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EXERCISE UNITED SHIELD 2008

REVISITING MILITARY STRATEGY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

MUNGO MELVIN

With the current focus on expeditionary operations, it may seem strange to revisit old Cold War scenarios in staff rides. There is, of course, no anticipation of a return to large-scale East–West confrontation or industrial war. Nevertheless,* United Shield *derived a set of timeless lessons and raised many intriguing questions about war fighting and international co-operation in campaigns. Major General Melvin gives a first-hand account of the issues and debates stirred up by the exercise.

The Exercise Author, Major General Melvin, briefing near the old Inner German Border.

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A war reporter recorded the scene of combat: 'Screening smoke settles over the Elbe at Storkau in Eastern Germany's province of Sachsen-Anhalt like a shroud. A T-72 of the National Volksarmee of the German Democratic Republic rattles over the pontoon bridge constructed by olive green amphibious vehicles, followed by a Russian BMP. The unearthly roar quickly becomes louder: two Tornados of the Royal Air Force attack. Bombs explode and the bridge is broken under the deafening din of anti-aircraft fire.'[1] No, this is not a snapshot from some long-forgotten Cold War scheme, but rather an episode from a unique training event, an international staff ride led by Chief of the General Staff (CGS), General Sir Richard Dannatt. This article describes exercise *United Shield* (22–26 September 2008) and the strategic debate it has triggered from the perspective of the exercise author, drawing on independent analysis conducted by the Defence Academy and offering some personal conclusions.[2]

The Cold War was a time of relative strategic clarity

Since the end of the Cold War, most of the emphasis of the British armed forces has been on peace support operations in the Balkans, and latterly in counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. In line with national policy and international commitments, we have been rightly focused on achieving success in these theatres. This is, and must remain, our 'principal effort'.[3] But history shows that no armed force can afford to be fixed conceptually on today's conflicts entirely. The Cold War was a time of relative strategic clarity with political ends and military ways and means broadly aligned: in other words, our military strategy was in balance. Current operations, which by their expeditionary nature have a superficially greater degree of discretion about them, neither enjoy necessarily the same compelling sense of national urgency nor attract the appropriate priority of resource.[4] Any resultant disparity between ends, ways and means risks potential strategic imbalance. In the broader context, we can neither ignore the lessons of the past nor overlook the emerging challenges of the future in finding new ways to rebalance our strategy. Further, it is our contention that over the last twenty years, collective understanding of military strategy and the operational art that bridges this to tactics, including joint operational manoeuvre at large scales of effort, have diminished.[5] The staff ride was designed to address this assessed deficit.

Our campaign of study was the 'war that never was' during which we deterred a Soviet attack across the former Inner German Border. We chose this in order to elicit discussion of large-scale operations and operational level manoeuvre. So that there is no misunderstanding: we do not believe that there is any likelihood of a return to a Cold War, with a new Europe divided by a re-galvanised Iron Curtain transposed much further towards the East, for all the sabre-rattling we hear from Russia and its displays of military might in Moscow's Red Square. However, not least because of the events of summer 2008, it is surely prudent to review our obligations under Articles IV and V of the NATO Treaty in order to give assurance and demonstrate solidarity to member states (or prospective members) throughout the Alliance. This latter point was not lost on the Ukrainian military delegation that attended the staff ride, who gave us a most informative former Warsaw Pact perspective and view from the 'near abroad' of Russia.

The vast majority of today's real, as opposed to hypothetical, doomsday conflicts are intra-state. If we are to believe Rupert Smith's thesis of 'war amongst the people' and 'not on the battlefield', in which 'industrial armies' are obsolete, then we can surely afford to reduce our conventional capabilities for intervention operations. As that writer observed, '...without an enemy it is not possible to form a strategy, and without a strategy it is not possible to make anything but the broadest decisions on weapons and equipment. As a result forces in Europe have shrunk, but retain the form and equipment of another age intended for other battles.'[6]

Yet much as we would want to wish it away, inter-state warfare is not necessarily dead. It may have mutated merely in a manner which exhibits less obvious manifestations than hitherto (for example, 'cyber' warfare). Thus we still require a viable military strategy in response. As Colin Gray has remarked: [7]

> It is neither feasible nor particularly helpful to try to predict particular wars between states. But it is essential to remain alert to the possibility of such events. The intention here is not to try to spot tomorrow's wars, rather it is simply to register resoundingly the claim that regular warfare between states will long remain a feature of world politics.

So rather than either returning to 'pure' conventional warfare or conducting further 'traditional' peace support operations and 'modern' counter-insurgencies, we are faced today with a complex and persistent mix of both asymmetric and symmetric methods of fighting in so-called 'hybrid wars', in which both stabilisation and major combat operations (MCO) are messily intertwined.

We can neither ignore the lessons of the past nor overlook the emerging challenges of the future

An authoritative American study has concluded that such wars incorporate 'a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder'.[8] While there remains an extensive academic and military debate about the evolving dynamics and character of conflict, and how in practical terms we should adapt our operational techniques, training and structures to combat it, it is important to note that both states and non-state actors can engage us now, and in the future. This reality must inform our defence policy and military strategy that cannot be focused fully on the latter at the entire expense of the former. Likewise, a policy without an effective strategy is like a knight without either shield or sword.

Furthermore, we need to be prepared to meet the unexpected. According to many observers, we are now facing a revolution in economic and political affairs across the world, driven by globalisation, in which increasing inequalities of wealth and expectations may fuel future conflicts. With this in mind, Cold War specialists and now respected futurologists urge us to remain aware of the 'perils of prediction' and warn that 'all things are possible but not equally probable: the further we look into the future, the less precise becomes our analysis'. Nonetheless, 'the better we anticipate the future, the lesser the risk'. If there is 'no longer a clear distinction between peace and war', then we need to understand better that we have gone from Cold War to 'hot peace', in which internal and external threats to our security are very closely related.[9] Hence all armed forces need to adapt to meet current and anticipated requirements in an unstable and unpredictable world, recognising that the future is inherently uncertain. As the CGS stressed last year in the *RUSI Journal*, '...we must continue to optimise for the most likely, which is Intervention and Stabilisation Operations whilst maintaining our ability to dual role and meet the demands of MCO'.[10] Therefore consideration of the General Defence Plan (GDP) of 1988 was but a driver of debate in exercise *United Shield*, not an end in itself. Important as 'looking back' remains, our purpose was far more on 'thinking forward'.

Inter-state warfare is not necessarily dead

In sum, while the grand strategic context over the last twenty years has changed remarkably since the end of the Cold War, as has technology, including the widespread employment of new surveillance and precision attack capabilities, much of military strategy and operational art – the higher level business of intelligence, manoeuvre, logistics and command – has an enduring nature. While we no longer envisage preparing for war – let alone fighting one – on the North German Plain ever again, the staff ride provided much food for thought – from strategy to tactics and from Cold War to 'hot peace' – about the changing character of conflict in the hybrid wars of the twenty-first century.

Approach and Preparation

While hybrid warfare may not take a traditional, easily recognisable form, future security requirements may still require the preparation, assembly, movement and employment of significant ground manoeuvre forces – supported by air and maritime power – in a manner we no longer typically consider, let alone practise regularly. Simply put, if we neglect to train, we may lose capability. The CGS took the decision in early 2007 to revive operational understanding of MCO within the British Army. His method was to employ the tried and trusted method of the staff ride, a high-level battlefield study designed to educate a senior military audience. It was the first ever event of this type run by the CGS, becoming very much a joint and combined affair, with strong representation from the Royal Air Force and from the armies of the United States, Germany and other NATO and Partnership for Peace nations.

As we wanted to expose the complexity of MCO to the Army's future senior leaders, while generating discussion and debate on conflict in the round, the staff ride was conceived primarily to benefit today's generation of colonels and brigadiers. Although this group has an unparalleled level of operational exposure as formation and unit commanders in peacekeeping and counter-insurgency operations, there has been little scope for them to study the requirements of future war against enemies who may again resort to symmetric operations, and those at a larger scale than currently undertaken. Thus we derived the following exercise aim: 'To study combined and joint operational manoeuvre in order to prepare commanders for their role in MCO at large scales of national effort.'

From inception, therefore, the staff ride was designed to encourage creative thinking with application to modern circumstance rather than revisit an uncontested GDP for old time's sake.

Participants on a staff ride consider typically an historical campaign and specific episodes from it, such as major operations or battles, with a view to deriving lessons for contemporary operations.[11] On exercise *United Shield*, unusually, we looked at the 'war that never was' between NATO and the Warsaw Pact, taking 1988 as our benchmark for considering the strategic and operational planning on both sides. There were no veterans on hand to describe 'tales of derring-do' in battles, hard-fought, won or lost. We were well-mentored, however, by a notable cast of former NATO and national commanders led by Field Marshal the Lord Inge, supported by a strong team of military academics and senior serving officers.[12]

We still require a viable military strategy

The core of *United Shield* was the training audience of eighty-eight officers, with ranks ranging from major general to lieutenant colonel. Led by a two-star officer, including a major general from United States Army Europe (USAREUR), each of the eight syndicates was joint and multinational in composition. Apart from its syndicate leader, a typical syndicate consisted of six British Army colonels or brigadiers, a member of Headquarters ARRC drawn from their multinational contingent, an officer each from the Bundeswehr and USAEUR, and an RAF wing commander or group captain. In addition, each syndicate was supported by a dedicated lieutenant colonel 'facilitator', drawn from my headquarters.[13] To focus the activities of the training audience, four three-star group leaders were appointed, each responsible for providing direction and guidance to two syndicates.[14]

The detailed exercise programme was developed over many months in close conjunction with the civilian and military authorities of the host nation.[15] The Bundeswehr gladly put units and facilities at our disposal, not least its magnificent military police (*Feldjäger*) that cleared the path for our convoy of four large buses. I would contend that there has probably not been such superb and friendly co-operation between British and German forces since the end of the Cold War. That was significant in itself, and we are immensely grateful. The challenge now is to replicate these

bonds in operational theatres such as Afghanistan.

Discussion on a Mobile Seminar

The exercise programme ran over five working days. We started with a Monday evening scene-setting reception, held at the Allied Museum in Berlin. Former Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Centre General Hans-Henning von Sandrart gave us a fascinating description of Cold War military planning within the clear political constraints of forward defence and flexible response. He stressed that 'the revival of operational art [in the 1980s] represented the closing of a gap that had developed over the years'. He and others, notably General Sir Nigel Bagnall, were determined to make NATO 'mentally and physically capable at this level', with the simple aim of making 'deterrence safer' in the central region.[16] Looking to the future, he concluded his talk by stating 'no-one can predict precisely where and what new threats may emerge, so you are well advised to keep forces capable of conducting combined and joint operations at the operational level'.

The next morning (Tuesday), the CGS observed that the staff ride would prove 'historical, memorable and profitable'. More specifically, he reminded his British audience that the army must develop if it is to remain *relevant*. 'It needs the appropriate capacity to fight MCO and stability operations sequentially and simultaneously; the capability to endure on a wide range of operational tasks; and the ability to orchestrate manoeuvre – in its widest sense – at the two- and three-star level.' Furthermore, 'the Army must remain relevant to our Allies and to our own government in pursuit of Alliance and national policies'. Turning to all participants, he urged everyone: 'to make the history relevant; contribute; keep an open mind; and be prepared to learn!'

Subsequent stands that day – each a specific training event – were carried out at a former Soviet barracks in Elstal to the west of Berlin; at the German Joint Operational Headquarters near Potsdam; and at a crossing site on the river Elbe, north of Magdeburg. Together with the first stand of the Wednesday at the German Altmark Training Centre on the Colbitz-Letzlinger Heide, the overall aim of this preliminary period was to present the strategic and operational level perspective of the former Warsaw Pact, using a number of historical planning assumptions. Further, in order to drive an operational level decision-making problem towards the end of the staff ride, I had asked Charles Dick, a former head of the Soviet (latterly, Conflict) Studies Research Centre to write a purely fictional Soviet scheme of attack based on doctrinal norms.[17]

A policy without an effective strategy is like a knight without either shield or sword

One of the undoubted highlights of the staff ride proved the Bundeswehr's very professional river crossing demonstration on the Elbe, subjected to simulated air attack, which set the scene for a vigorous debate on the air-land interface, then and now.[18] The demands, frictions and synergies of co-operation between air and land forces became a recurrent topic of discussion throughout the week. Whatever the specific technical and tactical challenges, a consensus view emerged during the staff ride. Good communications between components, close integration of staffs wherever possible and, above all, a common understanding and application of the higher, joint, intent represent vital ingredients of success. Interestingly, one of the lessons of the Second World War applied during the Cold War was the co-location of air and land headquarters to ensure the best possible co-operation.[19] For various reasons, these structures were broken up in the early 1990s.

During the bulk of the subsequent days (Wednesday and Thursday), we analysed operations from the NATO perspective at a variety of viewpoints to the west of the former Inner German Border. The area nested by Braunschweig; Wolfenbüttel; Salzgitter; Hildesheim; Hannover; the Mittellandkanal and north to Celle was familiar to all the former commanders and most of the senior serving officers. Here we reviewed delaying, defensive and counter-offensive schemes of manoeuvre in order to draw out what has changed today in terms of capabilities at brigade, divisional and corps levels. The biggest difference identified over the last twenty years is the integration of all source intelligence means and 'joint fires' artillery, aviation and air power at a much lower level. On contemporary operations, companies and battle groups routinely employ unmanned aerial vehicles, attack helicopters and long range rocket systems that were largely the province of corps operations in 'GDP'. Together with vastly improved information and communications technologies and night-fighting equipment, these modern weapon systems allow one to fight a tactical battle quite differently. This being the case, there is now scope for greater innovation in the construct of shaping, decisive and sustaining operations, and in overall campaign design.

The exchange of views between experts in former GDP planning and today's practitioners provoked some lively and robust debates. Although quite different strategic circumstances apply, many serving commanders – with 'wars amongst the people' fresh in mind and sand on their boots – questioned whether some of the assumptions generally accepted during the Cold War would have applied, come the test. Would the Warsaw Pact have attacked in the manner we had so carefully scripted? Was it reasonable, for example, to expect that the German population (on both sides of the IGB) would have stayed put in the event of war? Would not much of the fighting have taken place in the urban areas that we tended to avoid on training rather than in the rural areas we found easier to exercise on and defend? Would we have reached our deployment areas on time in any case, given the higher readiness of our former opponents in comparison with the slower tempo of political decision-making in the West and likely traffic chaos? Of course, it is not possible to answer the hypothetical with counter-factual, but such challenges to previously accepted wisdom provided exactly the right sort of professional exchange in a staff ride.

The 'modernists', if one can describe the current cohort of commanders, did not have it all their own way. If there is

an intellectual flame to preserve, there is surely one of operational level design, resting on synchronised manoeuvre, mutual support and inter-operability between the tactical elements of national armed forces. In GDP, facing a common and recognised threat, NATO corps, divisions and brigades used to routinely practise the subordination of flanking formations to other superior headquarters and operational moves across national formation boundaries. Likewise, liaison teams were well practised in their roles and communications were regularly tested. NATO and national commanders got to know their counterparts very well, both professionally and socially. One of the unstated reasons for (and great successes of) exercise *United Shield* was to familiarise commanders with their compatriots from other nations.

We need to be prepared to meet the unexpected

In our discussions we identified a certain irony during the course of the staff ride. Thanks to the efforts of Generals Von Sandrart and Bagnall, and not least Crosbie Saint from the United States Army, by the middle to late 1980s there was an unparalleled degree of co-operation between services and armies in Germany, and also an intellectual stimulus between them.[20] A renaissance in joint, operational level thinking had broken down many of the hitherto rigid barriers and boundaries between nations. Against a common threat, there was unity of effort and purpose. Rules of Engagement (ROE) were uniform and all nations shared the operational risks and burdens to a lesser or greater extent. After the Cold War, as evidenced on peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and more recently in counter-insurgency operations in Afghanistan, there has been a resurgence of purely national thinking and the 'cantonisation' of operational theatres into almost sovereign sectors. Inevitably, this has led to primarily local or regional tactical solutions being applied to operational and strategic problems that require a common, integrated multinational and multi-agency approach at the campaign or theatre level. If it is to remain relevant and usable, NATO must surely address this issue.

The future is inherently uncertain

Logistics, often the Cinderella subject of staff rides, was given due prominence in a number of stands, notably at a former German depot where a local Bundeswehr unit put on an impressive and highly atmospheric demonstration of Cold War techniques. More importantly, German and British specialists then presented today's different logistic requirements and solutions, backed up with a display of modern equipments. In discussion, the need for improved co-operation and inter-operability between national contingents was highlighted, as was the need to build 'campaign' logistics installations for enduring operations. All members of the staff ride found the time here – as on other similarly designed stands – to speak to the British and German soldiers manning the various equipment. This was a valuable opportunity for all concerned, underlining the point that policy and military theory can only be put into practice by well-trained and motivated troops, supported by the best available equipment.

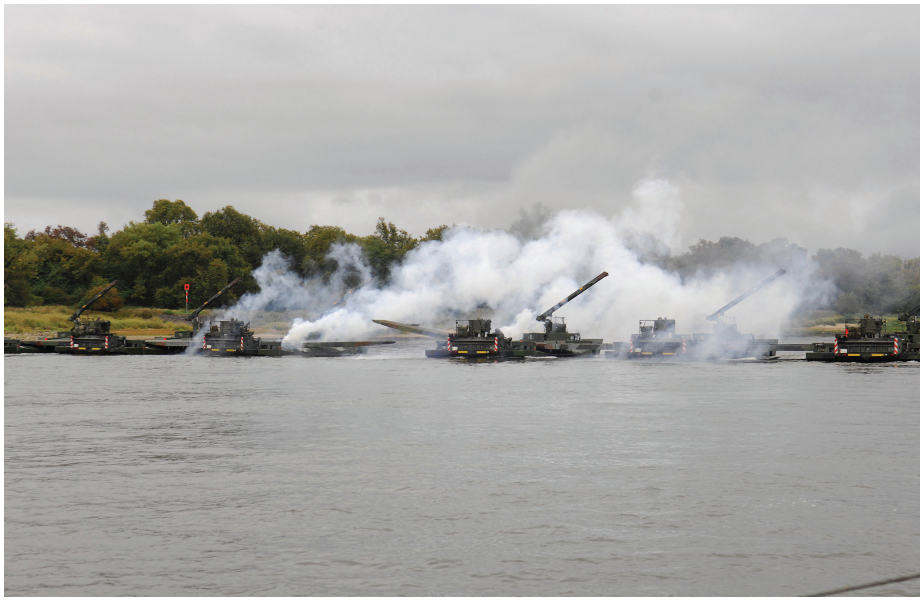
One of the skills well developed by the end of the Cold War was the rapid estimate and decision-making process required at the higher tactical and operational levels. Although the initial, set-piece deployment for GDP could be planned in great detail, 'subsequent moves' such as counter attacks at division, corps or army group level were all very much situation dependent. Attempts to template them even under the benign conditions of exercise usually ended in spectacular failure. Intelligence was never – and never can be – complete; commanders and staffs needed plenty of practice in deriving pragmatic solutions under extreme time pressure. Mindful that this sort of problem was far from the recent experience of the vast majority of the training audience, CGS decided to introduce a 'decision-making in battle' challenge for the Thursday afternoon at the final terrain stand. Syndicates were given a limited amount of time to consider a developed 'Dickov' scenario – that confirmed all their worst fears – and to come to an outline decision with suitable justification. Notwithstanding the evident artificialities of this little test, the variation in response and approach was significant.

Although views differ on whether such planning has direct relevance for today, the major operational problem held in the environs of Schloss Schaumburg overlooking the river Weser did reveal a lack of consistency in the methodology used in preparing and presenting solutions. While some syndicates set about purposefully in producing an original solution, taking into account 'classic' factors such as comparative force ratios, time and space and the need to generate surprise, other syndicates were distracted by trying to fight the problem with requests for additional information. When time for decision is at a premium, the perfect solution is the enemy of the 'good enough'. That aside, it was striking how quickly two members of the Ukrainian delegation (a retired lieutenant general and a serving major general) came to producing a clearly drawn graphical scheme of manoeuvre from the 'enemy' viewpoint. Thus the key point at issue here is not the 'rightness' of any one solution but the requirement for rigour in its derivation and presentation. So there is some pertinent material here in the development of command and staff courses if we are to preserve all-round competency in MCO at the operational level. In the meantime, Headquarters ARRC should continue to provide the focus for such thinking and training.

Throughout the staff ride we had some memorable contributions from our senior mentors and historians, who reminded us that the final decade of the Cold War was not the period of stasis of popular military cliché. As we heard on several occasions, a great deal of intellectual energy was being expended in seeking novel operational solutions to old strategic problems. In addition, new technologies such as stealth aircraft and much improved precision munitions were being introduced that only came into the public domain during the First Gulf War.

Conclusions

The first and most obvious point to make is that a battlefield study of such ambition and complexity should not be undertaken lightly. That said, the considerable demands on research, resource, preparation, administration and staff support were testing but manageable. The exercise appeared to pay off well, and proved a valuable experience all round. The feedback from the vast majority of the training audience was extremely positive: not only did *United Shield* run very smoothly but, more importantly, it had given much food for thought. As staff rides have long demonstrated, there is great value in bringing soldiers, sailors and airmen of different backgrounds, experience and nationalities together. Alliances and friendships forged in training translate into shared success on operations.



1st German Panzer Division's crossing site on the River Elbe under (simulated) air attack.

Important as 'looking back' remains, our purpose was far more on 'thinking forward'

Preparation of the exercise revealed significant gaps in the record keeping of the British armed forces during, and more particularly after, the end of the Cold War. We could not trace certain key historical documents, and found that there was limited national data and expert research effort available to assist us in our analysis. Therefore we had to rely on SHAPE, USAREUR and Bundeswehr historical offices for much of our information and support. This deficit has highlighted limitations in the role and capacity of the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence's 'Corporate Memory' organisation. My personal view is that we should develop this and other existing national organisations such as the Joint Lessons Cell to set up a Joint Armed Forces Historical Research Office to collate, analyse and publish operational narratives and lessons, including classified material for internal consumption and unclassified documentation for public information and subsequent research and teaching effort.

In terms of doctrinal and conceptual development, we need to invest more in understanding the nature of 'hybrid wars', and in improving joint, multinational and multi-agency co-operation in this process. As the Defence Academy proposes: [21]

> Planning and conducting operations in an era of hybrid conflict creates opportunities, challenges and vulnerabilities in all the lines of operation and not just the military line. The requirement for a shared declaration of strategic intent and a shared, comprehensive and agreed narrative and plan of action is essential to underpin coalition cohesion and avoid leaving exploitable chinks exposed. The plan must straddle and coordinate the political, military, economic, social, information and infrastructure lines of operation and incorporate the deployment and employment of the military instrument alongside that of OGDs, national governments, NGOs, civil capability and, wherever applicable, the host nation.

Discussion during the staff ride highlighted that we should adapt our military organisation and thinking – in the face of an ever-quickening pace of change – in order to best meet our current and most likely challenges in the short-term (such as counter-insurgency operations) while remaining flexible enough to turn to the unexpected, both in scale and character. In this respect, effective force structures require a balanced mix of both combat and 'influence' capabilities. The ability to blend these seamlessly and provide reconstruction effort where it is needed in a timely manner is imperative if we are ever to affect positively, let alone, win 'hearts and minds' and thereby achieve lasting campaign success.

If we neglect to train, we may lose capability

With these requirements in mind, we must get away from fixed notions of MCO and stabilisation operations, or symmetric and asymmetric warfare for that matter, and recognise that ambiguity and risk – as with change and uncertainty – remain enduring operating factors. Furthermore, the notion of linking *intensity* of operation to specific types of conflict is not useful as the distinctions between them are increasingly blurred. Routinely, 'warfighting capabilities' are employed today at the tactical level in counter-insurgency operations, which during our retreat from Empire we termed quaintly 'low-intensity operations'. At the patrol, platoon, company or even battle group level, the fire-fights involved nowadays and the close air and attack aviation support being employed

is 'high intensity', but the campaign as a whole is certainly not. The exercise validation study observed:[22]

> The ability to fight at high tempo and intensity, employing many of the capabilities that characterise 'conventional' war, is therefore a core capability that underpins the effective conduct of hybrid warfare to 'establish conditions in which the final outcome may be decided by a combination of other means'. Flexibility, adaptability, versatility and agility relative to an adversary will be crucial to both sides for seizing the initiative. The broader capabilities of airpower may be the crucial asymmetric capability that conventional forces can bring to bear.

In other words, the *main effort* – that which gives substance to decisive, campaign-winning activity – typically will be not be military in a traditional sense, but we cannot afford to lose either the will or the capability to fight, and be able to plan and conduct MCO should the need arise ever again.

The *categorisation* of future warfare is not the critical issue: what matters far more is the effectiveness of our response, nationally and together with that of our allies. While rightly prioritising for the most likely, confronting this reality by preparing for a wider range of conflict than we might wish may come at a price in organisational and procurement terms, but it is surely one worth paying for guaranteeing our nation's security. New thinking in this direction has already started: events such as the staff ride help fashion and inform it.

The staff ride was designed to encourage creative thinking

The due outcome and reward of exercise *United Shield* 2008, therefore, will lie in that special stimulus of 'looking back in order to think forward'. The Defence Academy concluded:[23]

> [The exercise] achieved to a large measure the aim of observing the war that never was and drawing some relevant deductions. It allowed broad brush analysis and discussion of the relevance and applicability of those conclusions for the wars at hand and for the wars that might be. That introspection spawned some critical assessments as to how an Army optimised for the most likely Stabilisation Operations can still retain the capability, ability and capacity to conduct MCO at readiness and scale. That debate has not concluded.

Finally, the vital role of a key guiding figure in effecting transformation within the armed forces should not be underestimated. Field Marshal Inge stressed on a couple of occasions the crucial importance of the Bagnall 'legacy'. As the outstanding thinker of his generation, Bagnall introduced the operational level of war and Mission Command into the British Army; he then set up the Higher Command and Staff Course to ensure that this body of thought was instilled into our institutions and ethos. In response, it crossed several minds that we need a 'Bagnall moment' today in order to introduce greater innovation in strategic thinking and operational practice across defence. A champion for hybrid conflict and the new strategy it demands is now required as the pace of change and the warlike peace it encompasses get ever hotter. ■

Major General Melvin assumed his current post of General Officer Commanding United Kingdom Support Command, in Germany, in August 2006. Previously (2004–06) he was Director Operational Capability in the Ministry of Defence, responsible for the collation of joint lessons and the strategic analysis of current operations.

Notes

1 Adapted from Helmut Michelis, 'What a Third World War would have meant', *Rheinische Post*, 26 February 2009.

2 In the spring of 2007, General Dannatt tasked the author, as the General Officer Commanding of the United Kingdom Support Command (Germany), and Director General of the British Forces Liaison Organisation (Germany) (BFLO(G)), to initiate planning the event for the early autumn of 2008 and write the exercise on his behalf. Subsequent to the staff ride, the Defence Academy completed a *Final Assessment Review* based on its observations during the exercise. I am very grateful to Lieutenant General Andrew Graham for providing me with his draft summary report, which I have referred to in compiling this article. I would stress that neither his report nor my own conclusions constitute an officially endorsed Ministry of Defence position.

3 In accordance with United Kingdom Defence Board direction.

4 Adapted from the Defence Academy *Final Assessment Review* (draft).

5 One prominent exception to this generalisation is the role of Headquarters Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (HQ ARRC) in maintaining and developing thinking at corps and land component levels in its training, including its 'Arrcade Fusion' series of command post exercises.

6 Rupert Smith, *Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Knopf, 2007), pp. 267–268.

7 Colin S Gray, *Another Bloody Century* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2005) p. 179.

8 Frank G Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington, VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, December 2007), p. 14.

9 Contributions by Chris Donnelly and Eric Morris on exercise *United Shield* 2008, 24 September 2008.

10 General Sir Richard Dannatt, 'The Land Environment – Moving Towards 2018', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 153, No. 4, August 2008), pp. 60-61.

11 The British Army distinguishes between two types of battlefield study: battlefield tours and staff rides. In comparison with a battlefield tour that could equally well be a civilian-run event for interest, a staff ride is designed for professional military *education and training*. Its origins lie in the senior commanders' rides of the German General Staff. It can be defined as follows: 'A staff ride consists of a systematic preliminary study of a selected campaign, an extensive visit to the actual sites associated with that campaign and opportunity to integrate the lessons from each. It envisions maximum student involvement before arrival at the site to guarantee thought, analysis and discussion. A staff ride thus links historical event, preliminary study and terrain to produce battle analysis in three dimensions. It consists of three distinct phases: preliminary study, field study and integration in an after action review.' Quoted by R A M S Melvin, 'Contemporary Battlefield Tours and Staff Rides: A Military Practitioner's View' in: David Hall (ed.), *The Relevance and Role of the Battlefield Tour and the Staff Ride for Armed Forces in the 21st Century,* Strategic and Combat Studies Institute Occasional Paper No. 48, (Shrivenham 2005), p. 56.

12 Field Marshal the Lord Inge, former Commander Northern Army Group (NORTHAG) and Chief of Defence Staff (CDS); General Hans-Henning von Sandrart, Commander Allied Forces Central Europe (CINCENT); General Sir Jeremy Mackenzie, Commander 1st (British) Corps and Deputy SACEUR and Lieutenant General Sir John Kiszely, a brigade commander during the Cold War. Richard Holmes and Chris Donnelly led the historical team that included other experts of the period such as Eric Morris and Charles Dick. Former commanders and historians provided the historical context for the staff ride and helped to stimulate discussion, primed by a comprehensive set of documentation (*Reader*, *Pocket Guide* and Supplementary Handouts) put together by the exercise author and writing team. This preparatory effort, which included many months of research and reconnaissance involving three study days and a rehearsal exercise, was supported by Air Marshals Stuart Peach and David Walker, Charles Dick and General Helge Hansen. Unfortunately the latter, a former CINCENT and currently a senior mentor to NATO, could not participate on the staff ride due to an unavoidable clash of commitments. Nonetheless his authoritative voice was heard in a pre-recorded set of orders to the training audience. In his Command Group, CGS was supported by senior serving officers, including General Sir David Richards, Commander in Chief Land Forces; Air Marshal Sir Stuart Peach, then Chief Defence Intelligence and now Chief Joint Operations; Air Marshal David Walker, Deputy Air Component Commander Ramstein; and Lieutenant General Andrew Graham, Director of the Defence Academy, who led the joint validation cell. Rounding out the Command Group was the Ukrainian delegation of nine serving officers and civilians, led by General of the Army Vitalii Radetskiy, Director of the Ukrainian Defence Academy and Colonel General Ivan Svida, Commander of the Ground Forces of Ukraine. General Radetskiy turned out to be one of the stars of the staff ride, making a number of lively presentations and pertinent observations.

13 The hub of the exercise control staff was a highly effective control cell run by my chief of staff, Colonel Bill Warren, together with two dedicated stand support teams, bus escorts, media support and film crew, and a medical team. The vital administrative underpinning was provided by my logistics staff and by a most efficient echelon from the ARRC Support Battalion.

14 From the British Army came Lieutenant General Sir Graeme Lamb, Commander Field Army; Lieutenant General Nick Parker, Commander Regional Forces; and Lieutenant General Richard Shirreff, Commander Allied Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC). We were especially privileged to add Lieutenant General Kenneth Hunzeker, Commanding General V (US) Corps to this high-powered team.

15 In addition to my own staff of the British Forces Liaison Organisation (Germany), we were assisted throughout by Brigadier General Carsten Jacobson, Commander Rear Support, Headquarters ARRC, and Colonel Bernd Giebner, Chief Host Nation Support. It is fair to say without their enthusiastic and focused support we would not have received clearance to reconnoitre and plan the Exercise, let alone conduct it.

16 When Inspekteur (equivalent to Chief of the General Staff) of the German Army, in 1986 General von Sandrart issued his *Operative Richtlinien* [Operational Guidelines].

17 This was soon christened the 'Marshal Dickov Plan' and led to an amusing incident. Entirely unbeknown to us, there had indeed existed in the USSR's General Staff Plans Department a very Russian Colonel General Dickov. Our Ukrainian friends not only wanted to know how we had got hold of a heavily classified document from such a respected figure, but then went on to criticise constructively some of its grand design!

18 The bulk of the excellent demonstration was performed by the Bundeswehr's Heavy Engineer Battalion 130, equipped with the amphibious M3 bridging and ferrying equipment. The Tornado aircraft came from RAF Marham.

19 For example, Headquarters Northern Army Group (NORTHAG) and Headquarters Second Allied Tactical Air Force (2 ATAF) were collocated in the Joint Headquarters at Mönchengladbach (Rheindahlen) in western Germany.

20 See, for example, General Sir Nigel Bagnall, 'Concepts of Land/Air Operations in the Central Region I' and Air Marshal Sir Patrick Hine, 'Concepts of Land/Air Operations in the Central Region II', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 129, No. 3, 1984), pp. 59–62 and 63–66 respectively; General Sir Martin Farndale, 'The Counter-Stroke', *RUSI Journal* (Vol. 130, No. 3, 1985), pp. 6–9; General Crosbie E Saint, 'A CinC's View of Operational Art', *Military Review* (Vol. LXX, No. 9, 1990), pp. 65–78.

21 Defence Academy *Final Assessment Review* (draft).

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*