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**Filling the Capability Gap -
A Medium Capability for the British Army**

Major T. Vallings

It is not the strongest of the species that survive, nor the
most intelligent, but the one most responsive to change.
Charles Darwin

INTRODUCTION

Despite the 1998 Strategic Defence Review (SDR), the British Army is still primarily structured to combat a high intensity conflict as part of a coalition force, to defeat a threat similar to that posed by the former Warsaw Pact. The environment has changed since the end of the Cold War, and the British Army lacks a credible capability to react quickly and decisively to a crisis either, as part of a coalition or on its own. Conflict over the last decade has mainly been at the mid to low intensity levels (operations other than war) and not at the higher warfighting levels. The structure of the British Army needs to change in order to meet the changing strategic environment and ensure that, it is able to respond with the appropriate capability, to meet future threats across the spectrum of conflict.

In order to understand the respective characteristics of heavy, medium and light forces and their relationship with future conflict, it is necessary to clarify definitions. “Heavy Forces” are optimised to defeat a sophisticated, armoured enemrom
ised
because, their strategic mobility is constrained by virtue of their size and weight to

shipping and exceptionally to large aircraft.¹ “Medium Forces” are characterized by their quick deployability thus, delivering the potential for forcing early conflict resolution. The majority of the force will be C130 air portable and tactical mobility will be high.² “Light Forces” are optimised for very rapid deployment and can operate dismounted for sustained periods of time. This is at the cost of their firepower and protection, but they retain tactical mobility, albeit on foot, in all terrain.³ The medium force will be linked to and incorporate “Rapid Effect” to ensure that its capability is fully exploited. Rapid Effect is defined as a “rapid build up of combat power in the theatre of operations,”⁴ in order to influence and ultimately control the will and perceptions of an adversary.⁵ The short to medium term will be referred to throughout the paper and encompasses the present day to the year 2015. The British Army, in the short to medium term must develop a rapidly deployable medium weight capability, to compliment their light and heavy forces and achieve a full spectrum capability based army.

The development of a medium capability requires tri service approval, as it is a joint concept with implications for all three services. Thus the following assumptions have been made. The Air and Maritime components of the concept will be developed by their respective services, once joint approval of the overall concept has been obtained. A detailed cost analysis will be required to support the recommendations in

¹ UK, Ministry of Defence. D/DGD&D/1/124 *Heavy Medium and Light Force Definitions* (Upavon: MOD UK, 2000), p 1.

² *Ibid*

³ *Ibid*

⁴ UK, Ministry of Defence. D/DGD&D/FD/08 *A Rapid Effect Capability for the Future Army – 2nd Circulation* (Upavon: MOD UK, 2000), p 2.

⁵ *Ibid*, p 3.

this paper. There will be no recommendations to reduce the current combat power of the British Army. Although no political intention has been given it is assessed that, if peace continues to progress in Northern Ireland, three of the six light rolled battalions will be re-deployed to mainland UK within the next eighteen months.

BACKGROUND

The British Army is currently structured with a mix of either ultra heavy or very light formations, a “barbell posture.”⁶

The heavy forces consist of 1 UK Armoured Division and 3 UK Mechanised Division and both divisions are required to generate the requirements set out in the SDR. The review tasked the British Army to be capable of responding to a major international crisis, on a similar scale and duration to the Gulf War, with a heavy division at thirty days

⁶ Ibid, p iii.

⁷ Adapted fro

readiness.⁸ The division provides an important contribution to a NATO or coalition force. Heavy forces combine firepower, protection and mobility to deliver decisive action in the combined arms environment. Their combat power and the political will to deploy them sends a strong deterrent message. Heavy forces are reliant on sealift for strategic mobility; once in theatre they are logistically very demanding and therefore slow to build up and sustain. Their lack of strategic mobility was demonstrated in the 1991 Gulf War, where it took three months to build up a heavy UK Division. However, it is important to emphasise that heavy forces provide the nucleus of the British Army's warfighting capability and this is not expected to change in the near future.

The UK light forces consist of 16 Air Assault Brigade, the six light role battalions on active service in Northern Ireland and the twelve infantry battalions that are not part of the Formation Readiness Cycle (FRC).⁹ The FRC is depicted at Annex A. Light forces are capable of operating across the spectrum of conflict and are specifically designed to operate in difficult terrain. They are capable of being deployed rapidly into theatre by either air or aviation assets but once deployed on the ground unless part of an airmobile unit their tactical mobility is restricted. In difficult terrain the ground will assist in their protection but in the open they are highly vulnerable. Their organic firepower is also restricted as they lack the vehicle platforms to mount weapon systems. "In wars of the future, there is simply no point in deploying highly trained light infantry without mobility

⁸ UK, Ministry of Defence. The Strategic Defence Review, (London: The Stationary Office, 1998), p 23.

⁹ The Formation Readiness Cycle is an annual rotation mechanism for generating the readiness of brigades and units for warfighting. Brigades rotate annually through training, high readiness and other deployment taskings in order that the British Army can provide a heavy division capable of warfighting at thirty days readiness. It is a three year cycle and therefore Divisions of three brigades each of three battalions are required to enable the cycle to function.

and protection.”¹⁰ The Gulf War emphasised this viewpoint when the 82nd Airborne Division was nicknamed “the speed bump”¹¹ because it lacked the protection, firepower and mobility to have any decisive effect on the Iraqi armoured forces. However, light forces have proven most effective in theatres such as Northern Ireland and on humanitarian operations, where their ability to win the hearts and minds of the population has enabled them to react decisively and effectively. Light forces are a vital to any force package that will have to fight in the urban environment. It is therefore, imperative that the British Army maintains a light force capability.

There is currently surplus capacity within the light force structure, as the non FRC infantry battalions are available for operational deployments, they are unlikely to deploy due to their low levels of readiness. Any draw down in the number of battalions in Northern Ireland will further increase the number of non FRC light role battalions. A medium division, consisting of three brigades each of three infantry battalions, could therefore be developed from the surplus capacity within the light force structure. This would still leave six light rolled battalions (three of which would be re-rolled from Northern Ireland) and 16 Air Assault Brigade to maintain the light force capability. Thus it would not reduce the warfighting capability required from the heavy and light forces. Yet, it would provide the new medium capability battalions with a more focused role, high levels of readiness and a more relevant contribution to the British Army. A medium

¹⁰ Douglas A Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport: PRAEGER, 1997), p 77.

¹¹ John Gordon IV and Peter A Wilson, *The Case for the Army XXI “Medium Weight” Aero-Motorised Divisions: A Pathway to the Army of 2020*, Report for the Army After Next Project, (US Army War College: 1998), p 5.

division of three brigades would nest into the FRC, ensure the readiness of the lead battalion or brigade and provide units to rotate through operational deployments.

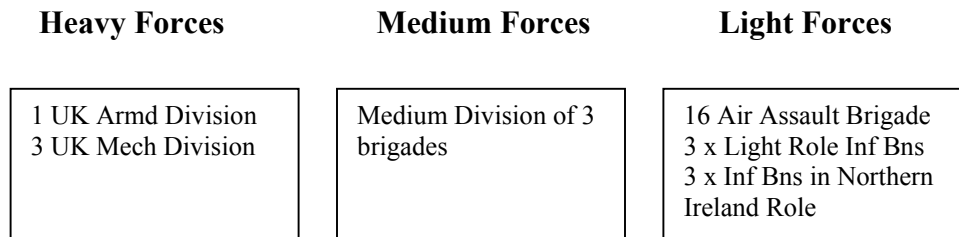


Figure 2. The Proposed Structure

FUTURE CONFLICTS

It is apparent that the overall magnitude of the mechanised threat in any given scenario will be smaller than what was faced during the Cold War, but it is also quite evident that the total number of different threats that may have to be addressed has increased substantially.¹²

The RAND Corporation¹³

The threat has “globalised” and is no longer confined to a single identifiable adversary. The UK is unlikely to face conflict at her borders in the foreseeable future and will therefore, need to become a truly expeditionary force to protect her strategic interests. Regional instability amongst former Warsaw Pact countries has increased and due to their geography and ethnicity they are strategically relevant to Western Countries, Bosnia for example. Instability in the Middle East continues to threaten Western economic interests and instability in Indonesia and Africa is unlikely to reduce.

¹² Matsumura, Gordon, Steeb, Glenn, Herbert and Steinberg, *Lightning Over Water*, Report for the United States Army and Office of The Secretary of Defence, (Santa Monica, RAND, 2000), p 153.

However, state on state conflict has become less frequent in comparison to mid to low intensity crises.¹⁴ Conflict over the last decade has in the main occurred in the middle ground of the spectrum of conflict, somewhere between high intensity warfighting and peace support operations. Sierra Leone, Haiti, East Timor, Somalia, Rwanda, Kosovo and Bosnia are examples. These conflicts have occurred within “failed” or “failing states” and similar threats are likely to continue when one considers that only seven countries in the world have had a democracy for over one hundred years.¹⁵ They will also become more frequent as government forces and ethnic causes within failing states strive to maximise their military leverage through “off the shelf” purchases of high technology weapon systems. Such weapon systems accompanied by asymmetric techniques¹⁶ significantly increase the lethality of rogue states and guerrilla forces, enhancing their overall threat to western forces. Urban operations will become more relevant to future conflicts as the asymmetric threat increases and due to human demographics. Urban warfare is the preferred environment for technologically inferior forces to engage a sophisticated force; “it is extremely difficult for modern forces to make best use of their technological advantages against a determined adversary in an urban environment.”¹⁷ Analysts predict that, 70 % of the world will live in urban

¹³ The RAND Corporation is a federally funded, non-profit institution that helps improve policy and decision making through research and analysis.

¹⁴ John Gordon IV and Peter A Wilson, *The Case for the Army XXI “Medium Weight” Aero-Motorised Divisions: A Pathway to the Army of 2020*, Report for the Army After Next Project, (US Army War College: 1998), p 2.

¹⁵ Douglas A Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport: PRAEGER, 1997), p 22.

¹⁶ An asymmetric attack is when the enemy seeks to circumvent our superiority by engaging us in alternative ways. It is becoming increasingly attractive to less capable states. For a further explanation see The Strategic Context Paper UK Ministry of Defence, D/PUS/11/3/1(930) dated 24 Jul 00 Para 100.

¹⁷ British Army Field Manual Volume 2, Operations in Specific Environments Part 5, *Urban Operations* (Army Code 71657 Nov 1999), p iii.

conurbations by the year 2020.¹⁸ Therefore, mid to low intensity, intra state conflict involving urban operations is not only increasing in frequency but is also the most likely form of conflict that the British Army together with its allies will have to resolve in the future.

It is no longer appropriate to view the spectrum of conflict in linear terms as future theatres are likely to involve warfighting and operations other than war scenarios of differing intensities at various stages of a crisis. Operations should be viewed holistically (see Annex B) in terms of, “Conflict Prevention”, “Warfighting” and “Post Conflict”, as it enables politicians and service chiefs to better focus their objectives, end states and force packages when deciding whether to intervene. Furthermore, instability does not stand still and the current situation in Kosovo provides a good example of the relevance of the holistic approach to the spectrum of conflict. The UK is employing heavy forces to conduct peace support and peace enforcement operations, as she has no alternative capability.

The existing Joint Rapid Reaction Force can provide an early initial presence, which may act as a deterrent. Nevertheless, it is inadequate for the new environment because it is relatively small, lightly armoured and potentially vulnerable if attacked before it can be reinforced by heavier forces which take much longer to deploy.¹⁹

It is not economical or logical to tie the decisive capability of heavy forces to the post conflict or conflict prevention sectors, when a more appropriate medium capability could conduct such operations. Due to the frequency of such missions, heavy forces struggle to

¹⁸ NATO Research and Technology Organisation Technical Report 8, *Land Operations in the Year 2020* (Research and Technology Organisation: Mar 1999), p 11.

achieve their warfighting training and readiness levels. A medium capability force in such theatres as Bosnia and Kosovo would reduce the number of heavy forces in theatre and it would be less constrained by the limited infrastructure. Therefore, the UK is not only reducing her ability to respond to high intensity warfighting, but also employing inappropriate forces in medium to low intensity operations. This is the dichotomy for UK defence planners, balancing the need to maintain a high intensity warfighting capability with that of developing a capability better suited to respond to the most likely form of conflict. Therefore, in order to respond quickly to likely future conflicts Rapid Effect must be understood and incorporated into a medium capability.

RAPID EFFECT

Though we have heard of excessive haste in war, we have not yet seen a clever operation that is prolonged.

Sun Tzu

The UK and her allies over the last decade have been successful in orchestrating the cessation of hostilities in areas such as Bosnia and Kosovo, yet they have been unable to prevent atrocities or the escalation of a crisis from occurring. The result has been a committal of force, in lengthy post hostility operations, to achieve political and economic end states. Conflict prevention has not been achieved due to the failure of economic, diplomatic and military measures. The military have lacked the strategic responsiveness to deploy a credible ground force into theatre, in time to deter an adversary, from achieving his operational or strategic goals. Heavy forces cannot deploy into theatre in time, and light forces lack the firepower and protection to be credible. The aim of Rapid

¹⁹ UK, Ministry of Defence. The Strategic Defence Review, (London: The Stationary Office, 1998), p 23.

Effect is to force an aggressor to seek early conflict resolution, as a result of deterrence and if necessary through pre-emption or dislocation, prior to him achieving strategic or operational objectives. The aggressor's successful outcome of these objectives would provide him with leverage in any subsequent peace agreements thereby, prolonging the post conflict operations. Essential to Rapid Effect is strategic responsiveness, implying high readiness and rapid strategic mobility. "Rapid response deters, reduces risk, constrains enemy options, expands the array of possible favourable outcomes, and facilitates rapid decision."²⁰

However, Rapid Effect is more than the deployment of a credible force; it involves judgement. Sun Tzu recognised the benefits of rapid response to seize an opportunity: "What is of the greatest importance in war is extraordinary speed; one cannot afford to neglect opportunity."²¹ Each crisis must be analysed correctly, so as to be able to judge the window of opportunity available, to determine whether the aggressors decision-making cycle can be influenced.²² This window of opportunity will vary from crisis to crisis, but without a force in place to take action, the opportunity cannot be exploited: "'boots on the ground' is the only visible tie that deters aggression."²³ The window of opportunity exists between the time that an aggressor poses a threat until he has achieved his operational / strategic goals. The following diagram illustrates Rapid Effect theory.

²⁰ IBCT O&O Concept v 4.0 18 April 2000 p 4.

²¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans by Samuel Griffin, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p 69-70

²² "Operation Allied Force and the Legal Basis for Humanitarian Interventions." *Parameters* (Spring 2000), p 40.

²³ Douglas A Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport: PRAEGER, 1997), p 23.

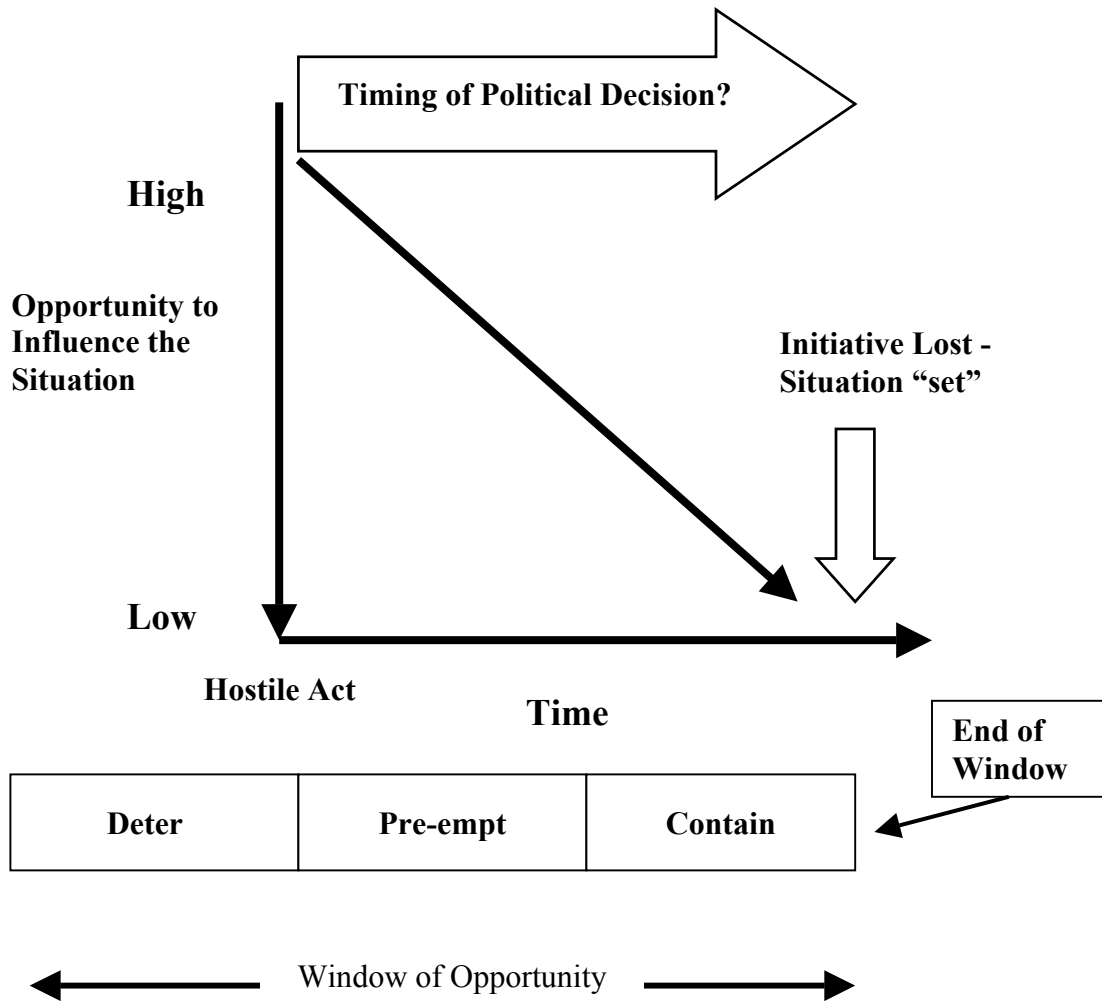


Figure 3. Rapid Effect Theory²⁴

However, it should be emphasised that strategic responsiveness is in relation to the enemy tempo and therefore, strategic responsiveness will not always have to adhere to stringent timelines. The art of the possible is likely to override any firm timeline. This paper recommends that the lead battle group of a UK medium brigade should be at forty-eight hours notice to move and be in theatre ready to conduct operations within five

²⁴ UK, Ministry of Defence. D/DGD&D/FD/08 *A Rapid Effect Capability for the Future Army – 2nd Circulation* (Upavon: MOD UK, 2000), p A A-1

days²⁵ of the political will to deploy. Five days is likely in most cases, to be inside an adversary's ability to reach his military end state. It should also be noted from the graph that the ability to influence the aggressor either through deterrence, pre-emption or dislocation decreases as he comes nearer to achieving his goals. The Army must become proactive coming into play before peace is lost.²⁶ Rapid Effect relies on the force being credible²⁷ and as the force may have to defend itself, it must be capable of limited warfighting, to at least be able to extract itself. The risks are high but the gains are higher. Ideally deterrence will work, but only if the force is combat power credible with the necessary military and political intent.

Extensive analysis conducted by the RAND Corporation shows that by the rapid deployment of a force into theatre, specifically designed to halt an enemy advance, it can significantly increase the chances of success. This is illustrated at Annex C. Hence, the main advantage of Rapid Effect is early conflict termination, which will inevitably result in fewer casualties and reduced cost; "The early deployment of a high performance combat force will have a profound impact on the probability, duration and overall cost, of a major campaign."²⁸ These opportunity costs must be emphasised in order to offset the costs involved in creating a medium capability.

²⁵ Five days is a benchmark time line for developing the medium force; it is not set in stone. Once the concept is trialled the force may be deployable in less than five days. Alternatively, the force may not be fully deployable for six days due to the magnitude of the task. However, it is important that any increase in five days to deploy the force will reduce the window of opportunity available.

²⁶ Douglas A Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport: PRAEGER, 1997), p 143.

²⁷ "A force must be capable of conveying enough physical fighting power to offer a threat that is, or at least is seen by the opposition to be, commensurate with the aim." Race to the Swift p 134.

²⁸ John Gordon IV and Peter A Wilson, *The Case for the Army XXI "Medium Weight" Aero-Motorised Divisions: A Pathway to the Army of 2020*, Report for the Army After Next Project, (US Army War College: 1998), p 2.

SUMMARY

The British Army is not well structured to meet the most likely conflict and it is forced to respond with heavy forces that take months to arrive in theatre. A medium force is required to enable the British Government to respond to future threats with a full, capability based army that covers the spectrum of conflict. Mid to low intensity, small to medium scale, threats are the most likely and military planners are currently only able to respond with heavy or light forces. Neither of these forces are optimised for such a threat and the medium force is required to fill this important capability gap. It will allow heavy forces and light forces to concentrate on their own specialities. Furthermore, medium forces are required to provide the army with the ability to achieve Rapid Effect. Rapid Effect seeks to achieve early conflict resolution by deterring, pre-empting or dislocating the enemy prior to his achievement of strategic / operational goals. It is reliant on a rapidly deployable, credible force, capable of limited warfighting tasks and supported with the political intent to deter, pre-empt or dislocate an adversary. Medium forces, if successful, will also reduce costs in human and monetary terms.

THE MEDIUM FORCE

The two primary reasons for creating a medium capability have been described, yet they are not inextricably linked. A medium force designed to operate solely in the Post Conflict segment, in response to a crises that has already terminated, would not require the strategic responsiveness of a force designed to deter an adversary. However, a crisis that has terminated is still extremely volatile and is able to escalate to higher intensities with little warning. Therefore, it is important that a medium capability force has the

firepower, protection and mobility to not only deter escalation, but is also capable of responding to it. Thus, strategic responsiveness is the only criteria that, differentiates a force designed for post conflict operations or Rapid Effect. Designing a medium force, without the capability of achieving Rapid Effect, undermines the true worth of a medium force and denies the government options. Rapid Effect is also concomitant with current government policy to deter a crisis rather than suppress threats.²⁹ Therefore, in order that the UK gains maximum benefit from a medium capability in terms of; versatility, value for money, increased options and a greater contribution to its defence projection it must be capable of achieving Rapid Effect in response to a mid to low intensity crisis.

The medium force must be strategically responsive and therefore, the underlying criterion that cannot be compromised, is the force's ability to be in theatre and ready to conduct operations within five days. Hence, the force must be deployable by C-130 and fast sealift. This creates significant limitations on vehicle platforms and their weapon systems, as in order to be C-130 deployable, a vehicle is restricted to between twenty and twenty-five tons³⁰ fully laden. The force must also possess the combat power to be a credible deterrent, capable of limited warfighting if the situation escalates. Due to the weight restrictions that determine the shape of this medium capability the main battle tank, although highly desirable, must be ruled out of the force package. Until a tank with rapid strategic mobility exists or strategic lift capability is enhanced, the medium force will have to overcome the competing objectives of being both strategically responsive

²⁹ UK, Ministry of Defence. The Strategic Defence Review, (London: The Stationary Office, 1998), p 5.

³⁰ Interview with, Major General J Dubik US Army, "IBCT at Fort Lewis"
(<http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?TS=>} Sep/Oct 2000.

and credible. SDR recognised this and directed that: “both firepower and protection must be more deployable and more mobile on the battlefield.”³¹

The imbalance created by these conflicting requirements can be reduced through; the appropriate selection of vehicle platforms, connectivity to a follow on force, an understanding how it will fight, maximising its situational awareness and ensuring it can utilise and synchronise joint precision and indirect fires. These elements require further explanation. The UK lacks an armoured personnel carrier (APC) with a twenty-five to thirty millimetre cannon³² that, is C-130 deployable. Therefore, an off the shelf purchase of an existing APC, such as the Canadian LAV III, will be necessary to ensure that the medium capability meets the weight restrictions and maximises its firepower. It is also important that where possible, vehicle platforms are kept to a single type with variants to reduce the logistic footprint through the commonality of spares. It cannot be denied that, despite maximising the firepower of APCs the warfighting capability of the medium force is lacking without a main battle tank.

Therefore, the medium force must be capable of seamless connectivity with a follow on heavy force to assist its deterrent posture by enhancing its credibility. When the heavy force enters theatre the medium force is not redundant and can be used “to contribute to warfighting operations by conducting rear operations, defensive operations, screening,

³¹ UK, Ministry of Defence. The Strategic Defence Review, (London: The Stationary Office, 1998), p 22.

³² A 25-30 mm cannon is currently the highest calibre main armament of APCs across the world. The American Army is currently experimenting with a 105 gun on a LAV III platform and if it is successful it will greatly enhance both the firepower and protection of the LAV III.

recce and operations in complex terrain.”³³ It will also provide essential information and intelligence for the follow on force on its arrival thereby, enabling the heavy force immediate situational awareness. Connectivity is therefore key to enhancing its combat power, strengthening its deterrent posture to assist in achieving Rapid Effect.

The medium force will be optimised to deter an aggressor and only conduct offensive, defensive or delaying operations when deterrence has failed. It is unlikely to be a decisive force except in low intensity small scale operations. However, it will be capable of deterring, pre-empting or dislocating elements of a superior sized force to achieve Rapid Effect. In such circumstances it will aim to halt an enemy, to encourage further diplomatic measures. If deterrence fails it will be capable of severing lines of communication, holding strategic objectives or conducting delaying operations to buy time. Primarily, it will be structured for low to medium scale, low to mid intensity operations such as Sierra Leone and Bosnia. It should not be postured against an overmatching adversary even to achieve Rapid Effect, as it will not be credible. Due to the escalatory nature of intra state conflict it may find itself under attack from a superior sized force, in such circumstances it will have to conduct delaying operations to extract itself out of contact to favourable ground and greater protection. It will fight dismounted with its APCs in fire support. Thus enhancing APC protection through an increased stand off distance. Anti armour assets will be organic down to platoon level and both man portable and vehicle mounted. Vehicle mounted mortars integral to the company groups will be necessary to provide guaranteed indirect fire at company level. This is a

³³ UK, Ministry of Defence. D/DGD&D/FD/08 *A Rapid Effect Capability for the Future Army – 2nd Circulation* (Upavon: MOD UK, 2000), p 12.

vastly superior capability than that, found in current light role battalions, but these capabilities will require extensive wargaming to determine the necessary quantities. The force will have to rely on theatre assets for its air defence, other than man portable weapon systems. The medium force must also be capable of high levels of interoperability with attack helicopters³⁴ to enhance its anti armour capability. Added to this capability will be the requirement to use ground in its favour that is not suited to the enemy's capability. This will mean forcing armoured adversaries into urban areas or difficult terrain, and asymmetric threats into open ground. Thus, the medium forces superior tactical mobility will enable it to manoeuvre to a position of advantage to engage the enemy and then situation dependent, withdraw. In effect applying asymmetric techniques on the enemy.

The medium force must be a high priority for digitisation and it will require superior Information Surveillance Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) capabilities than currently found in either heavy or light battlegroups. The ISTAR group should include; enlarged reconnaissance platoons equipped with ground radar and a real time imagery link back to the command headquarters, UAV assets and the ability to link into theatre ISTAR assets, especially satellite imagery. These assets are necessary to ensure overmatching situational awareness³⁵ to enable the medium force to capitalise on enemy weaknesses and deter, pre-empt or dislocate the enemy from positions of advantage.

³⁴ Attack helicopters will not be organic to the medium force but due to their strategic mobility attack helicopters are likely to arrive in theatre early and available to support the medium force. Attack helicopters will be particularly important to the medium force in the early stages of deploying, whilst air assets are achieving air superiority and fighting the deep battle.

³⁵ Overmatching situational awareness is the result of information dominance. It enables commanders to not only understand their own battlespace but also that of their enemy. Overmatching situational awareness

Overmatching situational awareness, resulting in superior operational tempo will improve the force's protection, by enabling the force to avoid enemy strengths and influence the enemy where he is weak. This concept was recognised by Sun Tzu: "Speed is the essence of war. Take advantage of the enemies unpreparedness; travel by unexpected routes and strike him where he has taken no precautions."³⁶ Through digitisation and the organic ISTAR assets the force will be able to call on joint assets to deliver precision fires greatly improving the lethality and credibility of the force. It is important that this joint capability is understood and emphasised to avoid any misconception that, the medium force might operate without joint assets when trying to deter an aggressor. In effect, information dominance will act as a combat multiplier enhancing the credibility lethality and protection of the force, through its own manoeuvre and ability to synchronise joint fires.

MEDIUM FORCE CONCERNS

Concerns over the development of a medium capability are focused on its lack of firepower and protection, its ability to sustain itself and the unlikelihood of receiving strong political will, accompanied by a timely decision to enable the force to exploit windows of opportunity. Measures to improve the force's firepower and protection through information dominance, overmatching situational awareness, interoperability with aviation, joint assets and enhanced organic anti tank and mortar capabilities have been addressed. A comparison of the firepower, protection and mobility relationship between heavy, medium and light forces is tabulated at Annex D. Although this analysis

occurs when a forces awareness is so superior to that of an enemy that his operational tempo is enables him to be inside the enemies decision cycle.

is subjective, the medium force is only narrowly, outscored by the heavy force. The force will be at its most vulnerable when postured to achieve Rapid Effect against a larger force prior to the arrival of a follow on force. In such circumstances, conflict prevention through deterrence will be its objective, which is possible with its ability to call on joint fires and by ensuring that the enemy are aware that a heavy follow on force is on route. Thus, although its firepower and protection is lower than, that of a heavy force, it is a significantly more lethal and sustainable force than a light force. In particular, the medium force provides options that are not currently available.³⁷ Any weakness in firepower or protection of the force should be viewed against the fact that the medium force provides an added capability for early deployment, that is better protected and more lethal than the only current option of deploying a light force. “All military operations involve risk and force protection is never absolute.”³⁸ Many force protection measures actually reduce the combat effectiveness of units in performing their primary mission. Protection measures must be balanced with the maintenance of operational tempo. The superior operational tempo of the medium force will actually add to its protection.

In order that, the force can deploy and immediately conduct operations it must be able to sustain itself for at least three days³⁹ prior to either air re-supply or the arrival of ground logistic assets in theatre. The 1982 Falklands Campaign provides a good example of the importance of logistics to expeditionary operations and the words of Brigadier

³⁶ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans by Sammuell Griffin, (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p 134.

³⁷ “Mission Needs Statement For Rapidly Deployable Armoured Forces.” (www.tradoc.army.mil/transformation). Feb 2000.

³⁸ Protect the Force, “How to Fight Force XXI” Concept Development Programme, (www.-cgsc.army.mil/CDD/papers/protect.htm), Jul 1996.

³⁹ Three days is a planning guide and will in reality be driven by the art of the possible. However it is vital that the force is able to deploy and immediately commence operations.

Thompson, Commander 3 Commando Brigade are apt: “the logistic plan drives the tactical plan.”⁴⁰ The medium force creates sustainment challenges and concerns over its logistic capability, which are pertinent. However, improvements in “firepower, precision strike, and mobility will count for little if tactical logistics is allowed to obstruct organisational change or to constrain the operational reach of Army Ground Forces in the future.”⁴¹ Therefore, key to overcoming logistical constraints will be innovation and creativity, to implement technological advances and management best practices. Thereby, reducing the logistical footprint and enabling a more flexible, robust and responsive sustainment system. The footprint will be reduced with vehicle platform commonality, increased force self-sufficiency and through pre-positioning of vital supplies. Pre-positioning requires intelligent anticipation from the staff headquarters to act early with the right balance of Combat Service Support (CSS) supplies that the force will need to re-supply itself. The force is most vulnerable on immediately entering theatre and through increased self sufficiency it is feasible for it to sustain itself for up to three days whilst conducting operations. During this vulnerable period the force could be re-supplied by air using “configured loads,”⁴² until an alternate line of communication is established. The force, through its information assets, will be capable of benefiting from logistic efficiencies created by the timely and accurate reporting of its sustainment levels to its superior headquarters. This will allow logisticians to maximise re-supply practices

⁴⁰ UK, Army Doctrine Publication, Volume 3, AC No 71566, “Logistics” (MAS/ADM, Upavon, Jun 1996), p 3-A-4.

⁴¹ Douglas A Macgregor, *Breaking the Phalanx: A New Design for Landpower in the 21st Century* (Westport: PRAEGER, 1997), p 172.

⁴² A configured load is a US Army term, for pre packed essential combat supplies configured for a specific unit’s mission.

using “reach-back”⁴³ linkages to higher formations and assets in the UK. Reach-back relies on a well-trained staff that understands the capabilities available and how to employ them for mission specific requirements.⁴⁴ It is therefore, more likely that solutions to reducing the logistic footprint lie in novel logistic practices enhanced through technological creativity and innovation.

In order to achieve Rapid Effect and exploit windows of opportunity strong and timely political will is required. This will be easier to achieve if the UK is conducting operations on its own such as in Sierra Leone. When operating as part of NATO or a coalition, political decisions and mutual intent are inherently harder to achieve. There is little point in developing a capability, if it will not be used due to a lack of political intent. There is therefore, a requirement for the military to educate political leaders on the benefits of deploying an early medium force. It is likely that politicians will gain in confidence in the use of such a force once it has proven its worth. Thus, the force must only be deployed on missions within its capability and politicians must be fully aware of the risks involved. Politicians will be attracted to its benefits of early conflict resolution that result in overall savings in costs and casualties. Once understood, timely political decisions are likely to be forthcoming to maximise windows of opportunity and achieve Rapid Effect. It should also be noted that, the force might strengthen the government’s influence within coalitions, by bringing a valuable capability to the coalition which will assist in obtaining collective political will amongst its members.

⁴³ Reach-back is the term given to a force’s ability to rely on supporting formations in and out of theatre for resources.

HISTORICAL VIGNETTE

It appears that we are still not learning from our historical successes, as many of the recommendations made in this paper were concluded after the re-conquest of Sudan in 1898. The Battle of Omdurman was the decisive battle of the campaign, where a technologically superior but vastly outnumbered British force defeated 50,000 Mahdists, followers of the Khalifa. Winston Churchill claimed that “Never has so large a country been conquered and so powerful an enemy destroyed by civilised troops at such a small cost in money.”⁴⁵ Professor Spiers⁴⁶ concludes his analysis of the campaign with the following extract:

It was a striking success not only in military but also in political and financial terms and the foundations for success were laid by the superb intelligence operation, the meticulous attention to logistical arrangements, the exploitation of the enemy’s political, strategic and tactical errors, and the use of disciplined and mobile firepower to secure and consolidate victory. The inter-relationship between these factors and not any one factor alone, coupled with strong political support in Cairo and London, produced this remarkably successful war of intervention.⁴⁷

CONCLUSION

The change in the strategic environment increases the possibility of conflict at the mid to low intensity level. State on state conflict still poses a major threat to the UK, yet the British Army is less likely to see conflict on this scale in the short to medium term. The

⁴⁴ IBCO O&O Concept v 4 p18.

⁴⁵ Strategic and Combat Studies Institute The Occasional Number 32 Wars of Intervention: A Case Study – The Reconquest of the Sudan 1896 –99 by Edward M Spiers Feb 1998 p 7.

⁴⁶ Professor Spiers is the Professor of Strategic Studies at Leeds University and since 1992 has been the British Army’s Chief Examiner with responsibility for the Defence Studies examination.

⁴⁷ Edward M Spiers, “Wars of Intervention: A Case Study – The Reconquest of the Sudan 1896–99,” *The Occasional*, Number 32, (Feb 1998), p 7.

British Army is well structured for high intensity conflict with its heavy and light force organisation and this capability must be retained to meet any serious state on state conflict. The British Army is unlikely to fight a war on its doorstep and will therefore, have to deploy into a foreign theatre in order to protect the UK's interests as either a coalition or on its own. Therefore, the Army must develop a truly expeditionary force capable of interoperability with air and naval assets and with coalition partners. Heavy forces and light forces are not well suited to mid to low intensity conflicts, such as Bosnia and Kosovo due to their relationship with firepower, mobility and protection. It is not economical, nor practical to tie heavy forces into medium scale operational deployments that become detrimental to their warfighting capability. It is therefore, necessary to fill the increasingly relevant capability gap, between light and heavy forces to ensure that, the UK is able to respond appropriately and rapidly, to threats across the spectrum of conflict. The British Army could develop a medium division of three brigades without reducing its heavy force combat power by rerolling and better use of the non FRC light rolled battalions. A medium force allows the British government more flexibility in assigning the appropriate force to best meet the crisis.

Furthermore, in line with government objectives blanketed by the Strategic Defence Review, there is increasing pressure for coalitions and single nations to seek early conflict resolution. When diplomatic and economic measures have failed or in support of soft power the rapid deployment of a force into theatre can greatly improve the chances of early conflict resolution. The UK lacks the capability to achieve Rapid Effect and fully exploit windows of opportunity. Therefore, through the development of a

medium capability that is specifically designed to achieve Rapid Effect and operate at the mid to low intensity levels the British Army could develop a capability to not only better suit the changed environment but play a major role in early conflict resolution.

The force must be capable of a high level of connectivity with a second echelon follow on force but primarily, it must be deployable anywhere in the world and able to conduct operations within five days of the authority to deploy. The force will need to be digitised, and supported with an enhanced organic ISTAR capability to achieve overmatching situational awareness. Through, this capability, its tactical mobility and the synchronisation of joint fires it will be able to counter its weaknesses in firepower and protection, to be a credible force, capable of deterring likely adversaries. It will fight dismounted, to sever lines of communication, seize vital or strategic objectives, or hold key sites to halt an adversary prior to the achievement of his strategic or operational goals.

The medium force will require strong political will to ensure that it is able to maximise windows of opportunity and this will require military leaders to educate politicians on the risks and benefits involved. Sustainment of the force will be critical to its success and calls for innovation and creativity to ensure that it can be logistically supported. In short the medium force with its wardrobe of advantages is a must for British Defence rather than a requirement.

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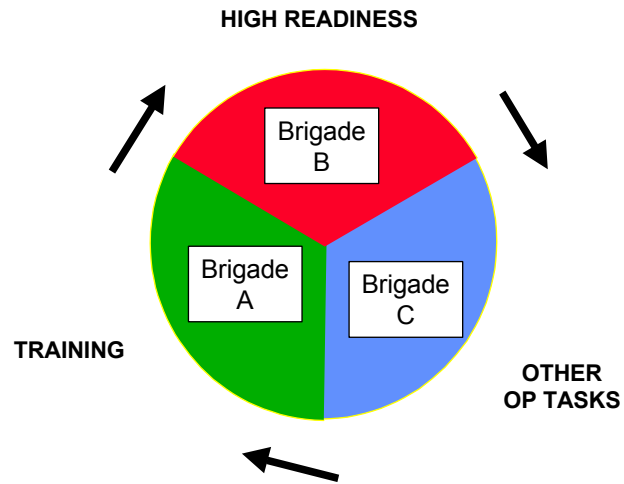
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THE FORMATION READINESS CYCLE



A brigade spends one year in each sector.

THE SPECTRUM OF CONFLICT – HOLISTIC MODEL

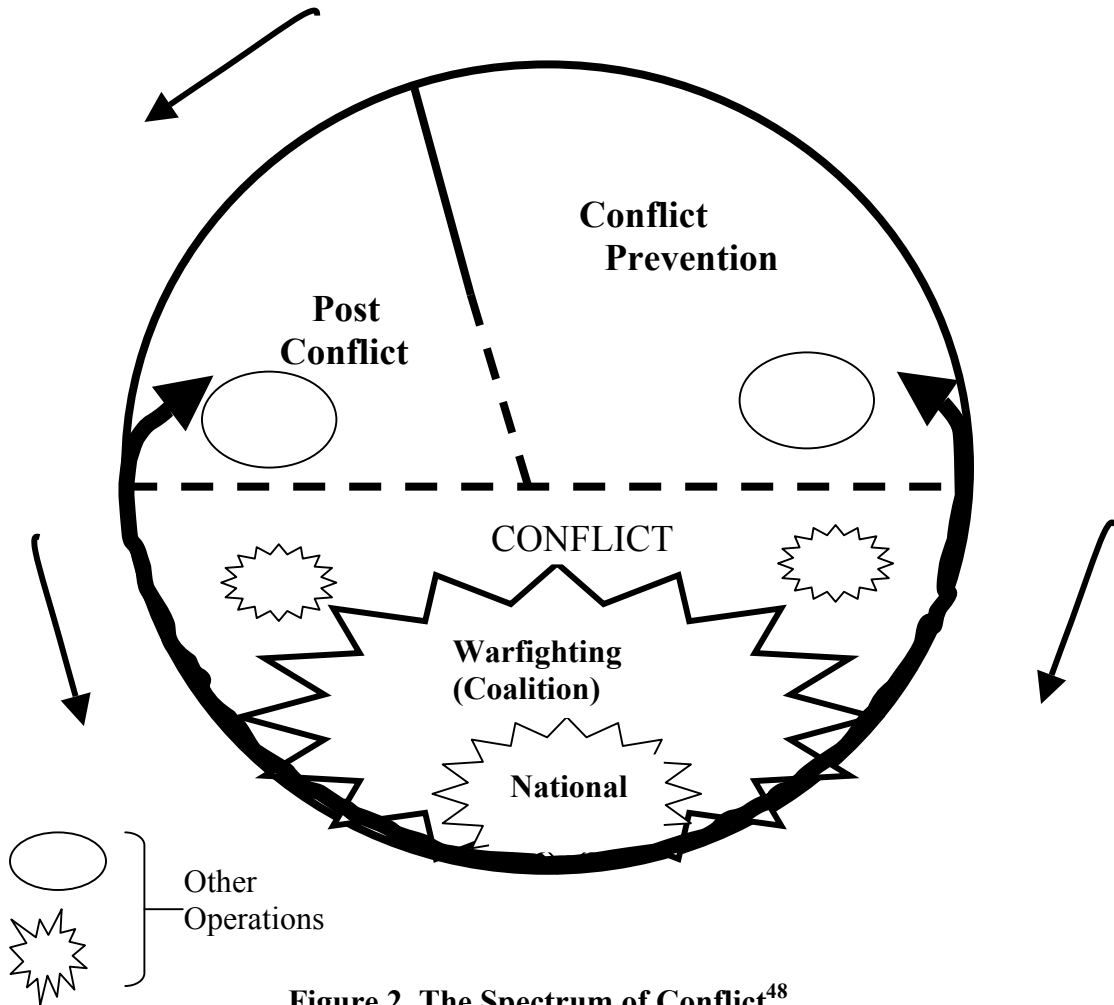


Figure 2. The Spectrum of Conflict⁴⁸

⁴⁸ UK, Headquarters Infantry, D Inf 118/00/00, *Future Infantry: The Route to 2020*, (Warminster: Headquarters Infantry, 31 Jan 2000), p B-2.

ANNEX C TO
EX NEW HORIZONS
DATED 15 APR 01

DEPLOYMENT OF A MEDIUM FORCE INCREASES PROBABILITY OF SUCCESS

The top graph represents the outcome with current rapid reaction forces and the effect of a desired medium weight capability is represented in the second graph. The desired medium force stretches the potential for success.

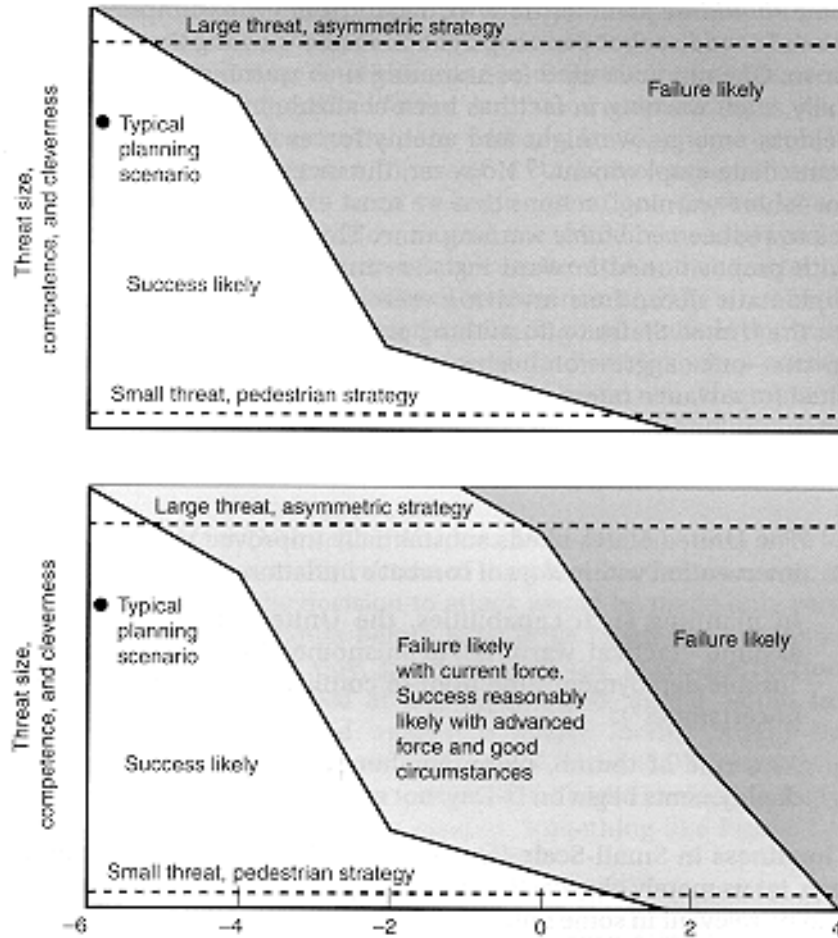


Figure 1 – Desired Medium Capability⁴⁹

⁴⁹ Gritton, Davis, Steeb and Matsumura, *Ground Forces for a Rapidly Employable Joint Task Force*, Report for the National Defense Research Institute, (Santa Monica, RAND,2000), p 7.

ANNEX D TO
EX NEW HORIZONS
DATED 15 APR 01

FIREPOWER PROTECTION AND MOBILITY COMPARISON

The table below compares firepower, protection and mobility with light, medium and heavy forces. The analysis has been conducted by the author and is therefore subjective. However, it assists in emphasising the current capability gap and the need for a medium force to maximise its firepower and protection within its required mobility criteria.

Force Type	Firepower	Strategic Mobility*	Tactical Mobility*	Protection	Total
Light	1	1.5	1	1	4.5
Medium	2	1.5	1.5	2	7
Heavy	3	0.5	1	3	7.5

Ratings:
3 = High
2 = Medium
1 = Low

*Strategic and tactical mobility scores have been divided by 2 to ensure mobility has equal weighting with firepower and protection.