural and water systems. As noted above, early intervention is an important tool in preventing protracted conflicts; the question is therefore whether there is a responsibility to intervene either

to prevent a conflict from breaking out or through escalation to end a conflict quickly with the aim being climate related.

As the implications of the climate crisis become more pronounced, and more human lives are put at risk, states may see an additional responsibility within the drive to limit carbon emissions and the predicted global temperature increase. Is it out of the realms of possibility to imagine military activity targeting the actions of a state or private industry that is not adhering to internationally agreed environmental standards and whose activities are deemed to cause global problems?

We are already seeing major emitters face boycotts and public shaming. As more governments and private entities reduce their carbon footprints and contribute towards to global effort, those not complying or making significant effort will be more visible as those actors risking the lives of people all around

the world through their irresponsible activities. Is it unimaginable, in the future, to see some states adopt a new version of the **Responsibility to Protect** doctrine, where the risk of climate change is added to those of genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and in which intervention against environmentally damaging activities is therefore considered acceptable (and even desirable)?

The likelihood of such a doctrine becoming regular, and acceptable, practice is of course up for debate, and

will be dependent upon development in the short-term regarding international climate agreements and the extent to which the recent focus on environmental concerns will carry forward with the same momentum, particularly when it can be argued that the Covid-19 pandemic replaced it within the public consciousness. Nevertheless, the climate will continue to change, and militaries will continue to play a major role in the response.

It has been **suggested** in some quarters that the environmental cost of conflict

should lead to a reduction in military spending, focusing these resources instead on other initiatives such as a Green New Deal. There is no doubt that these deserve funding, but to suggest that simply reducing defence spending is a solution is somewhat naïve, ignoring as it does the reality of the international security environment. It is also at odds with the generally recognised concept that conflict is likely to increase as a result of climate change.

It is not about reducing military spending but rather altering the way in which

militaries approach conflict so that environmental impacts are minimised. Thus, counter to the popular narrative, and for the benefit of the environment, military activity will actually need to be increased. More importantly, if climate change starts to drive policy, the use of military force to intervene much earlier in conflicts (or potential conflicts) might become de rigour. The key question will be to which level of intervention a state is willing to act.

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ARTICLE FUTURE LAND CHALLENGES SYMPOSIUM

COMPLEX, SYMBIOTIC INSURGENCIES AS A FUTURE LAND CHALLENGE

MAX PROVOOST

“As long as the insurgent has failed to build a powerful regular army, the counterinsurgent has little use for heavy, sophisticated forces designed for conventional warfare. For his ground forces, he needs infantry and more infantry, highly mobile and lightly armed.”

David Galula,

Counterinsurgency Warfare:
Theory and Practice

INTRODUCTION

The only thing that is certain about the future, is that it cannot be predicted. One can make reasonable assumptions about rough outlines, but its exact manifestation will remain uncertain. In this context of inherent uncertainty, many Western militaries are in a constant process of trying to grasp both the future's operating environment and its challenges. These challenges concern both the military's effectiveness in this future operating environment, and future threats to existing and upcoming security interests. Although militaries are expected to prepare themselves to deter, mitigate or confront these future challenges, the only certainty is that it is uncertain whether the identified future challenges will actually manifest themselves, let alone as foreseen. Nevertheless, the resulting process of organising, equipping and training to meet these future challenges takes place under budgetary constraints and a growing demand for cost-effectiveness. Militaries are expected to 'do more with less', often at the cost of redundancy, long-term sustainability and a broad readiness to face a wide spectrum of both foreseen and unforeseen security challenges. Correctly

identifying future challenges has thus become a necessity in order to make choices properly allocate scarce financial resources, and not so much a process to identify the necessary ways and required means to meet desired ends.

This article does not argue that Western militaries should not utilise technological advantages nor prepare for high-intensity, multi-domain major warfighting against near-peer adversaries. It does, however, argue that insurgencies will remain a threat to the interests of Western democracies and that they will have an increasingly complex, symbiotic character. Consequently, Western militaries will continue to be directly or indirectly involved in counterinsurgency efforts. Countering an insurgency will probably remain a human endeavour with a premium placed on human-human interaction. The question is then raised whether a small, but technologically advanced and increasingly automated military, optimised for short-term, high-intensity major warfighting, will be best suited to successfully engage in a long-term, counterinsurgency effort.



Increasingly complex, symbiotic networks often have a dormant insurgent potential
(Aftermath of a confrontation between Mexican authorities and the Sinaloa Cartel in Culiacan, Mexico)

INSURGENCIES AS A PERSISTENT SECURITY CHALLENGE

In the past two decades, the increasingly complex insurgencies in both Iraq and Afghanistan were a security challenge that occupied many Western militaries. Although this led to a conceptual revival of counterinsurgency warfare, the experiences in both theatres were cathartic. Conveniently enough, this era of counterinsurgency has almost seamlessly transformed into one of resurgent strategic competition between systemic rivals in a world that is increasingly becoming multipolar. This transformation in the international order has led to a renewed, yet rightful focus on high-intensity, large-scale, multi-domain warfare and a revival of various types of deterrence in multiple domains. However, the speed with which this change of focus manifested itself, has prevented that the vast experience and hard-won lessons of two decades of counterinsurgency warfare be formalised and adopted in military doctrine, thinking and preparation. This presumed error is in part accommodated by a traditional

reluctance in many Western militaries to deal with counterinsurgency warfare.^{1,2}

Yet, insurgencies are the most common form of armed conflict since at least 1949.³ When looking at developments during the Cold War, this trend will not change in the expected upcoming era of strategic competition between a wide range of state and non-state actors. Internationally oriented violent non-state actors will continue to instigate local, regional and even global insurgencies, while strategic competition between state-level systemic rivals can easily lead to proxy or remote warfare, including instigating, supporting or countering insurgencies in spheres of influence.

Furthermore, there are several **global trends** that can fuel and spark 'genuine domestic' insurgencies. Although the traditional nation state is expected to remain the primary actor in shaping societies and in the international political system for at least the near future,

many such states are under domestic pressure.⁴ Growing inequality between 'have's' and 'have-not's' in multiple socio-economic areas is eroding social cohesion in many countries, developed ones not excluded. Similarly, an increasing number of societies shows a growing division between people with liberal or traditional views, while popular sentiments like nationalism, religious intolerance, exclusionary politics, and antipathy towards immigrants are also on the rise. Consequently, modern societies are becoming more and more fragmented. As states struggle to mitigate these challenges, faith in democratic institutions and in general the whole principle of democracy is **eroding**, while at the same time many governments are becoming more authoritarian and repressive.

The speed and complexity of these evolving trends may eventually outpace a state's capacity to ensure good governance, provide basic services and

safeguard unity and territorial integrity. If states are unable to provide basic public services and meet the growing needs of their increasingly diverse and demanding populations, they can be challenged in their role and position by a range of both non-violent and violent non-state actors. This is a worrying development, because many insurgencies start as an exploitation of the lack of provision of basic services and public goods by the central state. Such ungoverned space allows both non-violent and violent non-state actors to take over the role and position of the central state, which can easily develop into an insurgency.

¹ Kitzen, M.W.M., (2012), 'Western Military Culture and Counterinsurgency: An Ambiguous Reality', in: *Scientia Militaria, South African Journal of Military Studies*, Vol 40, no.1, p.1-24.

² Rich, P.B. & Duyvestein, I. (ed.), (2012), *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, New York: Routledge, p.366

³ Paul, C., Clarke & C.P. & Grill, B. & Dunigan, M., (2013), 'Paths to Victory, Lessons from Modern Insurgencies,' RAND Corporation, p.xvii

⁴ DCDC, (2018), *Global Strategic Trends: The Future Starts Today*, (6th ed.), UK: Ministry of Defence, p.12-16

PROPOSITION: THE ANALOGY BETWEEN A SYMBIOTIC INSURGENCY AND STATE-FORMATION

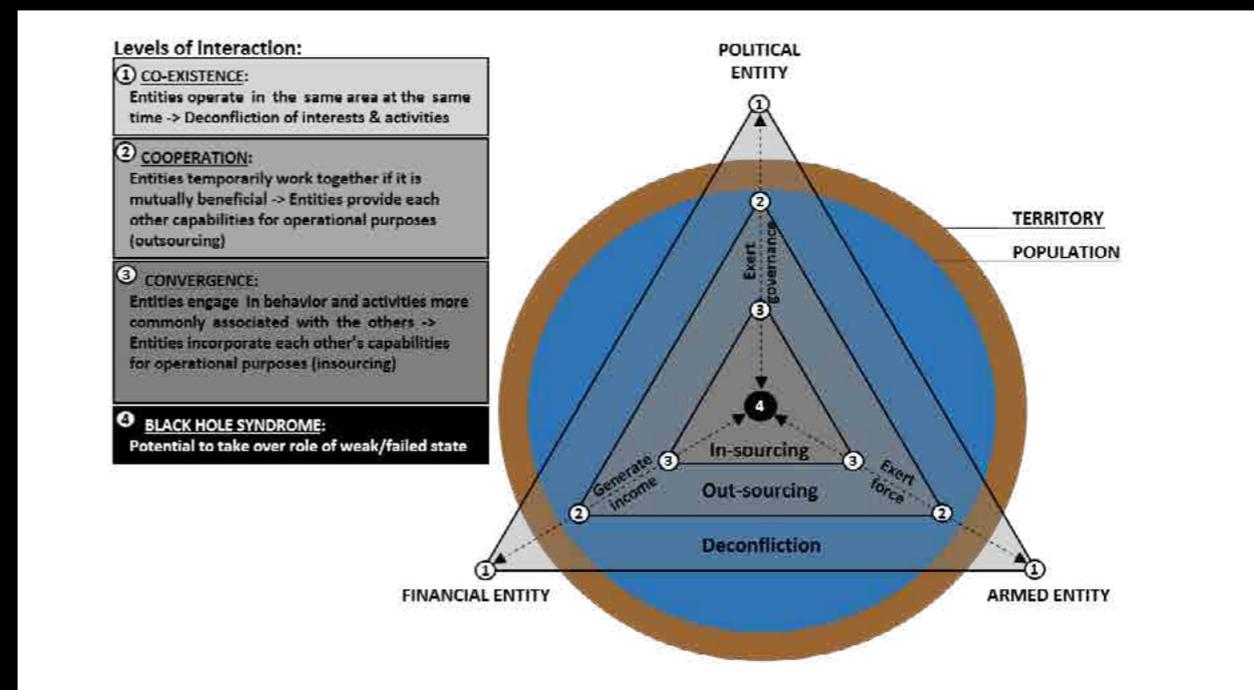
States exist through their ability to claim and maintain a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.⁵ Their effectiveness can be measured in terms of fiscal and legal capacity, i.e. the ability to levy taxes in order to provide for basic services and public goods, and the supremacy as sole arbiter of conflict resolution and contract enforcement through their monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force.⁶

An insurgency challenges these capacities through both politics and physical force in order to take over the state's role and position in a given territory. Ultimately, an insurgency will in some form establish its own fiscal and legal capacity, and with it a monopoly on the use of physical force. This is necessary in order to secure its newly acquired position, restore order after a chaotic phase of transition, and to collect taxes or financial resources. In a sense, these political, armed, and financial processes within an insurgency resemble a basic, rudimentary form of state-formation.⁷

Insurgencies are increasingly becoming a complicated mesh of interlinking groups with different purposes and roles in the different networks in which they interact. This often leads to confusion about the exact nature of the non-state threat, because the complex and symbiotic character of the networked interaction often obscures the true strategic goal(s) of the insurgency. Political organisations, (illicit) financial enterprises and violent non-state actors can also form such a complex and symbiotic network in the context of the earlier described global trends. However, from an abstract perspective such a complex, symbiotic insurgency can be unravelled to a conceptual trinity of a political component that exercises governance, an armed component that exerts physical force, and a financial component that generates financial resources. By qualifying the interaction and integration of the required components as co-existence, co-operation, or convergence it becomes possible to assess an insurgency as either a network of different entities or

a single entity of incorporating different components. This assessment gives an indication of the potential the insurgency has to successfully take over the role and position of the state. The entities that form the required components operate in the context of a territory and population, both of which influence or even determine their manifestation, and thus

the character of the insurgency. These increasingly complex, symbiotic networks often have a **dormant insurgent potential** should they converge into a single, politically motivated entity that has the potential and ambition to take over the role and position of a state in a given territory. Based on Makarenko's crime-terror continuum, this condition is called a 'Black Hole Syndrome'.⁸



▲ Analogous to state-formation, a symbiotic insurgency can be unravelled into a political component that exercises governance, an armed component that exerts physical force, and a financial component that generates financial resources

⁵ Weber, M., (1922), *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, Tübingen: Mohr, p.29

⁶ Besley, T. & Persson, T., (2009), 'The origins of state capacity: property rights, taxation and politics', in: *American economic review*, 99 (4), p.1219

⁷ Provoost, M., (2019), *Symbiosis In The Sahara And Sahel: Why And How Does Jama'a Nusrat Ul-Islam Wa Al-Muslimin' (JNIM) combine insurgent, terrorist and criminal activities and what does this reveal about the movement's true nature?*, Breda: Netherlands Defence Academy, p.30-31

⁸ Makarenko, T., (2004), 'The Crime-Terror Continuum: Tracing the Interplay between Transnational Organised crime and Terrorism', in: *Global Crime*, 6(1), p.129-145

THE MILITARY AS A *NOLENS VOLENS* COUNTERINSURGENT

Insurgencies will thus remain a major future security challenge, although from a Clausewitzian perspective, counterinsurgency is essentially a political undertaking. This perspective is reinforced if one considers an insurgency as a rudimentary form of state-formation and its political cause as its strategic centre of gravity. Nevertheless, because of the often absence of both a feasible political counterinsurgency strategy and an apparent lack of political will to develop one, Western militaries are often required to fill the resulting policy void. The operational level of war then tends to become the substitute for developing a counterinsurgency strategy.⁹ Militaries cannot ignore nor neglect this role. Because counterinsurgency requires a comprehensive, whole-of-government approach and a thorough understanding of unique and context-specific political dynamics and drivers of conflict, one can argue that counterinsurgents should consider placing human security in stead of military security at the centre of their thinking.¹⁰

In this line of thinking, it is a valid question to ask whether relatively small, but technologically advanced and increasingly automated militaries, optimised for major warfighting, will be the best instrument of state power to successfully engage in a long-term counterinsurgency effort.¹¹ Many contemporary Western armed forces do not have the required manpower to provide and sustain the force density needed for a successful long-term counterinsurgency. This shortfall can be mitigated by both operating in a coalition and the use of proxy or partner forces, but either of these options has its downsides.¹² In light of the technology focussed perspective on warfare, it should be considered that counterinsurgency will probably remain a human endeavour with a premium placed on human-human interaction. The soldier, operating amongst the people, is the platform in counterinsurgency warfare. In this context, technology that enhances human skills will have the most positive effect on the outcome

of a counterinsurgency. In contrast, technology that provides small militaries decisive tactical, operational, or strategic advantages over near-peer adversaries, might prove to be of limited use in a counterinsurgency. In return, it is questionable whether a military that

is solely focussed on human security and multidisciplinary counterinsurgency operations will be the best instrument of state power to successfully deter or engage systemic rivals in an era of renewed strategic competition.



▲ Internationally oriented violent non-state actors will continue to instigate local, regional and even global insurgencies (Militants of Al-Qaida affiliate JNIM, Mali)

⁹ Rich, P.B. & Duyvestein, I. (ed.), (2012), *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, New York: Routledge, p.366

¹⁰ DCDC, (2018), *Global Strategic Trends: The Future Starts Today*, (6th ed.), UK: Ministry of Defence, p.15

¹¹ Knowles, E. & Watson, A., (2018), *Remote Warfare: Lessons Learned from Contemporary Theatres*, London: Oxford Research Group Remote Warfare Program, p.26-27

¹² Rich, P.B. & Duyvestein, I. (ed.), (2012), *The Routledge Handbook of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency*, New York: Routledge, p.366

CONCLUSION

To conclude, global trends and developments indicate that increasingly complex, symbiotic insurgencies will remain an important feature of the international landscape and a land challenge for Western militaries. Although countering them is essentially a political undertaking, militaries cannot ignore their role and responsibilities in counterinsurgency and should prepare to meet this challenge. However, it is questionable whether a small, technologically advanced military, optimised for major warfighting, will best suited to successfully engage in a long-term counterinsurgency effort. In return, it is also questionable whether a multidisciplinary,

interagency counterinsurgency force will be a credible deterrent against systemic rivals in an era of renewed strategic competition. With many different types of adversaries seeking asymmetrical advantages, the ideal Western military should be able to meet these different future challenges simultaneously. This requires having a range of distinct, but complementary capabilities at sufficient states of readiness. Yet, this might prove to be rather utopic when budgetary constraints and a demand for cost-effectiveness, rather than operational needs, influence strategy development and armed forces design.



▲ Ungoverned space allows both non-violent and violent non-state actors to take over the role and position of the central state (Township, South Africa).



▲ The soldier, operating amongst the people, is the platform in counterinsurgency warfare (Brazilian soldiers patrol a favela in Rio de Janeiro, Brasil).

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This article will consider the discussions surrounding the nature of consent to the use of pharmacological performance enhancement in the military. It will review the legal requirement for consent, and then examine the complications specific to the military in meeting these requirements for both voluntary and informed consent. It will conclude by considering the challenges that disparities in consent among soldiers could create.

THE LEGAL REQUIREMENT FOR CONSENT

One of the primary concerns relating to the use of performance enhancing drugs by the military is the issue of consent. Governments and their armed forces have an ethical and legal duty of care to soldiers.¹ And this includes the maintenance of health and prevention of sickness of all military personnel, in addition to their protection against infection diseases, lethal agents and other hazards.² Governments also hold a legal duty of care

to soldiers, to afford them voluntary and informed consent to medical procedures.³ This is a legal requirement which is set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, which states that any medical intervention “*may only be carried out after the person concerned has given free and informed consent to it*”.⁴ However, achieving such voluntary and fully informed consent in the military is challenging for a number of reasons.

¹ House of Commons Defence Committee. (2005), ‘Duty of Care. Third Report of Session 2004-05 Volume 1’, London: The Stationary Office Limited. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmdfence/63/63.pdf> (accessed 5 Jul. 2019).

² Ministry of Defence. (2007), Queen’s Regulations for the Army, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/440632/20150529-QR_Army_Amdt_31_Jul_2013.pdf (accessed 6 Jul. 2019). Ministry of Defence. (2017), Joint Service Publication 950 Medical Policy. Ministry of Defence. (1997), ‘Background to the use of Medical Countermeasures to protect British Forces during the Gulf War (Operation GRANBY)’, <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20051115023018/http://www.mod.uk/issues/gulfwar/info/medical/mcm.htm> (accessed 6 Jul. 2019). Gibson, T. (2002), ‘A Shot in the Arm for the Military: Consent to immunisation Against Biological Warfare Agents’.

³ Ministry of Defence. (2017), Joint Service Publication 950 Medical Policy.

⁴ Council of Europe. (1997), ‘European Treaty Series No. 164, Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine’, <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168007cf98> (accessed 6 Jul. 2019).

VOLUNTARY CONSENT

The hierarchical nature of the armed services means that soldiers are likely to feel coercion from the chain of command to undergo treatment, whether genuine or not. Especially where failure to receive treatment would render them unfit for duty, for example in accepting a pre-deployment vaccination such as Yellow Fever. Further to chain of command pressure, soldiers are also likely to experience peer pressure or personal guilt where refusal to accept medical treatments places additional burden upon their colleagues. Additionally, if failure to accept an medical intervention limits a soldier's ability to perform their duties, for example by making them non-deployable there may be career implications of refusal too.

These factors all compromise the military's ability to ensure soldiers freely express voluntary consent.

The voluntary nature of consent can also be compromised where those who accept performance enhancing drugs are remunerated for doing so, as with other high-risk, arduous and unpleasant duties in the military.⁵ And if enhanced soldiers were to perform acts of heroism would they still be recognised for this with honours and awards? Such potential for additional pay and medals further clouds the nature of consent to taking performance enhancing drugs in the military.

⁵ For example unpleasant work allowance is awarded "to compensate Service personnel for operating in conditions involving an exceptional degree of discomfort or fatigue, or exposure to noxious substance beyond that compensated for by" normal pay. "It is paid for the wide range of activities that Service personnel may be expected to undertake which fall outside their normal range of military duties and are considered to be of an objectionable, or harrowing, nature." (Ministry of Defence. (2019), Joint Service Publication 752 Tri-Service Regulations for Expenses and Allowances, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/813165/JSP_752_v39_July_2019_Final.pdf (accessed 9 Jul. 2019).



INFORMED CONSENT

And it isn't just the voluntary nature of consent which poses problems in the military, there are challenges to providing adequate information too, especially where medical intervention is part of a classified programme for operational reasons. An example of this can be found in the implementation of the immunisation programme against biological warfare agents for UK troops during the Gulf War in 1990-91. British soldiers deploying to the Gulf faced the threat that Iraq might use biological and chemical weapons against them, so the UK Government implemented a programme of medical countermeasures to protect them. As part of this programme these soldiers received a series of vaccination against bubonic plague, whooping cough (pertussis), and anthrax, however, due to the requirement to prevent Iraq from learning of the nature of these medical countermeasures, the programme was classified as secret.⁶

Due to operational security the secret classification of this vaccination programme had the unintended outcome of limiting the information provided to soldiers who were offered these vaccinations, and as a consequence many

soldiers had no real understanding of what the immunisation programme involved, or what vaccines they were given. Similarly, any military pharmacological performance enhancement programme would be likely to be protected by a comparable security classification, meaning that soldiers taking part would be unlikely to have complete information on which to make a decision to consent. This predicament places a greater responsibility on those authorising and administering their use, especially military doctors and medical practitioners, who are responsible for the treatment and medical care of soldiers in barracks and on operations.

Unlike the majority of civilian doctors, doctor's in the armed forces must navigate between two different loyalties, as a doctor to their patients, and as officers to their chain of command.⁷ These loyalties have the potential to come into tension where a doctor's ethical obligation to patients comes into conflict with the demands of military necessity. For example, when patient confidentiality restricts the sharing of information relating to justifiable military concerns regarding a soldier's fitness for



⁶ Ministry of Defence. (1997), 'Background to the use of Medical Countermeasures to protect British Forces during the Gulf War (Operation GRANBY)'.

⁷ Blair, D. (2011), 'To Whom Does a Military Medical Commander Owe a Moral Duty?', in Whetham, D. (ed) (2011), *Ethics, Law and Military Operations*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. British Medical Association. (2012), *Ethical Decision-Making for Doctors in the Armed Forces: A Tool Kit*, London: British Medical Association, <https://www.bma.org.uk/advice/employment/ethics/armed-forces-ethics-toolkit> (accessed 8 Jul. 2019).

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ministry of Defence. (2016), *Joint Service Publication 830: The Manual of Service Law*.

DISPARATE UPTAKE

active service, or when triaging conflict casualties according to their clinical needs regardless of which side they fought on.⁸ As officers, military doctors operate within the hierarchical structure of the institution and therefore are bound by service law to obey the lawful commands of those in positions of authority.⁹ And as medical professionals they are also regulated by their professional governing body, which has the power to sanction doctors who are in breach of medical ethics and fail to uphold the standards expected of them. In theory these dual obligations, between the military and medical professions, could come into opposition, and it has been suggested that in order to overcome this, military doctors would not be responsible for the implementation of pharmacological performance enhancement, but rather a parallel profession of ‘military enhancer’ could be created to oversee such a programme.

Another challenge in administering performance enhancing drugs in the military is their uptake. If consent is to be voluntary and informed, than uptake could be mixed, where some soldiers are willing to take drugs while others are not. A situation could therefore arise whereby a unit of soldiers has synthetically created performance disparities among its members, rather than those which result of natural human differences. This would leave military commanders with a predicament over whether to entirely decline the drugs, or to permit some to take it and bare the additional risks and burden, and also whether to accept the damage such a split could have to unit cohesion.

Consent isn't the only option. There is scope within human rights law to compel soldiers to undergo medical intervention without the requirement for consent, but this is strictly permitted only on the basis of public safety or in circumstances where it is necessary for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.¹⁰ Such exceptional circumstances, requires approval at the highest level, and is only permitted under conditions where obtaining consent is not feasible, contrary to the best interests of the soldier, or not in the interests of national security.¹¹



¹⁰ Council of Europe. (1997), ‘European Treaty Series No. 164, Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine’. Council of Europe. (1997), ‘European Treaty Series No. 164, Explanatory Report to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine’. <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=09000016800ccde5> (accessed 6 Jul. 2019).

¹¹ FitzPatrick, W., and Zwanziger, L. (2003), ‘Defending Against Biochemical Warfare: Ethical Issues Involving the Coercive Use of Investigational Drugs and Biologics in the Military’, *The Journal of Philosophy, Science and Law*, 3, <http://jpsl.org/archives/defending-against-biochemical-warfare-ethical-issues-involving-coercive-use-investigational-drugs-and-biologics-military/> (accessed 6 Jul. 2019).

CONCLUSION

The potential to pharmacologically enhancing the performance of soldiers offers many potential benefits to the military, however it comes with the requirement to consider the ethical and legal predicaments of such technology, as with the introduction of all new technologies. This article has considered the particular debates concerning the issue of consent to pharmacological performance enhancement, including the

requirement for consent to be obtained that is voluntary and informed, and the specific difficulties in achieving this in the military environment. Any programme to enhance the performance of soldiers using pharmacological options would place a particular tension on the role of the military doctor and medical practitioners, who's trust and professional ethics must not be compromised.

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INTRODUCTION

Planning for 2035 is no easy task. Take the last 15 years, they have seen many important changes – from the re-emergence of state-based threats to the outbreak of coronavirus (also known as COVID-19) – which have changed the character of international affairs but were hard to predict and account for.¹ The next 15 years look as likely to see massive domestic and international change, making preparation for them an overwhelming task.

However, while it is important to take account of, and adapt to, these potential changes, it is as important to acknowledge that some things will not change. Many aspects of military engagement have remained the same for the last 15 years (and well before) and are likely to stay the same for the next 15 (and long after).

There is a danger that in looking forward to predict the future the UK will forget to also look back to learn from the past. In doing so, it may end up making the same mistakes in the 2030s as it did in the 2010s.

One area where the UK could learn as much looking back as looking forward is partnered operations. The UK looks increasingly unlikely and even unable to engage against security threats alone.² Added to this, despite significant change, the UK looks likely (barring a major threat to national security) to continue to

engage abroad with relatively few British forces on the frontline.³ Instead, it will focus on supporting local, national and regional forces to do the bulk of frontline fighting. This approach, which we refer to as remote warfare, has defined the UK's international engagement for decades and is likely to define it well into the 2030s. Yet, despite their long history, these types of engagements are often poorly understood. If they are going to continue into the next decade, they need serious thought and debate to address several common misconceptions.

This article deals with two of them:

- The first is that it is a lower risk and lower cost way of achieving British objectives abroad and, as such, can be used to build influence and UK reputation with minimal consequences.
- The second is that – by training local and regional forces over a long period of time – the UK can build local and regional capacity so that foreign states can address potential threats more autonomously in the future.

As this article will explore, these assumptions are not evidenced in recent experiences, which demonstrate the need to learn from the mistakes of the past to ensure the UK mitigates against the risks of this approach in the future.

¹ Malcolm Chalmers, "Taking Control: Rediscovering the Centrality of National Interest in UK Foreign and Security Policy," RUSI, February 10, 2020, <https://rusi.org/publication/whitehall-reports/taking-control-rediscovering-centrality-national-interest-uk-foreign>; "COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch," The Covid-19 Pandemic and Deadly Conflict (International Crisis Group, March 24, 2020), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/global/sb4-covid-19-and-conflict-seven-trends-watch>.

² Abigail Watson and Megan Karlshoej-Pedersen, "Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa" (Oxford Research Group, November 6, 2019), <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/fusion-doctrine-in-five-steps-lessons-learned-from-remote-warfare-in-africa>.

³ Emily Knowles and Abigail Watson, "Remote Warfare: Lessons Learned from Contemporary Theatres," Oxford Research Group, June 27, 2018, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/remote-warfare-lessons-learned-from-contemporary-theatres>.

MISCONCEPTIONS ONE: REMOTE WARFARE IS RISK-FREE

The Oxford Research Group (ORG) has long argued that the fact that states intervene on a light footprint does not mean that the risks of military intervention are removed, or even mitigated against.⁴ In fact, in many cases while Western forces may be removed from the frontline, civilians and partner forces often bear a disproportionate amount of the risks.

For instance, while providing training, equipment and air support to local forces in the fight against ISIS meant Western forces lost very few soldiers while pushing back the group, civilians and local partners on the ground suffered significantly. In Mosul Iraqi forces had been deeply traumatised by the experiences of 2014, and in many cases were reluctant to advance without heavy levels of international air support. The consequences of this can be seen clearly in western Mosul, the final stronghold of ISIS in the city, where around 15 neighbourhoods which housed around 230,000 residents were decimated.⁵

Similarly, while the Western footprint was relatively small in these campaigns, the long-term consequences of working with certain groups in the fight against ISIS are likely to be seen in the Middle East for years to come. The anti-ISIS coalition worked with certain groups (like the Peshmerga in Iraq, the Syrian Democratic Forces in Syria, and Misratan militias and General Haftar in Libya) who have real or perceived ethnic, geographical or community bias which has undermined the legitimacy of these groups among local and regional actors. Thus, by working with them, international forces exacerbated local, regional and international tensions and, arguably, created more fragmentation and instability in the future.⁶

A comparison between the destruction of Mosul in 2017 following the use of twenty first century precision weaponry, with a photograph taken in the aftermath of the Battle of Berlin at the end of the Second World War (Image credit: Wikimedia Commons).



⁴ Emily Knowles and Abigail Watson, "No Such Thing as a Quick Fix: The Aspiration-Capabilities Gap in British Remote Warfare," Oxford Research Group, July 30, 2018, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/no-such-thing-as-a-quick-fix-the-aspiration-capabilities-gap-in-british-remote-warfare>; Emily Knowles and Abigail Watson, "All Quiet On The ISIS Front : British Secret Warfare In The Information Age," Remote Warfare Programme (blog), March 31, 2017, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/all-quiet-on-the-isis-front-british-secret-warfare-in-an-information-age>.

⁵ Liam Walpole and Megan Karlshøj-Pedersen, "Remote Warfare and the Practical Challenges for the Protection of Civilians Strategy," Oxford Research Group, June 11, 2019, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/remote-warfare-and-the-practical-challenges-for-the-protection-of-civilians-strategy>.

⁶ Knowles and Watson, "No Such Thing as a Quick Fix."

Added to this, the UK could exacerbate instability and conflict by prioritising political access and influence above peace and stability.⁷ One British soldier we interviewed in Kenya said: “As an embedded security adviser, am I making these people any better? Probably not. However, I am sending a political message.”⁸ This belief that small-scale, tactical engagements can send a political signal and help build regional and international influence was echoed in many of our conversations with policy makers.

While this approach is understandable, it can become deeply problematic for two reasons. First, it can hinder international cooperation. This is already an issue in many parts of the world – such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa – where international engagement tends to be

defined by numerous actors engaged in parallel and often disjointed activities, which end up duplicating, and even contradicting, the efforts of others.⁹ The UK risks exacerbating these problems, unless it prioritises international cooperation. For instance, many soldiers, officials and commentators worried about the UK deploying to the Sahel just to maintain international alliances – particularly given that the UK’s expertise, experience, and skill sets may be better applied elsewhere in the continent.¹⁰

Second, prioritising influence could lead to a de-prioritisation of issues pivotal to peace and stability. For instance, one expert ORG spoke to said of international engagement in Niger, “it is one of the poorest countries in the world, but the focus on food security has fallen on deaf ears, while at the same

time there is a whole list of countries queuing up for providing more military support.”¹¹

Continuing to provide such support without addressing these long-term consequences, risks exacerbating rather than alleviate the drivers of conflict. In the short term this may lead to groups like ISIS reforming and posing threats again in the future (in fact ISIS, arguably, already is).¹² In the long term, it may create the very instability and chaos that countries like Russia (and their mercenaries) thrive in and Western countries struggle to engage in.

⁷ Peter Albrecht and Signe Cold-Ravnkilde, “National Interests as Friction: Peacekeeping in Somalia and Mali,” *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding* 14, no. 2 (February 21, 2020): 204–20, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17502977.2020.1719789>.

⁸ Emily Knowles and Abigail Watson, “Improving the UK Offer in Africa: Lessons from Military Partnerships on the Continent” (Oxford Research Group, March 25, 2019), <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/improving-the-uk-offer-in-africa-lessons-from-from-military-partnerships-on-the-continent>.

⁹ Watson and Karlshøj-Pedersen, “Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps.”

¹⁰ Abigail Watson and Liam Walpole, “Why Is the UK Going to Mali?,” Oxford Research Group, July 30, 2019, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/blog/why-is-the-uk-going-to-mali>.

¹¹ Watson and Karlshøj-Pedersen, “Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps.”

¹² Ryan Browne, “Pentagon Report Says ISIS Is ‘re-Surging in Syria’ Following Trump’s Troop Withdrawal,” CNN, August 8, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/08/06/politics/pentagon-report-isis-syria/index.html>; Orla Guerin, “Islamic State ‘Getting Stronger Again in Iraq,’” BBC News, December 23, 2019, sec. Middle East, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-50850325>.

MISCONCEPTION TWO: REMOTE WARFARE CAN BUILD STABILITY

The UK and its allies will not provide the means for states to provide their own security more autonomously in the future when: most of the problems creating instability in the places where the UK is engaged are deeply political (and require political solutions), but most of the activities are short-term or militarily focussed.

The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) 2020 Annual Report noted that:

*“Governments continue to pose the greatest threat to civilians around the world, with state forces responsible for more than a quarter of all violence targeting civilians in 2019 — the largest proportion of any actor type. Of the top five actors responsible for the largest share of civilian targeting in 2019, four of them are state forces, and the fifth is a progovernment militia.”*¹³

Given this trend, the international community should not respond to instability with tactical or militarily focussed solutions.¹⁴ Yet, they often do;

the US Stabilization Assistance Review noted that “the international community is providing high volumes of security sector training and assistance to many conflict affected countries, but our programs are largely disconnected from a political strategy writ large, and do not address the civilian military aspects required for transitional public and citizen security.”¹⁵

This is evident in many countries in the Sahel and Horn of Africa, where governments have used international support to increase the capacity of their security sectors but have failed to address root causes of instability – such as corruption and abuses by predatory state forces. In this sense, short-term activities, which focus on “defence and security institutions” but allow oversight to remain “weak and ineffective ... can lead to a situation where rights-violating security forces become better equipped to do what they have always done.”¹⁶ This “risk[s] further undermining human security” when populations are trapped “between increased

violence of abusive security forces and the terror of non-state armed groups.”¹⁷

Continuing such activities without addressing these problems – far from helping states provide their own stability more autonomously in the future – may exacerbate global instability and create more violent conflict in the region. For instance, in many countries in the Horn of Africa and the Sahel, predatory states have further alienated the civilian population and pushed them more towards extremist groups. In Somalia, ORG were told that the abuses of the Somali National Army are “a big recruitment tool for Al Shabab.”¹⁸ Similarly, an International Alert study on young Fulani people in the regions of Mopti (Mali), Sahel (Burkina Faso) and Tillabéri (Niger) found “real or perceived state abuse is the number one factor behind young people’s decision to join violent extremist groups.”¹⁹

▼ On foot patrol in Mogadishu with an AMISOM Formed Police Unit (Image Credit: AMISOM Public Information/Flickr Creative Commons).



The International Crisis Group’s recent analysis on COVID-19 argues that these issues could be made worse by the spread of the disease. First, they argue that the virus is likely to put even more pressure on state infrastructure – making non-military solutions more important. Second, they note, some predatory states and armed groups may use the virus as an opportunity to further their own power at the expense of providing for their population – making military support, arguably, more harmful than before.²⁰

¹³ Roudabesh Kishi, Melissa Pavlik, and Sam Jones, “ACLED 2019: The Year in Review” (Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, March 2, 2020), <https://acleddata.com/2020/03/02/acled-2019-the-year-in-review/>.

¹⁴ Co-Founder and CEO Rachel Kleinfeld, *A Savage Order: How the World’s Deadliest Countries Can Forge a Path to Security* (New York: Pantheon, 2019).

¹⁵ Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, “Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts To Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas” (U.S. Department of State, 2018), <https://www.state.gov/reports/stabilization-assistance-review-a-framework-for-maximizing-the-effectiveness-of-u-s-government-efforts-to-stabilize-conflict-affected-areas-2018/>.

¹⁶ Marina Caparini and Eden Cole, “Public Oversight of the Security Sector: A Handbook for Civil Society Organizations” (United Nations Development Programme, 2008), https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/CSO_Handbook.pdf.

¹⁷ Knowles and Matissek, “Western Security Force Assistance in Weak States.”

¹⁸ Emily Knowles, “Briefing: Falling Short of Security in Somalia,” Remote Warfare Programme (blog), January 31, 2018, <https://remoteproject.org/publications/briefing-falling-short-security-somalia/>.

¹⁹ Luca Raineri, “If Victims Become Perpetrators” (International Alert, June 2018), <https://www.international-alert.org/publications/if-victims-become-perpetrators-violent-extremism-sahel>.

²⁰ “COVID-19 and Conflict: Seven Trends to Watch.”

CONCLUSION: HOW TO LEARN THESE LESSONS

These are difficult problems that are not easily addressed; however, acknowledging that partnered operations are going to be part of how the UK engages abroad in the future (and, as such, need to be properly considered when it makes and develops policy) is a good start.

In a recent report, my co-author and I examined how remote warfare could be given the same level of strategic oversight as other UK engagements.²¹ The report argued that it required building routine consultation and engagement across all departments (both in Whitehall and among UK personnel deployed in country). More than this, it argued that it is essential that the UK works as hard to coordinate with other key stakeholders – such as other international actors engaged in the same region, the host nation and civil society (both in the UK and abroad).

The first step to achieving this is unpicking the common misconceptions about remote warfare. An approach that prioritises

influence above international coordination could undermine such efforts. As could a belief that small-scale tactical training courses can contribute to regional stability. It is important to have an open and frank conversation about these misconceptions, both within government and with a wider pool of external experts.

One of the lessons from Chilcot was that external engagement can check group think and create better strategy – or not if it's not done.²² Small, poorly planned engagements can still have detrimental impact on peace and stability. To ensure that it does not, the UK needs to engage with external experts in a concerted, meaningful and systematic way to understand the political consequences of remote warfare.

If remote warfare is to continue into 2035, it must be properly understood so that the UK can deliver on its national objectives, contribute to peace and stability abroad and protect civilians. To do this we must look back before we can go forward.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Abigail Watson is a Research Manager at the Oxford Research Group. She researches and presents on the military, legal, and political implications of “remote warfare”: the shift towards light footprint intervention. She leads on the team's research into this shift, including conducting extensive field research with UK personnel undertaking these activities. She has co-authored five major reports: *Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps: Lessons Learned from Remote Warfare in Africa*, *Lawful But Awful? Legal and political challenges of remote warfare and working with partners*, *Remote Warfare: Lessons Learned from Contemporary Theatres*, *No Such Thing as a Quick Fix: The Aspiration-Capabilities Gap in British Remote Warfare* and *All Quiet on the ISIS Front? British secret warfare in an information age*.

²¹ Watson and Karlshøj-Pedersen, “Fusion Doctrine in Five Steps.”

²² “Iraq Inquiry - Sir John Chilcot's Public Statement, 6 July 2016,” accessed July 26, 2016, <http://www.iraqinquiry.org.uk/the-inquiry/sir-john-chilcots-public-statement/>.

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URBAN WARFARE: TEACHING YOUR ENEMY TO WIN

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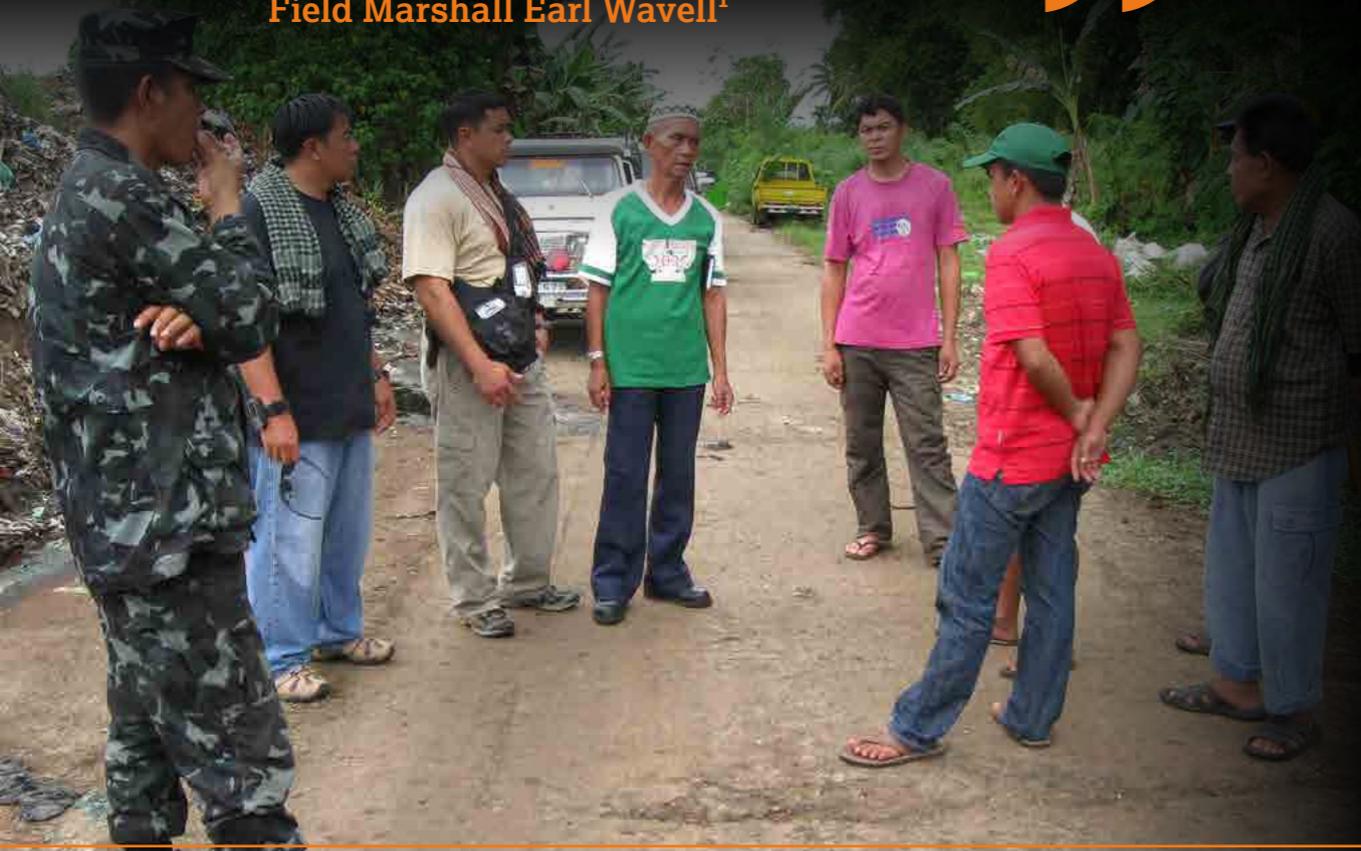
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WHY WE NEED A MODERN THEORY OF **SPECIAL WARFARE** TO THRIVE IN THE HUMAN DOMAIN

ARNEL P. DAVID, DAVE ALLEN,
DR ALEKS NESIC, AND
DR NICHOLAS KROHLEY

“ This has shown that the British make the best fighters in the world for irregular and independent enterprises... that where daring, initiative and ingenuity are required in unusual conditions it can be found both from the professional and unprofessional fighters of the British race. ”

Field Marshall Earl Wavell¹



Tradition and heritage are an enduring quality of many military organisations. The British Army is rich with its history and centuries old regiments, but is in danger of being too steeped in its past that it loses relevance in the present. Changes must be made, but without sacrificing grace and warfighting capability. The present zeitgeist is a litany of buzzwords (e.g. “hybrid warfare”, “the grey zone”, “constant competition”, and “sub-threshold”), which swirl throughout contemporary military literature. Strategies and plans are made, but lack execution or any meaningful implementation. This is due, in part, to a state of strategic confusion, wherein ill-defined concepts are being deployed without adequate grounding in a coherent theoretical framework.

This article explains why we need a renewed examination of theories. It reinvigorates the British Army’s long tradition of using an indirect approach to thrive in the human domain. War is a political act performed by humans. It is on land, amongst people, that the military must prevail. Defence must posture not only with platforms, but also through investment in

highly skilled human operators who have been educated, trained, and equipped to excel in the human domain.

This article does two things. First, it makes the case for why theory is essential to support concept development and strategy. At present, we suffer a cognitive dissonance between concepts and strategy, which is rooted in a lack of foundational theories. A lack of rigorous theory leads to “shallow bumper sticker”² ideas and jargon, which are equally sticky and unhelpful. Success in the human domain requires concepts and capabilities that are built on a solid foundation of theory fit for purpose, specifically, a theory of a special type of warfare that is waged in complex human environments, using traditional and non-traditional means to achieve strategic advantage. Second, this article explains what types of challenges a theory of this special warfare can begin to solve. ‘Special’ in this case is not ‘better’ or ‘more elite’, but instead, simply different and non-traditional. In the end, this article will show how the British Army can operate globally, with stronger relationships, greater understanding, and extended influence.

¹ F Spencer Chapman DSO. *The Jungle is Neutral*, Chatto and Windus 1949 ISBN 0583 12816 5 (Foreword by Field Marshall Earl Wavell June 1948 pp9-11)

² Huba Wass de Czege in emails with author and in Thomas E. Ricks, *The Generals: American Military Command from World War II to Today*, (New York: The Penguin Press, 2012), p354-363.

WHY THEORY?

The British Army needs capability and capacity to understand, interpret, and influence human behaviour. It is soldiers who will be on the ground early, working with an indigenous populace, understanding a given situation, and providing critical context to both civilian and military leadership. Soldiers must navigate complex social systems, and operate at a speed that creates vital decision space. Critically, they must do so with an understanding of second and third order effects, ensuring their actions do not create more problems than they solve. Put simply, our warfighters have learned that contemporary tactical actions have direct political consequences.³ Our frontline personnel are operating on complex human terrain, where they are often overmatched by competitors with a superior understanding of the local populace, and have far greater leeway to manipulate local dynamics to achieve effects. Without a unified theory in this age of persistent

competition, how can we educate, train, and equip soldiers for success?

Our current approach to the human domain lacks depth and rigour. Theory is absent. Methods and tradecraft are underdeveloped, and often improvised. Thinking and theory have been largely outsourced to civilians, forgetting the fact that theory is a core responsibility of military professionals. **Theory precedes** concepts, doctrine, and strategy, just like any other profession. Do doctors conduct surgery without understanding theories of medicine, or lawyers practice law without an understanding of its spirit? Perhaps institutions like the Army are ‘running hot’, and consumed by the administrative demands of the day, leaving no time for theoretical exploration and reading. Brilliant battlefield commanders are known to possess **coup d’oeil**, but this rapid ‘**thin slicing**’ of situations does not hone the military judgment required for

complex problems on a staff. Concept development, strategy formulation, and theoretical exploration require academic study and intellectual engagement. Theory is essential as a description of the elements of the environment, an indication of the workings and interaction of those elements, and a path to determine what winning looks like within defined policy parameters.⁵ Theories also provide a logical structure from which we derive predictions, and those predictions guide strategic choice.⁶

In the context of the human domain, a theory of special warfare is needed. Modern conflict and competition are predominantly a **fight for influence**. This fight is less decisive than war from previous eras. In addition, there appear to be diminishing returns from the substantial investments made in conventional military weaponry.

³ Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

⁴ Rachel Reynolds, “Strategy Verbs Theory: A Dysfunctional Relationship,” *The Strategy Bridge*, (February, 2020): <https://thestategybridge.org/the-bridge/2020/2/25/strategy-verbs-theory-a-dysfunctional-relationship>

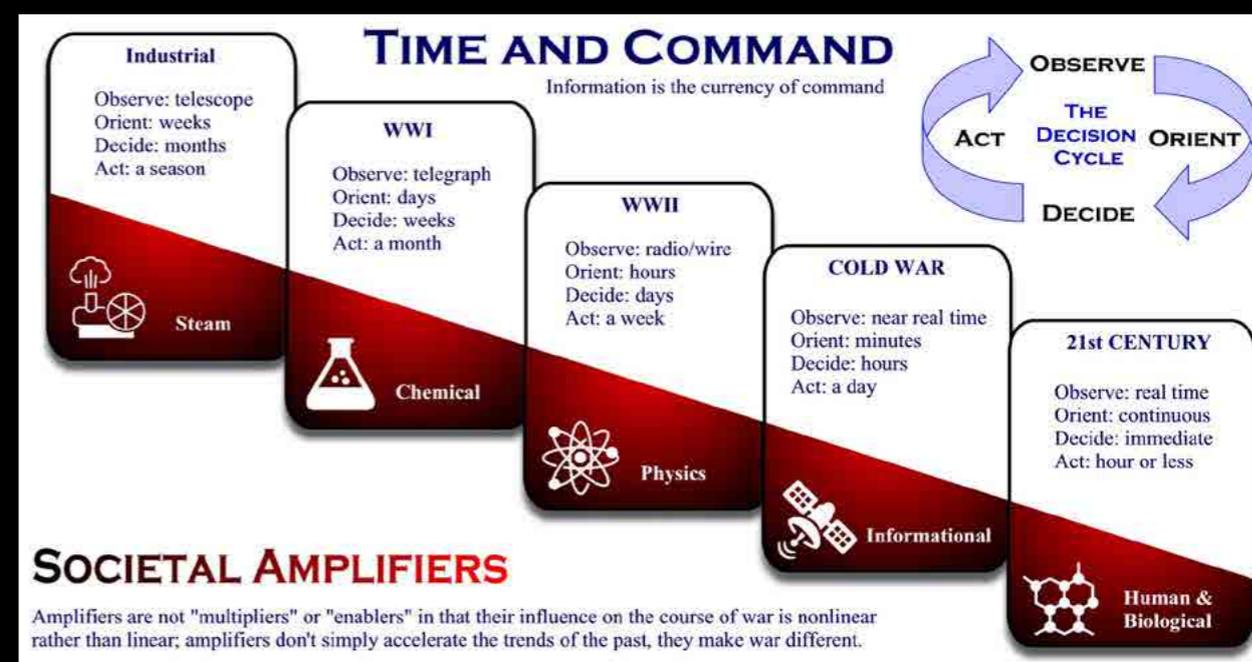
⁵ Joseph A. Gattuso Jr., “Warfare Theory,” *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 49, No. 4, (Autumn 1996), pp. 112-123.

⁶ Andrew Hill and Stephen Gerras, “Systems of Denial: Strategic Resistance to Military Innovation,” *Naval War College Review* (2016): Vol. 69 : No. 1 , Article 7, <https://digital-commons.usnwc.edu/nwc-review/vol69/iss1/7>

While many in defence continue to chase technological panaceas, scientists and scholars have declared that the social sciences are the science of the twenty-first century.⁷ Technology is ascendant in our popular culture, yet one general warns that we are entering an epochal shift, where controlling the amplification of competition and conflict will be human and biological, rather than organizational or technological (see figure 1).⁸ Despite the innovations of the so-called **Fourth Industrial Revolution**, the essence of modern warfare and competition remains among the people, and will continue to be driven by the people. As such, special types of soldiers and unique partners need the ability to understand, work with, and influence people.

This indirect way of operating, and attendant capabilities, make this a domain of warfare that can best be described as ‘special’.⁹ We must pause here to echo an important distinction. While we use the word ‘special’, we do not necessarily mean elite or better, but rather different. As Wavell’s opening quote shows, this

has long been a core strand of Britain’s strategic DNA. Meanwhile, western militaries continue to apply ad hoc fixes, when entirely new types of career models need to be built to support these modern ways of operating. A new warrior class is needed, to complement our existing lethal force, creating increased battlefield synergy. These new warriors need not be “perfect” soldiers by traditional military standards, so long as they are the “right” soldiers with the right skills for our current challenges. The **cyber warfare community** has recognized this dynamic, and is adapting its staffing and training model **accordingly**. Comparable innovations are needed elsewhere across the Army, and a theory on the desired capabilities and effects for special warfare can drive this development. This theory will need to address emergent challenges with strategic compression in the decision cycle, new training and educational modalities, and develop systems for operating amongst and within human networks.



▲ Figure 1 illustration developed by authors, derived from *The Age of “Amplifiers”* by Alan Beyerchen in *Scales on War* and “Time and Command” in *Envisioning Future Warfare* by General Gordon R. Sullivan and Lieutenant General James M. Dubik.

⁷ Duncan J. Watts, “Twenty-First Century Science,” *Nature* 445, 489 (2007), <https://www.nature.com/articles/445489a>

⁸ Robert H. Scales, “Clausewitz and World War IV,” *Armed Forces Journal*, (2006), <http://armedforcesjournal.com/clausewitz-and-world-war-iv/>

⁹ Linda Robinson, “Special Operations Forces Organization and Missions,” Council on Foreign Relations, (2013), https://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Special_Operations_CSR66.pdf

STRATEGIC COMPRESSION

John Boyd's *Patterns of Conflict* shows how past tactics were unable to keep pace with the maelstrom of complexity in emergent weaponry, arguing that this was a determinant factor that decided outcomes in war. Commanders who clung on to old ways of operating exhausted finite resources on capabilities and platforms that provided limited returns. This dynamic holds true today. The modern strategic compression of both time and depth brings the enemy into our homes, and into our social media feeds. Pervasive access to information presents both opportunities and dilemmas for state institutions. Strategies for data collection and information synthesis are needed to support rapid decision making, and should be incorporated into a new theory.

Scholars and development practitioners advocate an “eclectic combination” of diverse perspectives and methods, revealing hidden connections and dynamic patterns not visible with a single lens.¹⁰ Collection strategies must leverage thick and big data approaches to unlock greater explanatory power, which leads to detailed

causality and a richer understanding of the human narrative. Successful use of these data approaches will require increased cooperation, engagement across the enterprise, and the use of unusual partners. Moreover, many civilian organisations are increasingly locked away behind blast walls, causing a diminished understanding of local dynamics. Teamwork and government fusion is needed to demonstrate new ways of collaborating in the complex human domain.

The Army, operating on land and amongst people, can access dangerous and remote places where civilians are unable to go. It takes specialised and well-trained professionals to provide the insights that enable adaptation and understanding in the face of change. For the British Army, this is no revelation. The British Empire once produced officers like Henry Rawlinson, who decoded an ancient script in Persia¹¹ that unlocked the key to understanding ancient civilizations. There are also famous mavericks like T.E. Lawrence and Freddie Spencer Chapman, whose understanding of local human networks in

their environmental contexts enabled them to partner effectively with local forces, bringing hybrid warfare to bear against formidable enemies in the hard pan desert of the Middle East and the dense jungles of Malaya¹² However, their skills in decoding human behavior and understanding operational environments were not systematically studied, or written into training manuals. As a result, the British Army has been left only with anecdotal evidence of their successes, as opposed to replicable models and processes that could be scaled across the force.

HUMAN NETWORKS

In the military, we tend to focus on conflict and competition, forgetting about the power of cooperation. Specialised infantry battalions currently train, advise, and assist foreign military forces. A new theory of special warfare can look to expand their operating construct. Specialised units could enable and accompany indigenous forces, building local capacity beyond basic infantry tactics to include institutional development, whilst gathering information about the operational environment. Moreover, such forces could partner more broadly to include the wider security community, both formal and informal, such as police forces, militias, tribes, and civil defence forces within a collaborative network of cooperation and influence.¹³ They could link to conflict prevention, stabilisation, and **prosperity** initiatives to these new and non-traditional partners, creating access to new markets for UK equipment and, most importantly, sensing the slightest vibrations of trouble across a web of human networks. A new theory can explore these variables, find incentives for cooperation, and identify training and education requirements for special warfare.

¹⁰ Rudra Sil and Peter J. Katzenstein. 2010. “Analytic Eclecticism in the Study of World Politics: Reconfiguring Problems and Mechanisms across Research Traditions.” *Perspectives on Politics* 8 (2). Cambridge University Press: 411–31.

¹¹ Yuval N. Harari, *Sapiens: A Brief History of Humankind*, (London: Vintage, 2011)

¹² Rob Johnson, *Lawrence of Arabia on War: The Campaign in the Desert 1916-18*, (Oxford: Osprey Publishing, 2020).

¹³ R.F. Reid-Daly, Pamwe Chete: *The Legend of the Selous Scouts*, (South Africa: CTP Book Printers, 1999).

EDUCATION AND TRAINING: INTERDISCIPLINARY REQUIREMENT FOR SPECIAL WARFIGHTERS

Given the trends noted above, training and education modalities for the modern warfighter must leverage an interdisciplinary approach to the applied social sciences. Interdisciplinary—because not one single discipline is capable of providing comprehensive understanding of the human domain, and applied—because the tradecraft of research, analysis, and implementation must be fit for the reality of the operational context we find ourselves in.¹⁴ This has been a key challenge for Western forces, as we have struggled to understand and navigate the human domain because of our ethnocentrism. An inability to see the world through non-Western eyes (a weakness that is not shared by adversaries such as Iran, Russia, and China) has limited our ability to exert the types of influence, whether emotional or rational, that can affect human behaviour.¹⁵ We need to identify the right personnel who have the aptitude to thrive in this space and can adopt an *ethnorelative* worldview.

Senior leaders have a natural inclination to focus on the macro level dynamics of competition, rather than the local drivers of violence and stability. Yet it is on the ground where local tensions spur bottom-up conflict, and become entangled into a broader narrative that is weaponized to weaken our influence and freedom of action.¹⁶ Leaders develop the wrong theoretical premise, and form a hypothesis based on a misunderstanding of what we are experimenting with—the human condition. A theory to understand the human condition in warfare, i.e. special warfare in the human domain, needs to expand current education to include *causal literacy*,¹⁷ psychology, sociology, and cultural anthropology. These are the *foundational disciplines* that can explain the variables of human domain in irregular, unconventional, and/or hybrid warfare. It is, necessarily, a bottom-up endeavour that is rooted in local granularity.

Future forces still require the foundational skills of shooting, moving, communicating, and surviving. However, training must expand to the arts of negotiation, conflict mediation, and diverse language skills—rooted within an investigative framework and methodology that will enable tactical level elements to make sense of their operational environment. The ultimate aim of developing these skills and knowledge is to achieve a capability that can effectively act, react, and intervene within human networks' emotional, cultural, and physical spaces at a rate faster than any adversary.¹⁸ This necessitates understanding complex internal, indigenous, or traditional cycles of decision-making processes at the local level and, ultimately, creating tactical effects within the population that directly support political and strategic objectives.¹⁹

¹⁴ Aleks Nestic and Arnel David, "Operationalizing the Science of the Human Domain in Great Power Competition for Special Operations Forces," *Small Wars Journal*, (2019), <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/operationalizing-science-human-domain-great-power-competition-special-operations-forces>

¹⁵ Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹⁶ Nicholas Krohley, *The Death of the Mehdi Army: The Rise, Fall, and Revival of Iraq's Most Powerful Militia*, (London: Hurst & Company, 2015) and Stathis Kalyvas, "The Ontology of 'Political Violence': Action and Identity in Civil Wars." *Perspectives on Politics*, 2003. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592703000355>.

¹⁷ Celestino Perez, Jr., "Strategic Discontent, Political Literacy, and Professional Military Education," *The Strategy Bridge* (2016): <https://thestategybridge.org/the-bridge/2016/1/7/strategic-discontent-political-literacy-and-professional-military-education>

¹⁸ Christian P.J., Nestic, A. (2017), *Foundations of the Human Domain in Unconventional and Irregular Warfare*, *Valka-Mir Conflict Science Series: US Army SOF Textbook: USAJFKSWC&S, Fort Bragg, NC*

¹⁹ Aleks Nestic and Arnel David, "Operationalizing the Science of the Human Domain in Great Power Competition for Special Operations Forces," *Small Wars Journal*, (2019), <https://smallwarsjournal.com/jrnl/art/operationalizing-science-human-domain-great-power-competition-special-operations-forces> and Emile Simpson, *War from the Ground Up: Twenty-First-Century Combat as Politics*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS AND WAY FORWARD

With a post-Brexit and pandemic-impacted world, the British Army—now more than ever before—requires an agile special warfare capability able to operate in support of strategic objectives, while enhancing the overall effectiveness of all levers of government. The Army can develop small, inexpensive units able to leverage indigenous mass to achieve disproportionately large results. A theory of special warfare, perhaps informed by other work on remote warfare and information warfare, can build the right capability the UK needs in lieu of what it wants and cannot afford (e.g., more carriers and expensive aircraft). This is not a wholesale change of the entire Army and this force may not be like anything that exists today. It can be a force multiplier that magnifies the impact of existing capabilities. A fresh theoretical exploration will exercise our imagination, and determine the right mix and size.

A number of operating concepts in the US and UK find growing interconnectedness, and increased velocity of human interaction

around the world. Yet there is currently no system to contend with this complexity, and the wide array of accompanying relationships across multiple human networks. Simply stated, no system exists to track, manage, and map relationships in the human domain outside our normal stare at threat networks. We have to look beyond just the enemy. Many military and government organisations conduct engagements overseas, but they are not meaningfully captured, much less integrated into any knowledge sharing or learning systems. Relationships matter, and can be pivotal in building trust or obtaining a ground-level understanding in inaccessible areas.

These challenges plague militaries and other government agencies at a time when strategic thinking has not kept pace with a radically changing strategic environment. The type of special warfare discussed in this article is a critical element of a wider theoretical debate that must take place within defence. Through such debate, unpacking theory through continued

discussion and informed by sufficient rigour and research will help “thresh the grist from the chaff of the conventional theories of war.” The military, principally the Army, would be in better position to transform across the operational spectrum:

1. At the individual level: We should equip soldiers with the social, psychological, and cultural skills needed to navigate – and influence – complex human environments. This would ensure that our personnel are prepared to assess, engage, and influence on an inter-personal level. Such training and educational opportunities have been implemented by the US Army Special Operations Forces across the globe with wide success.
2. At the tactical level: We should institutionalise a robust and scalable framework for investigation of the human domain, fusing best practices from human intelligence, network-centric targeting, civil reconnaissance, and human terrain analysis. At present, these disciplines are stove-piped, and each is poorer as a
3. At the operational level: We need a significant investment in agile information systems to support the collection of human engagement data by military and civilian elements. A public-private partnership should be formed to develop these shared data repositories, leveraging big and thick data combined with local understanding, to help anticipate crises and coordinate effective responses.
4. At the strategic level: Conceptual alignment is absolutely vital to the future of the United Kingdom’s strategic security interests. Facing an array of state and non-state competitors, and with resource-intensive demands from the cyber and space domains as well, the British Army must craft a value proposition that is both affordable and impactful. There needs to be a larger conversation on the centrality of the

result. The integration of our assessment and analytical capabilities would ensure consistency and focus in our approach to the human domain, and deliver an integrated, actionable understanding of complex environments.

²⁰ Oxford Research Group, The Remote Warfare Programme, <https://www.oxfordresearchgroup.org.uk/pages/category/remote-warfare>

²¹ Martin C. Libicki, “The Convergence of Information Warfare.” *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 11, no. 1 (2017): 49-65. Accessed April 5, 2020. www.jstor.org/stable/26271590.

²² Sean McFate, *Goliath: Why the West doesn’t win wars. And what we need to do about it*, (London: Penguin Random House, 2019).

²³ JFC Fuller, “The Black Arts,” *Occult Review* (April 1923).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

human domain. Strategic advantage in an environment of persistent competition will emerge from how we engage with and understand the political, economic, and social networks that connect humanity. The Army must help Strategic Command lead this conversation.

Take in sum, this article made the case for a renewed examination of theory, and proposed that a theory of special warfare is needed to contend with the ever-important human domain. The British Army has a key opportunity to field low-cost, human-driven capabilities that assess, engage, and directly affect the strategic landscape. The larger question arises as to whether or not leaders will have the courage to make the case for investment in people over platforms, amidst a culture that privileges traditional symbols of power over those that may not be as visible but yet, are pivotal.

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The opinions, conclusions, and recommendations expressed or implied in this article are the authors' and do not reflect the views of any organisation or any entity of the U.S. or U.K. government.

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THE FUTURE OF RAS IN THE LAND DOMAIN

In recent years the use of Robotics and Autonomous Systems (RAS) has proliferated at a rapid rate. The British Army is wise to this rapid growth and wants to lead NATO in the use of these systems. The opportunities RAS offer in logistics, ISTAR, close combat and integrated Situational Awareness (SA) are stark. Tragically, NATO states are not the only nations involved in the

development of RAS, the enemy gets a vote to, state and non-state actors are beginning to use RAS for a variety of missions across the mosaic of conflict. This poses a range of challenges to expeditionary force deployments round the world. The Army Warfighting Experiments (AWE) are designed to keep pace with these challenges.

DEVELOPMENT FOR THE BRITISH ARMY

In 2018 the Future Force Development team with the Infantry Trails and Development Unit and DE&S delivered the Army Warfighting Experiment (AWE) 2018 called Exercise AUTONOMOUS WARRIOR (LAND). This tested RAS to the limit on Salisbury Plain. The experiment taught the Army some invaluable lessons about the use and mis use of RAS. The experiment showed us that RAS technology can do almost anything we require a person to do in the battlespace. The experiment also gave us some useful limitations for RAS; if we do not have a specific requirement we need to deliver, we might develop a system that isn't a priority, this wastes money. While financial restrictions remain

in place the development of RAS is limited to small scale purchases. This makes mass deployments to multiple theatres difficult, this has a direct impact on the 'expeditionary nature' of these systems. Expeditionary Warfare is something the British Army currently champions.

The most exciting area of development we discovered in 2018 was system sensors. While the RAS we selected were using electro optic real time video they also have the ability to assess the footage as they scanned the battlefield, this is a unique opportunity and one that we seek to exploit as part of Manned Unmanned Teaming.



OPPORTUNITY

MANNED UNMANNED TEAMING

Manned Unmanned Teaming (MUMT) is a collaborative operation between manned assets and unmanned systems to achieve a task. Examples of manned assets include helicopter crew and Joint Terminal Attack Controllers (JTAC). MUMT enables the direct control of unmanned systems from manned platforms rather than tasking via the UAS operator. To realise MUMT in practice requires certain critical technological enablers over and above current (UK) capabilities that include additional datalink integration and messaging, and higher levels of automation and autonomy with respect to UAS platform and sensor control/tasking.

To perform MUMT effectively can also require shared SA of context (geospatial, mission/tactical, airspace), which in turn can drive technological requirements to pass and display/communicate this information.

The concept of MUM-T is supported through NATO STANAG 4586 which defines a number of Levels of Interoperability through which users other than the UAS operator can access information and sensor feeds from the UAV and control the unmanned sensor and/or platform. The British army view is that MUMT eases the cognitive burden on the soldiers operating on the ground, the US Army view is that the two systems are used to enhance each systems strength. These are two very different views; the US Army has even started to branch out toward 'Advanced Teaming' where multiple systems feed back to one manned system. Development with our allies will be difficult as each nation seeks to exploit MUMT to fit their models of fighting.



IT'S NOT JUST US

Across the world lessons are being learnt and shared on the use of RAS for nefarious ends. In Yemen a general was assassinated using a drone and in Venezuela a presidential parade was also attacked using drones, of interest, the parade did have drone jammers, but they were switched off at the time of the attack. Drones are used to fly Drugs into prisons, criminals are learning about the use of drone and this is experience that could easily translate to violent actions if required. The Russians have used their URAN9 Unmanned Ground System (UGV) in Syria, while it is unclear how they were used, some reports suggest they were used as a weapons platform. The deployment and

use of a UGV in Syria should alert decision makers to the development of these systems by state actors.

The growth of sensors on and off the battlefield causes some unintended consequences for the use of RAS; the electromagnetic spectrum quickly gets clogged with multiple systems competing for limited bandwidth. In developed nations this demand for bandwidth is high regardless of the use of RAS for military purposes. In the future this will need to be addressed. To be clear this is not enemy action but a limiting factor on the use of drones on the modern battlefield.

THE AWE CAMPAIGN

Taking the work of AWE18 forward and noting the developments of RAS by adversaries around the world, the AWE programme provides the Army an opportunity to engage and collaborate with Industry partners to explore emerging technologies and identify specific capabilities suitable for rapid exploitation. Through research and experimentation, it explores what innovative approaches can be leveraged to give the Army competitive edge.

AWE CONTEXT

The AWE programme is an Army experimentation programme that has been established for approximately ten years and has constantly delivered high quality evidence for the Army. It creates military scenario environments and generates innovative ways to engage with a large variety of industry. It pushes the boundaries of technology and military capability, testing a range of prototype systems by putting them in the hands of the user while giving invaluable military feedback to suppliers.

AWE19 (OR AWE MUMT TO AVOID CONFUSION)

Owing to Covid 19 the AWE19 experiment has been delayed till Autumn 2020 when the British Army will deliver a £3 million experiment on Salisbury Plain, with DSTL experts 6 Systems will be tested in a series of tactical missions to assess the viability of Master / Slave drone tethering and wider MUMT. The experiment seeks to prove the hypothesis that drones can remove some of the cognitive burden to the crews of

vehicles. A Warrior IFV and Athena C2 Ajax variant will be used to test the viability of some of the UGV/UAS systems. The most exciting prospect of AWE19 is the Air to air Drone systems offered by QinetiQ and Leonardo. Proving the viability of these two systems will make the British Army world leading in aerial MUMT.



AWE 2020 EXERCISES

The focus for AWE 20 will switch to focus on Agile Command, Control and Communication, Computing and Cyber (C5). Following a tough selection process, over 100 industry partners have been selected to attend the exercise. Although the exact dates are still to be confirmed, the anticipated dates are late Sep, early October, and likely to include a media presence and a Visitors' Day.

THE FUTURE

The British Army remains a reference military and seeks to retain the war winning edge by exploiting the technology that is offered by RAS and more specifically MUMT. Both state and non-state actors are actively developing systems in the field and the Army Warfighting Experiments will keep the British Army on the front foot.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Major Alexander Bayliss MA commissioned into the Grenadier Guards and deployed to Afghanistan in 2009 and 2012. He commanded a Company in London before his posting to Army HQ. He holds a Masters in War Studies and has a BA in Business Studies. Major Bayliss has been an integral part of the development of Robotic & Autonomous Systems (RAS) in the British Army planning and executing multiple Army Warfighting Experiments.

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INTRODUCTION

The Agile Warrior Quarterly 2019 Edition 2 considered the Conceptual Force (Land) 35, the CF(L)35. This capstone concept proposed new capabilities, a new way of operating, and a new force design for the period 2030-2035. As part of the publication it looked at future command and control (C2), which it described as “a range of C2 approaches from fully autonomous decision-making at speed to directive C2 that can better ensure C2 survivability, flexibility and efficiency in the context of mission accomplishment”.

The model it described was a transformation of C2. Yet command and control is – at least for the moment - a human endeavour. Technology may change, but as the commanders of today move towards 2035 they will remain products of their training and experience. It is almost certain their move towards CF(L)35 will be an iterative one rather than a transformative one.

The Agile Warrior programme’s 2020 Future Land Challenges symposium also considered the future of C2. Instead of looking to 2035 it looked at the bridge

between 2020 and 2035. This included comparing the CF(L)35 command model with the NATO Edge C2 model and the experiences of a contemporary Battlegroup commander exercising ahead of operations in 2020.

Based on the presentations given at the symposium, this paper examines the concept of Edge C2 and compares it to current operational C2. It considers how an organisation can operate close to Edge C2 and describes a series of models that may help organisations identify factors that limit their ability to do so.



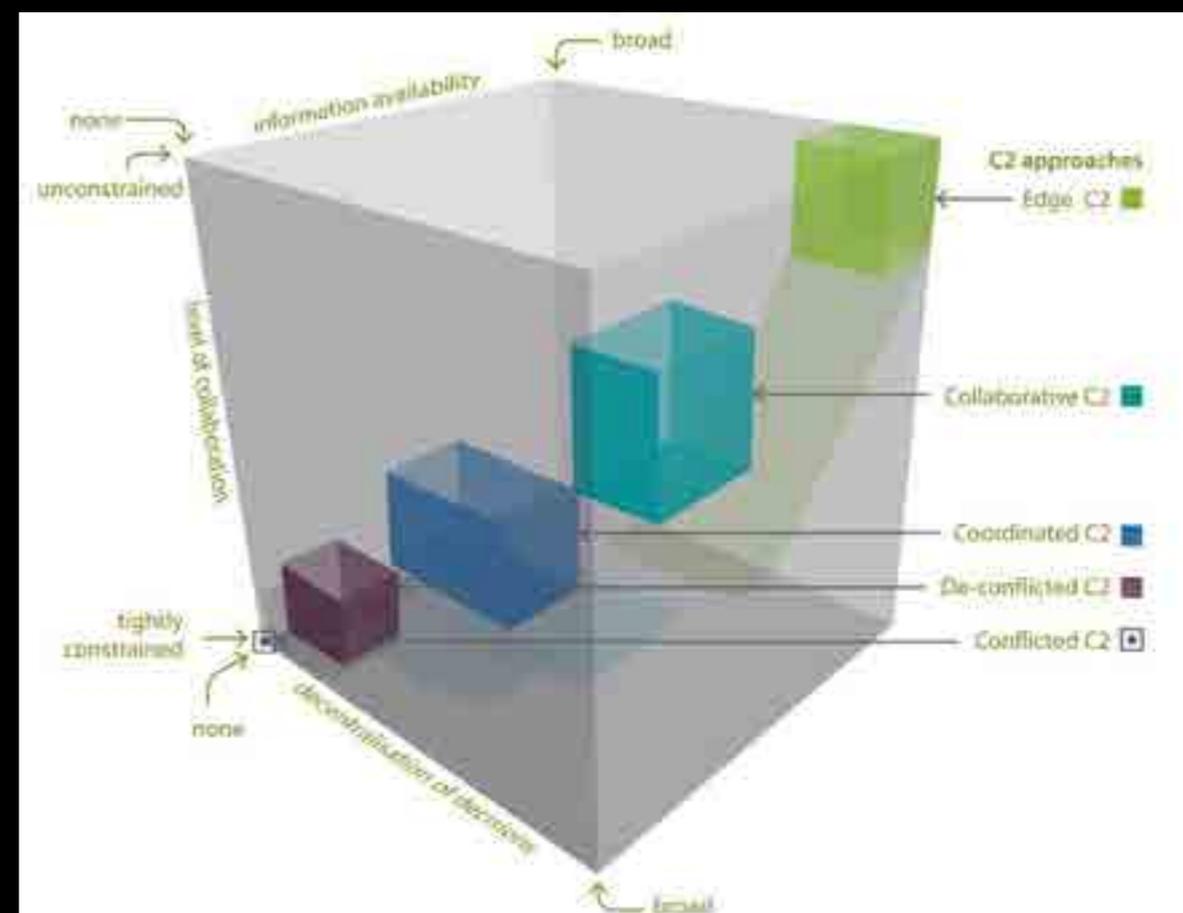
EDGE C2

Joint Concept Note 2/17,¹ The Future of Command and Control, is DCDC's high level concept note that describes the UK MOD's likely C2 model. It includes a model for Agile C2 taken from a NATO report on C2 agility.

This model, shown as Model 1 below, describes five different approaches to C2, each offering different advantages and disadvantages. Each is characterised by the extent to which it exhibits three features: how broadly it makes information available; how little it constrains collaboration; and how broadly it decentralises decision-making. An Agile C2 approach, it argues, can move between a tightly deconflicted command approach, a coordinated approach, through collaborative C2 and all the way to what it describes as Edge C2: a network of C2 nodes with easy access to shared information, continuously interacting and with distributed decision-making.

JCN 2/17 makes clear that, while one approach is not necessarily 'better' than another, being able to use all of the approaches gives an organisation the best chance for success.

The situations that Edge C2 is best suited to are those described by the Cynefin model³ as 'Complex' and 'Chaotic'. This model, shown in Figure 2 and developed in 1999 by David Snowden, describes situations according to their cause and effect relationships. Each situation, Obvious, Complicated, Complex or Chaotic, have their own correct response manner. In Complex and Chaotic situations, the best response is to act or probe before responding – leading them to solutions and C2 approaches that privilege tempo of action over centralised analysis and decision-making.



▲ Model 1: The NATO command and control approach model²

¹ Joint Concept Note 2/17, The Future of Command and Control. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643245/concepts_uk_future_c2_jcn_2_17.pdf

² North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) STO Technical Report, STO-TR-SAS-085, Task Group SAS-085 Final Report on C2 Agility. http://www.dodccrp.org/sas-085/sas-085_report_overview.pdf

³ A Leader's Framework for Decision Making, David Snowden and Mary Boone, HBR 2007. <https://hbr.org/2007/11/a-leaders-framework-for-decision-making>

Thus, a headquarters exhibits Agile C2 when it can switch between Deconflicted or Coordinated C2, to more difficult Collaborative C2, to the most challenging Edge C2. In this way an Agile C2 headquarters is able to choose from the widest number of C2 approaches to allow it to deal best with Obvious, Complicated, Complex and Chaotic situations.

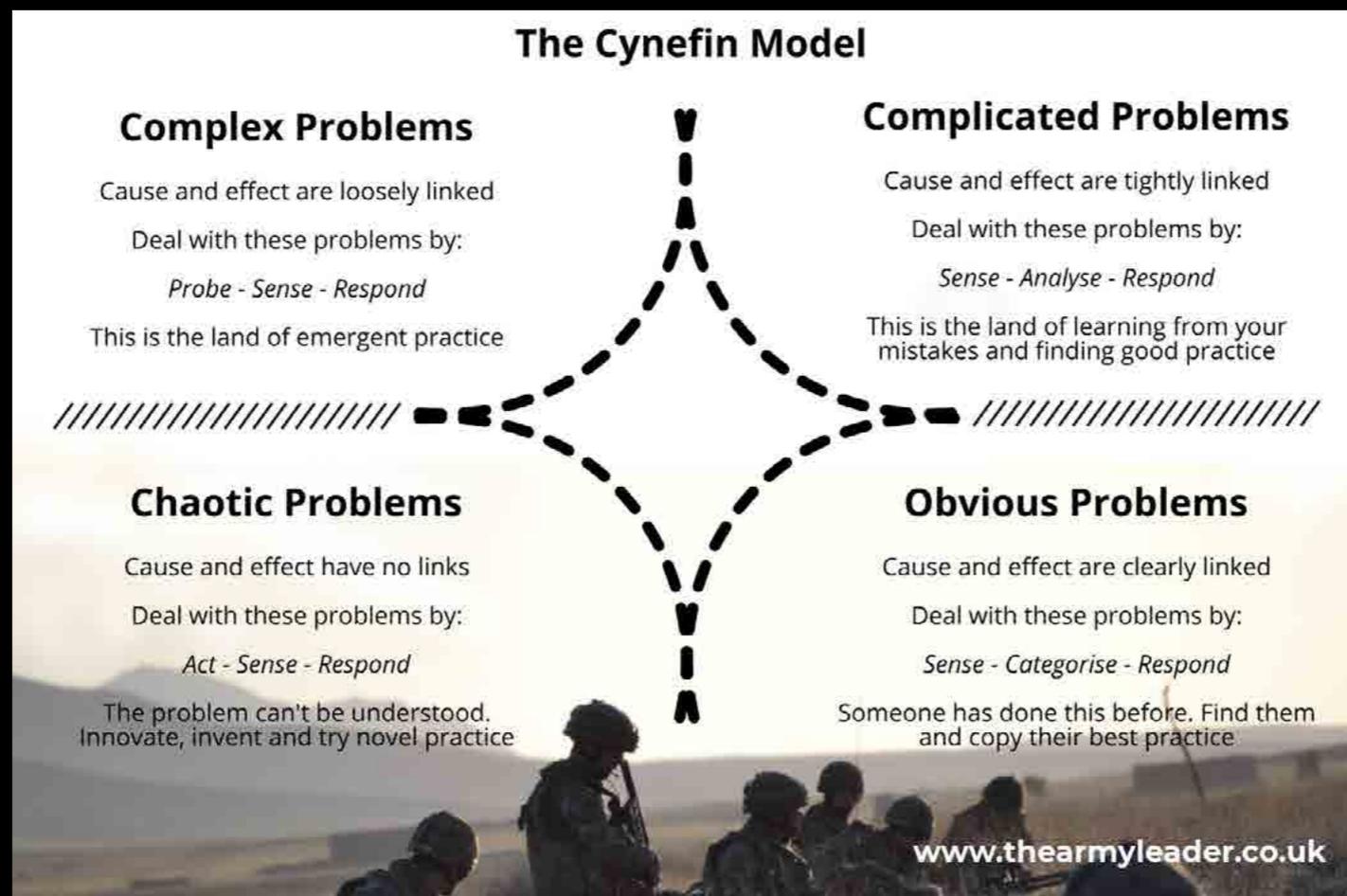
Model 1 shows that, in order to be able to use Edge C2, an organisation must share information, increase collaboration and distribute its decision-making as broadly as possible. Of these, distributing decision-making is the area where our current C2 is least ready. Based on the author's recent experiences of Battlegroup command, the British Army is not ready for truly distributed

decision-making. Nevertheless, striving to achieve Edge C2 – by sharing information, collaborating between teams and distributing as much decision-making power as possible to trusted commanders

– remains the best way to deal with Chaotic and Complex situations.

During Exercise Wessex Storm 20/1, a multi-unit collective training exercise on

Salisbury Plain, the author considered the issues surrounding future C2. He found two models helpful in understanding some of the factors that prevent British Army tactical units from getting closer to the Edge C2 approach. Of course, when considering a model, one should not forget the advice of statistician George Box, to “remember that all models are wrong; the practical question is how wrong do they have to be to not be useful”.⁴ The author hopes that, although not right, these models are sufficiently right to be useful to other commanders.



Model 2: The Cynefin Model

⁴ Box, G; Draper, N. (1987), *Empirical Model-Building and Response Surfaces*, John Wiley & Sons.

COMMANDING, CONTROLLING AND COLLABORATING

Using a Collaborative C2 approach, and getting close to Edge C2, requires decision-making to be as collaborative as possible. The British Army, similarly to most western armies, vests the authority to make decisions in the commander.⁵ The two are in obvious conflict.

Less conflicting, however, is the idea using the staff as a collaborative group to plan and recommend courses of action during a battle. When a commander is deployed in their tactical headquarters, they still have the ability to tap back into their staff headquarters and collaboratively use their staff's analytical power. The staff's wide-but-shallow situational awareness is augmented by the commander's own narrow-but-deep situational awareness of the battle.

Developing conplans, drawing up conditions checks and defining Decision Points during planning are ways of 'forward-loading the thinking' so that less needs to be done during the execution of the mission. In the same way, when a commander reaches back into their staff

during the execution of the mission they are 'back-loading the thinking'. They are passing it to a team that is better placed to recommend courses of action.

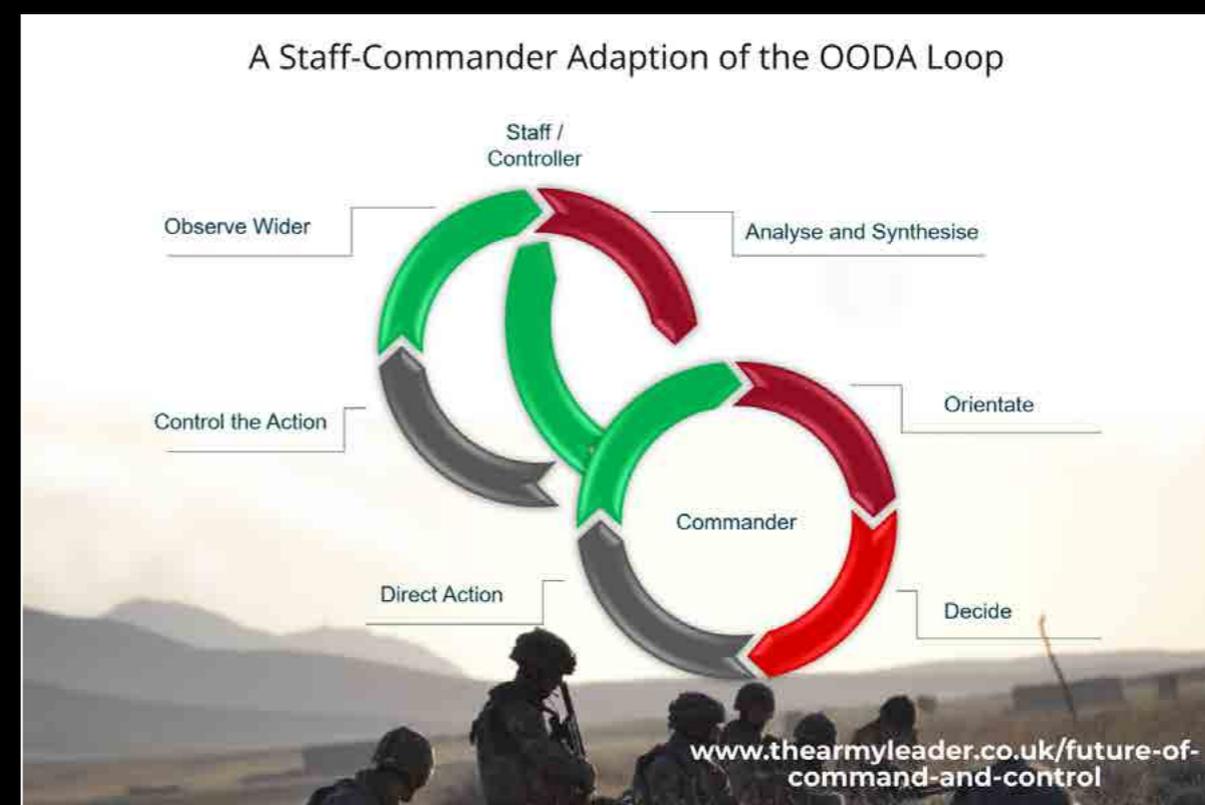
The model that best describes this manner of command is an adaptation of John Boyd's OODA loop.

In the normal OODA loop a commander observes, orientates, decides and acts. In a more collaborative C2 model, the commander additionally reaches back to his staff (and, through them, to other C2 nodes). As the commander observes a problem or situation, they also pass the problem or situation back to their staff, who can use their broader situational awareness to observe more widely. Using their greater processing power, better awareness, access to other C2 nodes and (hopefully) less-overwhelmed thinking-power, the staff can analyse, synthesise and recommend an action to the commander. This allows the commander to decide, direct action, pass control of that action to the headquarters, allowing the commander to again (and staff) to observe again.

This C2 model, by no means perfect, illustrates a way in which a commander can use their staff as a collaborative tool, a node in a network that enables them to leverage greater processing power and situational awareness.

This model leads to a series of questions that an organisation must ask before it relies upon the model. First, how does it ensure the staff are best placed to exploit

their better/wider information, reach and analysis capacity? Second, given one cannot collaborate without comms, does reliance on this method of C2 change the importance we place on comms? And finally, how do the commander and staff build up an understanding of how each other think, such that the staff can provide useful and tailored recommendations to the commander. This last question is, perhaps, a function of how well they trust each other.



▲ Model 3: A Staff-Commander Adaption of the OODA Loop

⁵ Army Doctrine Publication – Land Operations, 2017, P22

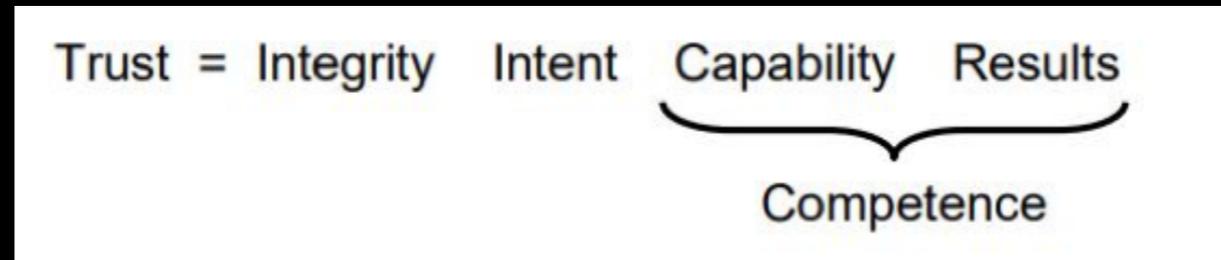
DISTRIBUTED FUNCTIONS AND TRUST

Mission command, a philosophy of centralised decision-making and decentralised execution, relies on trust between commanders and subordinates. It only functions effectively when high-trust relationships allow the commander to release the reins of directive command. Edge C2, with its decentralised decision-making, relies on trust even more.

In fact, Edge C2 relies on negotiated command – a step beyond delegated command, where commanders decide amongst themselves who will be authorised to make decisions. To a contemporary commander, taught that command is a legal authority vested in them to make decisions, the idea of negotiating decision-making authority is an anathema. For anything even close to Edge C2 to be used there must be an extremely high level of trust between commanders at every level.

In the British Army we take trust for granted. We do not often think about the structures we have in place that build trust, nor what it means when those structures break down.

There are several models that explore trust between individuals. Of these, the author has found Covey and Merrill's model⁶ to be the most useful:



▲ Model 4: The Trust Equation. Adapted from *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything*

The level of trust a person gives in another is broadly made up of two elements: will the person do what is right by the trustor (integrity and intent); and can the person do what is right by the trustor (capability and results).

They define a person's integrity as being made of three elements: congruency, being true to their values; humility, being more interested in what is right rather than being right; and courage, having the moral courage to do the right thing. Intent is about whether the person will act in line with what is best for the team: do they have a motive and agenda that supports

the trustor? Capability is about whether the person has the knowledge, skills and experience required (and exhibits the behaviours that convey those skills).

It is proven not by action but by their qualifications or their selection for their role. Finally, results are defined as a proven track record of focussing on successful results. Covey and Merrill do not mention one other factor that is common in trust research: the consistency of those results.

Building trust becomes more difficult when C2 nodes are dispersed, especially when the organisation is made up of sub-organisations from different organisations, nations or specialisms.

By way of example, the 2 R ANGLIAN Battle group on Exercise Wessex Storm

20/1 was made up of two rifle companies from 2 R ANGLIAN, one rifle company from 1 R ANGLIAN, an engineer squadron from 32 Engineer Regiment, a Tac Battery from 3 Regiment Royal Horse Artillery, a EOD team from 33 Engineer Regiment, a Military Working Dogs section, a Light Electronic Warfare Team from 14 Signals Regiment and a Prehospital Treatment Team from 3 Medical Regiment.

Of these, the officers and NCOs from the other infantry unit were well-known to the commander (results). They had passed the same courses as the parent unit's commanders (capability), had been selected using the same pan-infantry criteria (which included their integrity) and, as members of the same Regiment, were invested in its reputation (intent). The artillery and engineers had worked alongside the headquarters during previous training (results) and made it clear their reputation was dependent on how well they supported the Battlegroup, assuring their intent. By contrast, other sub-units arrived on the day of the final exercise (limiting knowledge of their results and the

⁶ *The Speed of Trust: The One Thing that Changes Everything*. 6 Nov 2006
by Stephen M. R. Covey, Rebecca R. Merrill

ability to gauge their capability). Some had commanders selected for their technical skills rather than decision-making skills (limiting confidence in their capability to work under Edge C2). Some were moved between battlegroups during the exercise, and were clearly uninvested in the unit's success (intent).

The lesson? If an organisation wishes to move towards Edge C2 it must understand which parts of its organisation are likely to be low-trust and work on specific actions that will build trust in the gaps. Covey and Merrill provide a model that does just that.

To maximise trust, and thus to move towards Edge C2, it is worth asking the

following questions. If you are forming a battlegroup or mission-focussed task group, how can you maximise each element of the trust equation? If you are designing a military structure, either physically or organisationally, how do you design-in elements that maximise the elements of the trust equation and naturally build trust? And when you join a new organisation, how do you accentuate different parts of the trust equation to engender your trustworthiness within your new team?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, for an organisation's C2 to give it the best chance of success, it must have Agile C2, switching between the C2 approach best suited to the situation it faces. For Chaotic and Complex situations, the best approach is Collaborative or, better still, Edge C2. Edge C2 is futuristic – it may even be an unachievable nirvana with our current systems. This does not mean moving towards it does not offer advantages.

In order to reap the benefits of Edge C2 an organisation must share its information broadly, collaborate across its C2 nodes and be willing to negotiate who commands and makes decisions.

Some of these characteristics are alien to our current C2 approach or beyond or current C2 technology. Even so, command and control are human activities. Human beings are complex and our interactions are often difficult to understand but, with the help of some simple models, it is possible to identify areas where we can improve our C2. Specifically, by how we collaborate between commanders and their staff and how we build the trust required for rapid delegation and negotiated command. By doing so we can begin to move towards a more effective future command and control approach.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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This article has also been published in **The Army Leader**.

A DOCTRINE OF INTERVENTION FOR CLIMATE CHANGE?

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LT COL WILL MEDDINGS CO2 R ANGLIAN

URBAN WARFARE: TEACHING YOUR ENEMY TO WIN

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‘Strategy trumps tactics’ is arguably as near as our field comes to a golden rule, a permanently operative injunction for soldiers and scholars alike that is applicable to all wars wherever and whenever we choose to look. The concept is variously rendered—Infinity readers will have heard it a hundred times. For instance, in the mid-1980s Allan Millett and Williamson Murray concluded an essay on the ‘Lessons of War’ with the line, ‘Mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected, but political and strategic mistakes live forever.’^[i] Its most frequently quoted encapsulation, however, is undoubtedly that attributed to Sun Tzu who said something to the effect that ‘strategy without tactics is the slowest route to victory; tactics without strategy is the noise before defeat.’^[ii] Further explication of a basic, time honoured concept is unnecessary.

Which makes it all the more interesting (or curious, appalling, infuriating: choose one according to your own mood), when we observe the current state of strategic affairs. All the wars of the Global War on Terror (GWOT, howsoever we may call it now), and the overarching GWOT itself, so precisely fit the mould of ‘noise before defeat’ that one wonders if Sun Tzu had a crystal ball. To recap:

- The 2003 invasion of Iraq triggered a sectarian civil war, inside an incipient region-wide schismatic conflict, wrapped in a global insurgency that is clearly a strategic debacle for the major Western powers, not to mention those living close to or in the Middle East. Islamic State, a particularly hideous foe to arise from this bloody cauldron, has been beaten back, but no doubt a successor will emerge—assuredly more virulently righteously deranged.

- The West’s almost two decades long adventure in Afghanistan has been a colossal waste of blood and treasure. ^[iii] The country remains near the very bottom of the international human development index and at the top of the international perception of corruption rankings. The Afghan police and army cannot effectively police the country or hold their own against a resurgent Taliban that is now as strong as ever. At the time of writing news reports are saying that the senior US commander there was just nearly assassinated in an attack that took out a reputed Afghan police general plus the intelligence chief of Kandahar province, as well as wounded the regional governor.^[iv]

[i] Allan R. Millett and Williamson Murray, ‘Lessons of War’, *The National Interest* (Winter 1988), p. 94.

[ii] A pedantic point: the oft-quoted line does not, in fact, appear in the most common translation by Thomas Cleary of *Art of War*. See Cleary (trans. and ed.), *Classics of Strategy and Counsel*, Vol. 1, (London: Shambhala Press, 2000). How it entered into the popular lexicon in this way, it is particularly beloved in the business management literature, is a mystery to us. The principle it expresses though of the primacy of strategy over tactics is certainly apparent throughout the work, and specifically for e.g., on p. 56. ‘The one with many strategic factors in his favour wins, the one with few strategic factors in his favour loses—how much the more so for one with no strategic factors in his favour.’

[iii] Thomas Jocelyn has just made this point compellingly succinctly in ‘The Afghanistan War is Over. We Lost’, *The Weekly Standard* (18 October 2018).

[iv] Philip Walter Zellman and Zubair Babakarkhail, ‘Top US General “Uninjured” in Attack that Killed Afghan General’, *Stars and Stripes* (18 October 2018).

The obvious question, then, is ‘why?’ How did this happen? What is it which has made our strategic efforts so fruitless? It is often supposed that the problem is a lack of strategy—or a surfeit of bad strategy, at any rate. Another variant of this thesis holds that the West is tactically proficient but strategically deficient.[v] That would be bad, if true, albeit putting us in good company; after all, Livy records even Hannibal the Great being rebuked by his lieutenant Maharbal after the Carthaginians wiped out a Roman army at Cannae, 216 BC for the same sin. ‘You know how to win victory’, he said, ‘[but] you do not how to use it.’[vi]

It is not true, though. In actuality, our tactics are also quite poor. We argue that two reasons, amongst possible others, are foremost. First, strategy is irrelevant in our current context because policy so

utterly dominates tactics—a situation arrived at by a combination of:

- social drivers, including notably a heightened leadership perception of war as essentially a tool of ‘consequence’ or ‘risk-management’ rather than for the pursuit of victory per se;[vii]
- which are especially pertinent in offensive liberal wars, or ‘wars of choice’, such as have typified the landscape of security affairs since the end of the Cold War;[viii] and,
- both the above being aggravated by advancements in information technology that expose the ‘home front’ to formerly distant ‘small wars’ in ways that consistently imperil political will, while also enabling senior commanders to dictate low-level decision-making in ways that



defeat the possibility of tactical initiative, boldness, and pursuit.

Second, because we operate in this manner, we force our enemy into an adversarial predator-prey relationship at the beginning of any conflict in which we, in effect, in an evolutionary manner progressively teach our enemy how to win. The British Army, for instance, boasts that it has the oldest and best Infantry Battle School in the world. And

that may be true, but it is not located in the Brecon Beacons, Wales where its soldiers train to be tactical leaders; it is located where London sends its soldiers not to fight and win, but just to fight and ‘hold the ring’ for a time while some promised sub-strategic/non-kinetic political accommodation fails to materialise.[ix]

[v] See the debate ‘Whiteboard: Is the US Tactically Proficient but Strategically Deficient?’, War Room (US Army War College, (17 August 2018), <https://warroom.armywarcollege.edu/special-series/whiteboard/wb03-strategic-proficiency-1>

[vi] Titus Livius (Rev. Canon Roberts, trans., Ernest Rhys, ed.), History of Rome, Book 22, Para. 51, <http://mcadams.posc.mu.edu/txt/ah/Livy/Livy22.html>

[vii] Christopher Coker, War in an Age of Risk (Cambridge: Polity, 2009).

[viii] Lawrence Freedman discusses offensive liberal wars in The Transformation of Strategic Affairs, Adelphi Paper No. 379 (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2006), pp. 39-44.

[ix] As discussed in Rupert Smith, Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

A HOLLOW FIST IN A KHAKI GLOVE

Strategy is supposed to be the ‘bridge’ between policy and tactics, or in other words to connect political ‘purpose’ with military ‘means’ through strategic ‘ways’. It is meant to ensure that military power is applied towards ends which force can plausibly effectuate. In the words of Colin Gray, ‘one has a strategy, which is done by tactics.’^[x] The metaphor implies a dialogue between statesmen and commanders, the object of which is to achieve a clear goal setting by the former, and appropriately bounded and orientated means on the part of the latter—an honest and objective mutual understanding of the sort of war on which they are embarking, for a start. The dialogue is unequal, in democratic states, and always a messy back and forth because the statesman may interject himself in any aspect of war-making that he wishes, though normally it is imprudent to do so—whereas the soldier must stay in his lane of professional competence.^[xi] Getting this right is far from easy.

Sadly, civil-military relations, as the strategic dialogue may be described, are now far from the correct ideal. Statesmen are very unclear on goals—indeed, to take the ever-shifting narrative of the now 17-year Afghanistan war as an exemplar, they are sometimes downright deceptive with their own populations, their allies, their commanders, and even themselves. It is not hard to read profound frustration with political leadership between the lines of the Canadian General Andrew Leslie’s lament on the state of affairs:

“I often get asked... why are you there? We’re there because you sent us. As a soldier, it’s not my job to explain why you sent us. Soldiers don’t do that. We tell you what we’re doing, we tell you how we’re doing it, but we should not be in the position of explaining to the people of Canada why we’re there. The responsibility for that lies with the political leadership and those who sent us.” ^[xii]

‘Why?’ is always the most fundamental question and, nowadays, it is frequently

unanswered, it is perhaps even unanswerable. It could well be argued that it will remain unanswerable in perpetuity until we lose the fear and shame we feel towards linking a conflict directly to the national self-interest. It is also arguable that because the national self-interest is often inextricably bound up with humanitarian principles that it is an enlightened self-interest which should add weight to any argument in its favour. Lord Palmerston, the politician who dominated British foreign policy at the height of its imperial power, including two stints as Prime Minister from 1855-58 and 1859-65, is reputed to have quipped sagely that, ‘whenever I hear the words “something must be done” I know that something stupid is about to happen.’ The unhappy reality, though, is that nearly all of the West’s wars for a generation at least have begun from an implicit answer to the question ‘why?’ that amounts to no more than: well, something must be done.^[xiii] More often than not the something that is

available is military force, irrespective of the actual utility of force in the context of the problem at hand.

Lawrence Freedman remarked over a decade ago that the ‘management of [the] tension between liberal ends and illiberal means is at the heart of many problems of contemporary strategy.’^[xiv] This is, in our view, quite true, but also something of an understatement. The liberal state engaged in a ‘war of choice’ brings along with it all the predictable values and urges that a determined and ruthless opponent requires to defeat it—such as the desire to limit conflict only to combatants and to spare them as well as civil society generally from harm (even to ‘develop’ a people, while fighting amongst it at the same time), to regularise war as much as possible and to legalise its conduct in all aspects. The ‘problem’ of contemporary strategy, really, is in fact more like a stake in its heart.

Information technology further complicates matters in a couple of significant ways.

[x] Colin Gray, *The Strategy Bridge: Theory for Practice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 20.

[xi] See Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (London: The Free Press, 2002).

[xii] Quoted in David Betz, ‘Communications Breakdown: Strategic Communications and Defeat in Afghanistan’, *Orbis*, Vol. 55, No. 4 (Fall 2011), p. 619.

[xiii] Edward Luttwak was perhaps the first, certainly the most prominent, scholar to point out the morally ambivalent, arguably morally absurd, quality of this situation and to propose a controversial (to some) alternative in ‘Give War a Chance’, *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 78, No. 4 (July/August 1999), pp. 36-44.

[xiv] Freedman, *Transformation of Strategic Affairs*, p. 42.

On the grand strategic level, the time-honoured technique of politically managing the vagaries of small wars has been to keep them simmering along just below the threshold of public attention. There has never been a time when imperial forces, such as those which Palmerston commanded, were immune to tactical setbacks. Pick a painting on any wall in the Officers' Mess of any old British regiment to find the evidence of battles hard fought and won at great cost, or simply lost and forgotten.

The difference now is that the degree and immediacy to which our lives are increasingly intertwined with those of distant others—economically, politically and culturally—in ways that erase the distinction between inside and outside, has magnified exponentially. There are no longer distant events that do not potentially impinge in real-time on people everywhere, notably amongst the home population.[xv] It used to be that Western populations were insulated from small

wars by distance, by solid frontiers, and by a superiority of conventional armaments, but this is no longer the case. That is what has driven the shift in strategic studies from more of a preoccupation with material combat power to a greater concern with narrative, strategic communications, and even a 'virtual dimension' of conflict that supposedly supersedes its tangible layers. [xvi]

On the sub-strategic level, the counterintuitive effect of digitisation that was supposed to make wars fast, decisive, and cheap by empowering the most high-tech capable armies to operate more nimbly, to make them more agile, and able to achieve more with less has been quite the opposite. The command apparatus of the most high-tech armies is more top heavy than ever, certainly no more agile, and produces good decisions no more reliably than before. The syllogism 'knowledge is power' remains true but only when it is the sum of information that is well understood and effectively

used, else it is nothing more than poorly used data. In practice this is often the case, as a main result of technological advancement has been the enhancement of the ability of senior commanders and distant headquarters to intervene in local command decisions, to militate against and occasionally decisively countermand on-the-spot judgment. Examples of this are legion in the literature on contemporary wars, but this vignette from the United States Marines operations in Helmand, Afghanistan in 2010 is particularly apposite:

"Day Three in Marjah. The Forward Air Controller, Ben Willson, was almost having a nervous breakdown. I hadn't seen him sleep since we'd landed. I hadn't seen him anywhere other than the cold central corridor of the central police station, hunched over, fixated on the chunky laptop that showed him what the drones above us were filming... What drove Ben to the verge of that nervous breakdown was that he requested up to forty air strikes a day but

almost all were denied. The few approvals that came through took so long—one took two hours, by which the planes had run out of fuel and flown away—that the little figures he saw on the laptop screen laying IEDs simply escaped. [He] like all the other forward air controllers in Afghanistan, had to go through five levels of approval for an air strike, including a lawyer and ending with the general and his staff." [xvii]

Instead of a nimbler command system able to respond swiftly to events in a bottom-up manner with strong local initiative, the reality is more the opposite with local initiative squelched by a command hierarchy obsessed with what crews have described as 'Predator porn' [xviii] or 'Kill TV'. The result is armed forces that possess all the outward appearances of strength—equipment, uniformity, manpower, training, and so on—which are actually severely handicapped by a constipated command and control system.

[xv] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty* (Cambridge: Polity, 2007), p. 6.

[xvi] David Betz, 'The Virtual Dimension of Contemporary Insurgency and Counterinsurgency', *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (2008), pp. 513–43.

[xvii] Ben Anderson, *No Worse Enemy: The Inside Story of the Chaotic Struggle for Afghanistan* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2011), p. 130.

[xviii] David Mindell, *Our Robots, Ourselves: Robotics and the Myths of Autonomy* (New York: Penguin, 2015), p. 242.

DARWINIAN COMPETITION: THE ECOLOGIST AND THE DOCTOR

A doctor engaged in tackling the problem of treating a bacterial infection that is resistant to antibiotics would recognise completely the issues faced by a military commander in this scenario. Too harsh an antibiotic and you risk damaging the patient, exposing them to a different suite of problems. Too weak or too small an amount of antibiotic used, and you will not kill the infection. The bacteria that are left behind spawn further bacteria that have inherited the tools necessary for survival. The doctor views this as a problem to be addressed through a more intelligent use of drugs as but one part of treating an infection, attempting to get so far ahead of the bacteria as to render moot its capacity to evolve. An ecologist would view the same phenomenon as an integral part of the Darwinian nature of the natural world; perpetual, incremental adaptation, and the survival of the fittest. We should seek to think more like the medical scientist.

Political hesitation, lack of strategic clarity,

and a tentative approach to committing and then employing the use of force create the perfect environment in which to train your enemy to advance their capabilities in an evolutionary manner. The insurgency in Helmand in particular, and in Afghanistan more generally, is in some ways a lesson in how not to progress a campaign. British soldiers were deployed to Helmand without a clear aim or a clear understanding of how the myriad of aims were to be achieved.[xix] This lack of political clarity led to military commanders who were unsure of with what they were tasked and a subsequent decision to not commit anything like the requisite number of troops to achieve a victory.

The British Royal Armoured Corps have a saying which has become a truism for using the power of a main battle tank: ‘Clout, don’t dribble’. An American variant of this was recently invoked by LGen (ret.) H.R. McMaster, formerly President Trump’s National Security Advisor, recounting

the ‘rules of thumb’ that his armoured cavalry troop had put to effect in the Battle of 73 Easting, a key engagement of the Persian Gulf War 1990-91: ‘if it takes a toothpick, use a baseball bat—don’t give the enemy a fighting chance—overmatch and overwhelm the enemy as quickly as possible.’[xx] The point here is not, as may be superficially supposed, simply to use the maximum force; it is rather a statement of the primacy of moral, or ‘psychological’, effects in battle and a reminder of the decisive importance of pursuing an enemy that has been shocked into incohesion all the way to his defeat.

McMaster cited the World War II American general Ernest Harmon, a key figure in the history of US armour, as the source of this inspiration, but he might as well have credited Ardant du Picq’s classic battle studies.[xxi] In other words it is an old idea, rooted in military thought going back well over a century, at least, and in many ways an excellent maxim for the use of military

force writ large. Imagine, then, if you wanted to create the best, most effective adversary you could. In the pursuit of this aim you could do a lot worse than to begin your campaign against this enemy with too few men and without a clear purpose. Your forces would be unable (through lack of numbers and through the opacity of the mission) to effectively adhere to the master principle of war: selection and maintenance of the aim. The force you employed would be faced with too many enemies to fight over too large a battlespace. A myriad of small, vicious fire fights would teach your rapidly learning adversary how you operated.[xxii]

Moreover, when and how you chose to end fights would teach this enemy how to exploit your habits to his own ends. Indirect fire and air delivered munitions are by their very method of delivery and greater target effect less discriminating than a person with a rifle or a grenade. Yet they have become a method by which

[xix] The authoritative and devastating account of this is in Theo Farrell’s *Unwinnable: Britain’s War in Afghanistan, 2001-2014* (London: Bodley Head, 2017).

[xx] ‘H.R. McMaster, A Warrior Thinker, Pt. 1’, Area 45 podcast (Hoover Institution, 28 October 2018), <https://www.hoover.org/research/area-45-hr-mcmaster-warrior-thinker-pt-1>; the German variant, attributed to Heinz Guderian, the father of the Panzer Division, is ‘Boot them, don’t tickle them.’ One presumes that Russians, Chinese, any nation that takes war seriously, will have a similar aphorism.

[xxi] Ardant du Picq (John N. Greely, trans. and ed.), *Battle Studies*, reprinted in *Roots of Strategy*, Vol. 2 (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 1987). Further on du Picq’s thoughts and modern relevance are to be found in Robert Leonhard, *The Art of Maneuver: Maneuver Warfare Theory and AirLand Battle* (New York: Ballantyne, 1991), pp. 44-46.

military commanders can buy out the perceived risks of committing more men to the fight—ironically, in practice, out of a surplus of concern for casualties the liberal democratic state at war fights with weapons that are more destructive than they might otherwise. This is not a new story, by any means, but the ‘destroying-the-village-to-save-it’ dilemma continues in contemporary operations. One well-publicised example was the 2011 wiping out of the Afghan village of Tarok Kolache by 25 tonnes of rockets and artillery in order not to lose the ‘momentum’ of ISAF forces in the area.[xxiii]

Yet early on in the Afghan conflict the Taliban had worked all this out—they had evolved. Numerous, broadly independent Taliban commanders had learned the keys to tactical success, which in turn have led to success in the conflict. Those lessons were to initiate the firefight, absorb or

deflect the initial storm of returning fire, and then maintain a harassing presence until the NATO-force ground commander was forced to use his lesser discriminating assets to make his ambushers take cover for a sufficient period to extract himself. The tactic very effectively demoralises—one sees this obviously in the myriad published veteran’s accounts of the war, which share in common a progressive wearying bewilderment of soldiers and commanders by it. The young British officer Patrick Hennessey, for instance, recounted the following scene, the last phase of a contact that took the form outlined above, in this case terminated by the need to pull back to regroup and withdraw a casualty by helicopter:

“Pull back from the buildings we’d fought into and held for four torrid hours, pull back from the positions we’d charged through that morning and, with the overwatch of the British

units on the high ground in the north who had done next to nothing all day, pull wearily all the way back to the start-line. Pull back over ground we’d lost a third of the company group taking. Pull back over ground we’d been shot and blown up by both enemy and our own side alike on, pull back in one steady, demoralised trudging hour over what it had taken us twelve to take. ...Martin summed pretty much everything up in his hilariously angry response to the repeated buzzing questions of the Number Two Company sentries. ‘Amber 21 this is Amber 60A. I’ve just had the hardest day of my life. Fuck off and leave us alone. Out!’”[xxiv]

The tactic, it probably goes without saying, tends also to upset the civil population whose towns and crops are blasted in the apparently fruitless fighting.

The classic insurgent ‘judo throw’ is to cause the government security forces to alienate themselves from the people by

provoking them into blistering combats amongst the population. Whether or not this situation is avoidable is beside the point—the problem is that our tactics exacerbate the problem. The thinking has now pervaded the collective DNA of western forces, and a risk averse deployment posture is now the accepted norm. Overly restrictive force protection measures and insufficiently permissive rules of engagement at the start of an operation create this paradigm. The enemy forces and our own are locked in an adversarial predator–prey relationship that accelerates the evolution of both groups (see Figure 1 on the next page). The analogy with nature is unavoidable and stark.

[xxii] As the biologist Rafe Sagarin wrote in his book *Learning from the Octopus: How Secrets from Nature can Help us Fight Terrorist Attacks, Natural Disasters and Disease* (New York: Basic Books, 2012), an attempt to apply evolutionary theory to national security issues: ‘the vaunted technology revolution in warfare is operating much more at the grassroots combat level...’ (p. xi).

[xxiii] A summary of the event and a selection of dyspeptic commentary on it may be found in Elspeth Reeve, ‘Military Destroys a Village to Maintain “Momentum” in Afghanistan’, *The Atlantic* (20 January 2011), <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2011/01/military-destroys-a-village-to-maintain-momentum-in-afghanistan/342568/>

[xxiv] Patrick Hennessey, *The Junior Officers’ Reading Club: Killing Time and Fighting Wars* (London: Penguin, 2009), pp. 237-38.

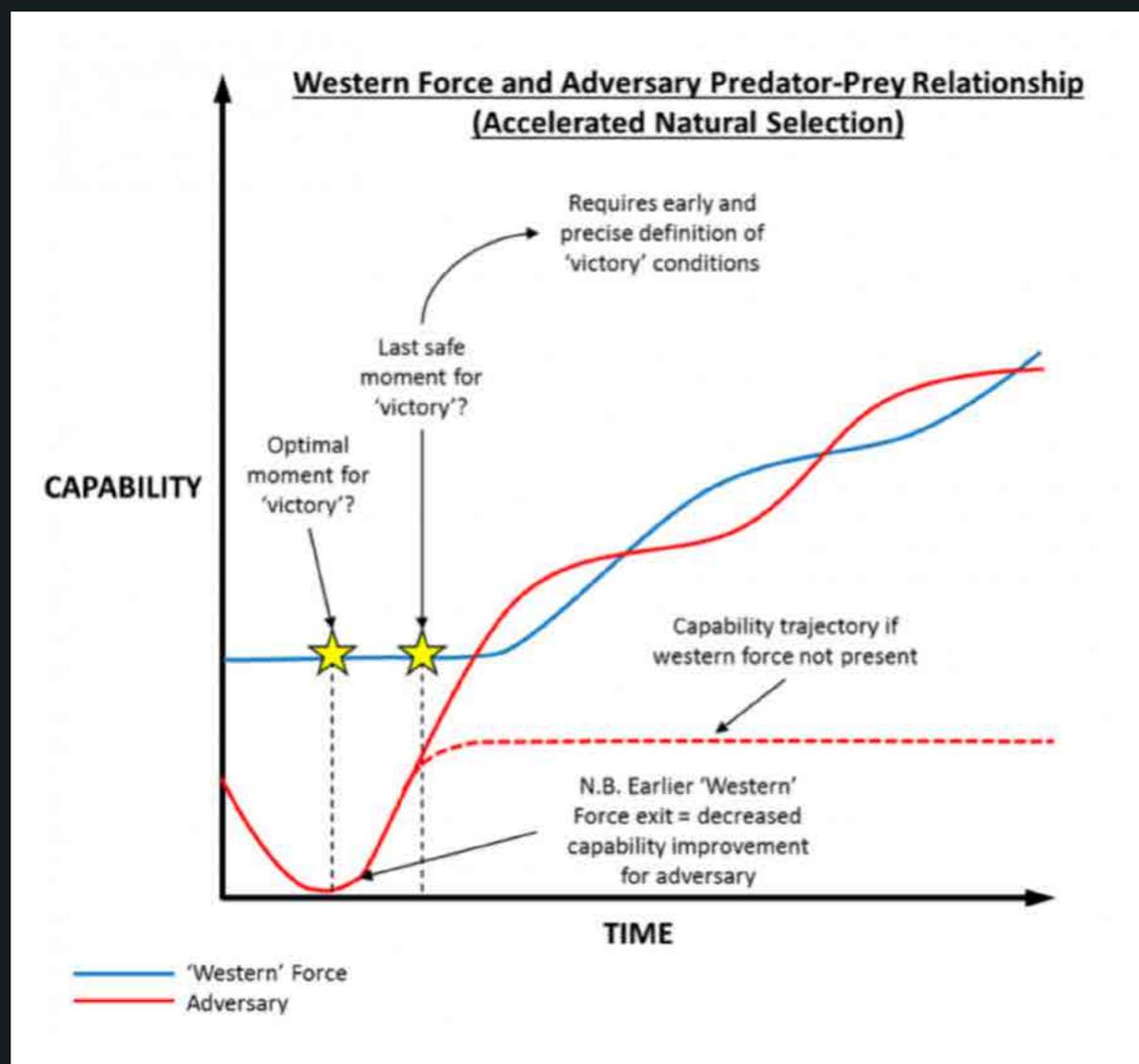


Figure 1: Western Force and Adversary Predator-Prey Relationship (Accelerated Natural Selection)

What the graph illustrates is the relative speed at which adaptation occurs. The adversary starts at a comparative disadvantage in capability terms (here capability can mean anything from equipment to tactics to numbers) and yet learns fast. This initial time window (the bottom left corner of the graph) is the opportunity for western forces to drive home their advantages and make significant gains. Indeed, should the political objective and strategy have been well enough crafted, the armed force will have achieved its aim and be on the way home before the lines cross, ideally at the point where the adversary's capability has been beaten to a nadir.

The UK's 2000 intervention in Sierra Leone in support of a beleaguered UN mission that had been working to restore peace in the country after a civil war, is a relatively good example. In that case, although there was a degree of lack of clarity in purpose in the Cabinet initially, the operation was

ultimately well conducted and swiftly concluded—'mission creep' was avoided and the British public, with whom the operation had not registered highly, despite several sharp combats including one major engagement to rescue eleven soldiers of the Royal Irish Regiment who had been taken hostage by the Revolutionary United Front, was generally positive in its view of the war, or at least unperturbed by it. Prime Minister Tony Blair was very pleased.[xxv]

However, the longer the western force is in the fight the more opportunity there is for the adversary to adapt. Again, the Afghanistan war is a superb example. As one senior ISAF commander summed up the conflict in a 2010 interview, by which time the writing was already clearly on the wall, "We entered Afghanistan after September 11 for one limited reason—to get Bin Laden and punish those who attacked us and those who sheltered them. And then we just... stayed." [xxvi] Part of the problem is that smaller, less formal

[xxv] See Andrew Dorman, *Blair's Successful War: British Military Intervention in Sierra Leone* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2009), also John Kampfner, *Blair's Wars* (London: Free Press, 2003), esp. chap. 4.

[xxvi] Quoted in Betz, 'Communications Breakdown', p. 615.

organisations are by their nature able to adapt more quickly; another is that anti-status quo insurgents are by definition highly incentivised to improvise, innovate, and adapt, whereas conventional armies are less so.[xxvii] This is magnified by the rate at which the less capable will be killed—a harsh but effective training regime.

The outcome is that after the initial period, the western force and the adversary are locked into a perpetual struggle with neither side able to seize an advantage significant enough to force a victory. This clearly plays to the strengths of the adversary, ‘we have the watches, they have the time’ as the saying goes. The population amongst whom the fighting occurs as well as the public of the intervening nations becomes exhausted by the emotional effort required to sustain the conflict. This has been the leitmotif of the Afghanistan war for most of the contributing nations to ISAF. For

example, a Canadian study concluded of the information campaign in support of the conflict that the ‘government failed to connect on an emotional level [with Canadians]. As a consequence, they won some minds but too few hearts.’[xxviii]

An even more sobering indictment may be observed in the memoirs of Major General John Cantwell, an Australian officer with thirty-eight years of service encompassing three wars from Operation Desert Storm in 1991, through Iraq in 2006, and Afghanistan in 2010 where he headed the Australian contingent. He had been hospitalised afterwards suffering from post-traumatic stress, powered at root by a gnawing doubt:

“As I paid a final salute at the foot of yet another flag-draped coffin loaded into the belly of an aircraft bound for Australia, I found myself questioning if the pain and suffering of our soldiers and their families were worth it. I wondered if the deaths of any

of those fallen soldiers made any difference. I recoiled from such thoughts, which seemed disrespectful, almost treasonous. I had to answer in the affirmative, or risk exposing all my endeavours as fraudulent. I had to believe it was worth it. But the question continues to prick at my mind. I don’t have an answer.”

Imagine a way of war that causes even the most senior commanders to worry ‘what is the point?’ to the point of hospitalisation—a way of war, moreover, which through one’s own efforts leaves the enemy stronger at the end than at the beginning. Actually, there is no need to imagine such a thing.

[xxvii] This is a central theme, for instance, of Carlos Marighela’s *Minimanual of the Urban Guerrilla* (1969).

[xxviii] Joseph Fletcher, Heather Bastedo and Jennifer Hove, ‘Losing Heart: Declining Support and the Political Marketing of the Afghanistan Mission’, *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, Vol. 124, No. 4 (December 2009), pp. 914-915.

CONCLUSION

The stabilisation orthodoxy which sees Western states intervening abroad militarily in pursuit of ends, almost always ill-defined, that military power has hardly a chance of effectuating has to be challenged. The problem, as we have discussed it so far, primarily in terms of tactics and strategy, is that it fatally compromises both, but especially tragically the latter. Time after time, governments paint themselves into a rhetorical corner from which no amount of ‘strategic communications’ can liberate them. When forced to confront the thorny issues, usually the ‘why are we there?’ question, or even worse it’s ‘is it worth it?’ cousin, ministers tend to be vigorous—framing wars of choice as values-driven fights, even existential ones, that it is essential to win. The trouble is that Western publics on the whole do not buy such arguments anymore, if ever they did; moreover, they see the obvious disjuncture between self-evidently economy-of-force-driven operations and

international political grandstanding and believe their eyes accordingly.

Notwithstanding any particular tactics, some would argue, the underlying causes of the ‘infections’ that give rise to the world’s many heart-wrenching crises exist and need to be ameliorated. Be this as it may, though, the humanitarian impulse ought, frankly, as Palmerston would have urged, be questioned carefully before any action is undertaken. A key thing to ponder would be: who is responsible for it? Is economic hardship, ethnic or sectarian disenfranchisement, or gender equality in this or that part of the world a matter of professional concern to the soldier?

In the current strategic context, for most Western armies the answer is a diffident ‘yes’; the soldier as armed social worker, robust peacemaker, and stability provider is an image with which the most voters seem comfortable and that politicians are therefore happy to emphasise. Such

beliefs are usually couched in terms of moral enterprise, but the reasons for it are equally, if not more, practical in their origin—the military is the one public institution that politicians can legally compel to go abroad and put life and limb at stake. Hypocrisy and ignorance, though, are at the base—do something, but make it cheap, is the demand.

A decade ago Sir David Richards, who had commanded British forces in Sierra Leone and later headed ISAF, but was then Britain’s Chief of the General Staff, suggested in a speech that what we needed in order to face a strategic context of liberal interventions was a cadre of skilled colonial administrators. He deplored that, “... in a desire not to be considered to be still colonial, I sense that we lost the mindset and skills across Government that our fathers and grandfathers instinctively understood and there was perhaps—and still is in some quarters—a reluctance to do

anything that appeared to be colonial in nature.”[xxx]

What Richards put his finger on here was an essential point, which may be readily observed with a short walk through the headstones of the British cemetery in Peshawar, Pakistan, or many other such dour monuments of empire dotted around the world—British, French, Russian, and Soviet for that matter. For the most part, the graves there are full of engineers and administrators, policemen and teachers, and often their wives and children, not soldiers. For all the sins of imperialism, at least its agents operated out of sufficient moral conviction to put their own lives on the line; whereas now we talk much of ‘whole of government’ solutions, we practice them hardly at all.

Passion is the ‘neglected mainspring of war’, as students of which we must never disconnect—as to do so would fly in the face of the understanding war as a ‘total

[xxx] M.L.R. Smith, *Politics and Passion: The Neglected Mainspring of War*, *Infinity*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (2014), pp. 32-36.

phenomenon' that Clausewitz enjoined us to possess.[xxxii] In our discussion of tactics and strategy and the reciprocal mutual learning that occurs between one's opponent and oneself we have never departed far from the moral dimension of strategy and warfare. This was a point one of our interlocutors, a British general of great experience in nearly all of the events we have cited thus far, was keen to stress. It is fitting to quote verbatim his assessment of our present liberal dilemma and how we got to it:

“The minute weapons of mass destruction were not found, Iraq gained a moral taint that simultaneously infected Afghanistan. Moral taint then led to the withdrawal of the popular mandate for either operation; withdrawal of the popular mandate led to a failure of political nerve, the impossibility of applying decisive force and an acute vulnerability to moral criticism. While we self-consciously limited both our aims and the resources we would devote to

their achievement, our enemies were able to endure and outlast us politically in an example of the strategic exploitation of asymmetric advantage. Liberal intervention is therefore a thin reed that requires quite specific conditions before it can be initiated... if it doesn't meet the conditions, do not do it. I regret coming up with a conclusion that perfectly exemplifies a political context suffused by risk aversion but that is where we are for now. Oh, for the simple verities of a war of national survival.”[xxxii]

A moral impediment sits at the heart of this problem. War should be just, both ad bellum and in bello. Without a defined purpose it is almost a guarantee that constructing a moral case for intervention will prove at best Herculean. Even more problematic is that with this context, behaving in a manner consistent with the guiding principles of war, designed in part to ensure that a brutal, violent undertaking is at least as swift resolved as possible will

prove at best Sisyphean. Western forces enter any conflict with advantages. What they have lacked in the post-colonial era is the clarity of purpose and sheer will that only a sense of moral authority can deliver.

It is bad strategy and poor tactics to engage in conflicts that are doomed to failure from the outset—and immoral to boot. The object of war is the creation of a better peace, we are assured, for no other cause can justify the wilful infliction of suffering and death on others and sanctify our own losses. Consider, therefore, the post-conflict scenario. Your adversary has been taught a thousand tactical lessons—by you. If he has been paying attention, he has been also taught a seminal lesson in strategy. When you leave, who do you think is best placed to seize power in the ecosystem you have so profoundly shaped?

[xxxii] Correspondence with LGen (ret.) Sir Robert Fry, UK Royal Marines (2 August 2018).

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