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Reserves - Civil and Military - In support
of the Comprehensive Approach

By Robyn Lloyd Hughes



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**THE DEFENCE ACADEMY
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**RESERVES – CIVIL AND
MILITARY – IN SUPPORT OF
THE COMPREHENSIVE
APPROACH**

BY

ROBYN LLOYD HUGHES

THE SHRIVENHAM PAPERS

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Reserves – Civil and Military – in Support of the Comprehensive Approach

by

Robyn Lloyd Hughes

The UK's Reserves – A National Crisis

It is now common currency that the UK's armed forces are perpetually over-stretched and under-resourced. Nevertheless it is clear that challenging demands will continue to be placed on them, at the same time as their numbers continue to shrink. In a microcosm of the state of the nation as a whole we are increasingly facing the need to dip into our reserves to keep going, only to find that those reserves are also scarce and getting ever scarcer.

To add further complication, the role of the armed forces has changed and continues to change. The focus now is on projecting British influence as a 'force for good in the world'. Our presence around the world is not simply as a fighting or occupying force – increasingly we are part of a multi-agency coalition, with civilian elements playing as important a role as the military contribution. The need to bring all the components together – civilian and military, regular and reserve – has led to the adoption of a doctrine known as the Comprehensive Approach.

The UK Ministry of Defence's recently published Strategic Review of Reserves¹ addressed in detail the role and utility of the reserves we have now and rightly focused on their capability to support current operations. One of the Review's main conclusions, expressed as a strategic recommendation, was that: 'In future the Reserve is likely to be needed for augmentation as much as for maximum effort, and be used more effectively to connect with the nation'. Another was that reservists' civilian skills should be recorded and used more on operations.

The impact of this – entirely logical – development is that our regular forces will continue to require topping up by an inflow of augmentees, either individuals or small groups. These will have gone through essentially the same training as regulars, but part-time over two or three years instead of full-time over a few months. The reality is that military commitments will revolve around six-month operational deployments in theatre separated by ever shorter gaps.

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The likelihood (and the expectation) is that most will serve one tour and then decide to move on, while only a small cadre will choose to make a career of it. The challenge for the Ministry of Defence will be maintaining a strong enough flow of volunteers coming into the system to keep numbers and standards at the right level – without resorting to conscription. This applies to both regular and reserve elements.

Three clear imperatives arise from the above:

- The Ministry of Defence must engage with other government departments, and with a range of other civilian agencies, to ensure the success of the Comprehensive Approach.
- It is absolutely essential that the Armed Forces – regular and reserve – engage with the community, and are seen as an integral part of the fabric of daily life.
- We need to nurture the idea of a true Reserve – a body held in readiness *within* the community and with a long term standing commitment to serve the nation. This should include a strong civilian element.

The ‘New Security Environment’

Since the turn of the twenty-first century much has been made of the so-called ‘New Security Environment’. (Presumably at some point in the near future it will no longer be considered new, but for now it has become an accepted term.)

The main characteristics of the New Security Environment have become clear:

- It is about ‘asymmetrics’ – in other words the main threat is from terrorists and insurgents rather than organised military forces;
- It is not primarily about ‘Defence of the Realm’;
- It has global reach – the focus is on fragile or failing states, of which there are around fifty in the world;

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- It is not simply about military intervention – war fighting still plays a part, but is more likely to be one short phase in a much wider involvement.

The 'new' skills required include:

- Peacekeeping, including in many cases peacemaking;
- Stabilisation Operations;
- Internal security;
- Constitutional development;
- Statecraft and governance;
- National reconstruction;
- Counterinsurgency

The Comprehensive Approach

'What NATO is needed and suited for is what the Alliance has been doing ever since it deployed in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995, namely generating forces to help stabilise fragile parts of the world. This began in the Balkans, is expanding today in Afghanistan, and every look into the future suggests that there will be a growing need for such work. Every reading of recent NATO communiqués confirms that this is now NATO's day-to-day job.'

Christoph Bartram²

The need for Stabilisation and Development Operations in post-conflict situations, or in fragile or failing states, is not in itself a new idea, but it has come strongly into focus in recent years. A strong military role is essential in such operations, but the tasks involved are frequently much more than purely military. It follows that they need not be limited to post-conflict situations, but may include support to fragile, failing or failed states at all stages of their progress to stability. This leads to the need for a range of civilian skills, not all of which can be provided from within the ranks of the Military, and many of which demand input from public and private sector organisations, including government

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departments, NGOs, aid and development agencies, charities, humanitarian and religious organisations. The central debate has been about how to enable all those diverse agencies to work together, and it has led to the adoption of the Comprehensive Approach.

There appears to be no universally accepted definition of what is meant by the Comprehensive Approach, but most start from the necessity of having some sort of military presence to create and maintain a secure space, so that other agencies can work within it to rebuild and develop.

The US Stability Operations Manual³ defines the Comprehensive Approach as follows:

‘An approach that integrates the cooperative efforts of the departments and agencies of the United States Government, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, multinational partners, and private sector entities to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal.’

However, this gives no indication of the nature of the shared goal, and no context for the operations involved. It is also set very widely, includes multinational partners, and indeed could encompass almost any partner organisation. It is only bounded by the fact that it appears in the context of the Stability Operations Manual.

For the purposes of this paper the following is suggested as a good working definition in the UK context:

‘The Comprehensive Approach is a conscious cross-agency effort to generate sustained state rebuilding through the protection and projection of all appropriate national instruments and expertise.’

Julian Lindley-French⁴

The House of Commons Defence Committee (HCDC) in March 2009 launched a new inquiry into the effectiveness of the Comprehensive Approach, and noted that:

‘There is significant overlap of work by the Department for International Development (DfID), the Foreign and

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Commonwealth Office (FCO) and the Ministry of Defence making co-ordination and a joint approach essential.’⁵

In the UK those three government departments are the essential components of the Comprehensive Approach, and its success depends on their joint effectiveness.

The use of the word ‘national’ in the definition above, and the HCDC’s demand for the key individual government departments to work more closely together underline the importance of implementing an internal government approach properly before attempting an international, institutional or coalition based one. This is sometimes referred to as a Whole of Government Approach.

The US Stability Operations Manual defines the Whole of Government Approach as follows:

‘An approach that integrates the collaborative efforts of the departments and agencies of the United States Government to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal.’⁶

It may be argued that the above definition is an altogether not very helpful statement of the obvious. However, it is important to note that a Whole of Government approach is vital to achieving the balance of resources, capabilities, and activities needed to secure and reinforce progress made by any one of the instruments of national power, while enabling success among the others.

It is useful to remember that a Whole of Government Approach is also valuable at home. There is always an internal threat from terrorism and insurgency, as well as from the effects of both natural and man-made disasters, and a co-ordinated response, including both military and civilian components, is demanded by the people and the press. This lesson was underlined by the USA’s experience of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

The HCDC in a 2008 report addressed the need to go beyond a single nation approach, and stressed the importance of carrying forward the Comprehensive Approach when working in the NATO context:

‘We believe that NATO needs to revise its Strategic Concept as a matter of the highest priority. The new Concept should define,

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far more clearly, the role, purpose and relevance of the Alliance in the context of today's security challenges. The new Strategic Concept should also reflect the fact that, in terms of its operations, NATO is about more than the projection of military force alone; it is about implementing the Comprehensive Approach, and providing the stability in post-conflict situations to allow reconstruction and development to take place.⁷

NATO's own pronouncements suggest that it is more comfortable with its independent, military-first outlook, although it does not rule out working with other more civilian based organisations if they are prepared to work in a co-ordinated way. The 2006 NATO Handbook states:

'At the institutional level, international organisations including the United Nations, the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe are recognising the need to meet threats such as terrorism square on, with all the resources available, and to co-ordinate this effort rather than to rely on the resources of any single organisation.'⁸

More recently, however, Jaap de Hoop Scheffer, the Secretary General of NATO, has been encouraging a greater commitment to the idea and in a Washington Post article in January 2009 expressed the view that 'NATO needs to have (*sic*) stronger support to the Comprehensive Approach'.⁹

Military Assistance to Stabilisation and Development (MASD)

The review of Defence Planning Assumptions, announced in the House of Commons by the Secretary of State for Defence on 11 February 2009¹⁰ made some significant changes to the Ministry of Defence's list of Military Tasks. 'Military Assistance to Stabilisation and Development' was added as a new Military Task (MT4.5); and 'Defence Diplomacy' was replaced by two new tasks. The first of these is 'Security Co-operation: Support to Current and Future Contingent Operations' (MT3.3), which reflects the requirement to maintain international support for operations, ranging from basing to contributions. The second, 'Security Co-operation: Strengthen

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International Peace and Stability and Support Wider British Interests' (MT3.4), covers the promotion of UK interests, including conflict prevention, counter proliferation and support to other government departments.

The US Stability Operations Manual defines Stability Operations as follows:

'Stability operations encompass various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or re-establish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief.'¹¹

In 2005, the UK Government established a body, initially known as the Post Conflict Reconstruction Unit, but renamed in 2007 the Stabilisation Unit. This is jointly 'owned' by the Cabinet Office and the three most closely involved departments, the Department for International Development, the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence. The Stabilisation Unit defines its scope as follows:

'Stabilisation is support to places emerging from violent conflict in:

- Preventing or reducing violence;
- Protecting people and key institutions;
- Promoting political processes which lead to greater stability;
- Preparing for longer term non-violent politics and development.

'Stabilisation usually requires external, joint military and civilian support, a focus on the legitimacy and capability of the state, and tangible benefits to the population to underpin confidence in the state and the political process.'¹²

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It is important to note that this definition does not simply address military situations, or even those where the main effort is still clearly a military one. This raises an issue about whether there are situations where civilian led Stabilisation Operations may be required, and it has been argued that some of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams' work in parts of Iraq has fallen into this category.

US Defense Secretary Bob Gates said in a recent speech:

'The Department of Defense has taken on many burdens that might have been assumed by civilian agencies in the past... now there is a need for a dramatic increase in spending on the civilian instruments of national security – diplomacy, strategic communication, foreign assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction and development... having robust civilian capabilities available could make it less likely that military force will have to be used in the first place, as local problems might be dealt with before they become crises.'¹³

Defence spending as a proportion of GDP is falling in the UK and among our main European partners. In the present economic situation we are not likely to see this situation improve in the near future. However International Development is one of very few areas in which the British government has expressed an intention to increase spending. In that context, it must be stressed that Stabilisation and Development Operations are largely civilian tasks (with military assistance under MASD). It is therefore realistic to try to ensure that future operations are funded and supported by the military only as far as necessary, and that the International Development budget bears its full share of the cost.

Management of a Joint Civil-Military Strategy

'For Stabilisation Operations, the starting point for planning should be an over-arching cross-agency strategy to ensure a common understanding, agree a common goal, manage the inter-dependencies between subsidiary objectives, determine a critical path and allocate responsibility for delivery. Such a strategy has to be developed with the involvement of all key implementers to ensure their ownership. This strategy should then form the basis for the more detailed military and civilian plans that operationalise it. Civilian agencies need to be

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consulted from the outset in the development of the military plan and vice versa.’

*Richard Teuten*¹⁴

It is clear that Stabilisation Operations require joint military and civilian support, and may address situations which go well beyond conventional military intervention or post-conflict support. NATO prepares and trains for its military operations using its Defence Planning Process (DPP). It is increasingly becoming clear that an equivalent process may be needed to mobilise civilian resources, whatever their origin, for Stabilisation Operations. If so, it must start, like the Comprehensive Approach, at national level, and in the UK’s case a good foundation has already been laid, including the publication by the Stabilisation Unit of two ‘Stabilisation Guides’, available on the Unit’s website.¹⁵

Nevertheless, a number of questions still need to be answered, such as:

- How do we know what civilian resources will be needed/involved?
- How do we exercise political and military control over such diverse resources?
- How do we try to control ‘freelance’ activity, which may include private ‘military’ support to deployed civilians?

Mission requirements for the military and civilian roles in Stabilisation Operations under the Comprehensive Approach might look something like the following:

The military element should:

- Provide and maintain a continuing secure environment;
- Protect victims and neutralise perpetrators of violence;
- Provide direct physical protection to deployed civilians;
- Provide logistic support to deployed civilians;

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- Provide the impetus for and lead integrated military/civil planning;
- Rebuild, train and support host nation armed forces;
- Conduct humanitarian operations in so-called 'non-permissive' environments (i.e. places where it is not considered safe for civilians);
- Conduct infrastructure/reconstruction operations in non-permissive environments

The civilian element, in permissive environments, either with or without direct military support and protection, should work to rebuild and sustain:

- Systems and mechanisms for law enforcement and justice;
- Representative governance;
- Diplomatic, Customs and Immigration services;
- Education, at all levels;
- Health systems and services;
- Economic policy, banking and financial regulation systems;
- Public utilities and transport systems;
- Commercial activity

An important part of the remit of the UK Stabilisation Unit is to identify and hold in reserve a pool of civilians capable of being deployed into operational theatres. They are currently 'recruiting' Deployable Civilian Experts, and have created a number of framework agreements with leading consultancy firms with the aim of connecting to people with the right knowledge and expertise who are prepared to be called out on short term (less than one year) contracts. This is an important first step, so long as it is borne in mind that simply compiling a database with details of volunteers' skills is not sufficient. A workable and realistic plan for their timely and effective deployment is also essential.

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The political and ideological impetus for an intervention or operation based on a Comprehensive Approach has an important bearing on the notion of who should be 'in control' – whether 'we' (whether that means the UN, NATO, EU, other groupings or individual nations) are the right people to intervene, and whether we are proposing to do the right things.

Leadership will always be problematical, for a number of reasons:

- The UN has inherent political and inertia problems;
- NATO's approach is 'military-first' (if not military-led), and it has no civil reconstruction brief or budget;
- The EU is finding a role – it is unlikely to challenge NATO on the military front, but may find a wholly or partly civilian role, perhaps working with NATO;
- No national government – even the USA – really expects to act in its own right, except in small local operations

Finance and funding raise a number of issues:

- Conditionality of funding - it is vital for the intervention force to maintain control of funding, because of corruption and the insecure nature of local agencies in a fluid political situation;
- The public perception in the West that our economies are in trouble, and that our own jobs and economic future are insecure, makes it difficult for politicians to justify spending large sums on operations a long way from home which have no obvious relevance to our own security;
- It is often argued that individual small-scale investments are better for both donors and recipients than pumping in billions at government level;
- Relief, aid and development activities are difficult to drive in hostile environments, and yet that is where the most rigorous financial management is needed;
- A realistic long-term budget is vital in operations which may mean marshalling resources over as long as 10-12 years to

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ensure the competence of the host nation to manage its own affairs;

- In the UK there is a political imperative that overseas development spending must be demonstrably linked to the relief of poverty.

The importance to the mission of the local population, and not just the government, must be stressed. If people have power, food, water etc they are more likely to accept intervention. At the same time we cannot simply expect to export our own political, social and economic models and impose them on people with different cultural backgrounds.

If we are to succeed in any given theatre of operations we need to:

- Enhance our understanding of the host country, and its culture, language, history and traditions;
- Make sure that lessons are identified, learned, and carried forward for future reference;
- Ensure that tours on the ground are long enough to develop subject matter expertise, keep skill fade to a minimum and allow adequate handover time;
- Develop 'corporate knowledge' – training and educating people in the principles, rather than the processes, allowing them to think about issues and cope with the unexpected;
- Recognise differences between military systems based on a command and control mindset, and civilian attitudes, which are more collaborative and consensus based;
- Listen to others, work together, understand and structure the problems we all face, in order to aid our understanding and develop our ability to make an effective contribution.

The Civilian Contribution

It is a characteristic of most post-conflict operations that there is a severe shortage of civilian assets and resources. Military commanders do not usually have the time, the skills or the resources to take on the

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most urgent early tasks, in particular reinstating law and order, and providing an emergency infrastructure. However, even in 'permissive' environments there is always a delay until an adequate civilian deployment can be achieved. This was a clear issue in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and is likely to be so again. We are increasingly likely to encounter the scenario where the combat phase of an operation is either very short, or non-existent, and the Comprehensive Approach needs to function from day one. This needs a civilian advance party or 'expeditionary force' to be ready to move at very short notice, with a plan in place and resources to carry it out. So far there has not been an adequate solution to this problem, and in the UK at least there seems to be reluctance on the part of government departments to commit themselves and their own civilian staff in this way.

Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC), initiated and led by the Ministry of Defence, is intended to work for local communities, through engagement with local government and other agencies, maintaining or rebuilding infrastructure, and setting up and leading development programmes. It is usually targeted at areas which are not (yet) considered safe for civilian agencies. In Iraq and Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Teams were established for this task, and have included both civilian and military elements in their structure. In Afghanistan field work has been carried out by Military Stabilisation Support Teams, working closely with the PRTs' civilian Stabilisation Advisors. These efforts represent a great step forward, but much more work is still necessary.

Unfortunately, military resources are only in a very restricted sense able to deal with issues which are rooted deep within society and affect everyday lives. A civilian lead is required in areas such as state building and constitutional reform, establishing judicial arrangements, or economic and commercial policy making.

Civilian agencies are also vital in addressing problems caused by organised crime, which always fills any void left by a breakdown in governance. Immediate action and access to information is needed, in concert with the Military, to prevent any spread of destabilising activity. A key element in this is the rapid establishment of reliable policing, which has both military and civilian aspects, and requires substantial training input and resources.

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Military Engagement with the Community

Until fairly recently a large number of people in the UK had served in the Armed Forces or had relatives with service experience. Today that familiarity has largely disappeared, especially among younger people. To make things worse the military has over the last forty years retreated behind the wire, maintained a raised level of security and stopped wearing uniform in public. Only over the last two or three years has there been any relaxation of this policy.

If the necessary flow of recruits is to be maintained it is absolutely essential that the military – regular and reserve – becomes more visible on the streets, engages with the community, and is seen as an integral part of the fabric of daily life.

When in 1962 the UK ended conscription it abandoned the idea of a 'Reserve Army' and instead turned towards an (ever shrinking) augmentation force, aimed at providing targeted backup to the regular forces. The resulting, still evolving, Territorial Army (TA) and the much smaller Royal Navy, Royal Marines and Royal Air Force Reserves are now heavily weighted towards specialists, and thus are no longer usable as balanced integrated formations, in the same way as for example the US National Guard. They are also, unlike the National Guard, much less of a true 'territorial' force and have lost many of their traditional links with local communities.

The issue of Engagement with the Community is being addressed by an ongoing initiative led by the Army's Commander Regional Forces, who is responsible for home based Army formations, including the Army's volunteer reserve, the Territorial Army. Its aims include the need to:

- Maintain and improve the Armed Forces' reputation throughout the country;
- Support recruiting for both regulars and reservists;
- Support UK Operations, which includes assistance to local civil authorities and police, and support for disaster relief operations, epidemics etc;
- Maintain security of the UK against terrorist or extremist threats;

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- Encourage and promote employer support for reservists and their families.

The link between the Military and the civil community is vital. We have in the UK a tradition of support for our servicemen which remains strong and must not be lost. In particular we have always been prepared as a nation to stand up and be counted, and to (more than) pull our weight in partnership with our allies. In this as in other areas we differ from many of our EU partners. It is crucial that we act now to maintain and reinforce this link, to ensure a continuing flow of recruits into the services and to uphold our national standing at home and abroad.

We also need to ensure that our reserves are 'used more effectively to connect with the nation' as recommended by the 2009 Strategic Review of Reserves. As the Review noted: 'Although Regular forces make this connection, Reservists are often better placed to connect, integrate with, and influence, the community in which, in their civilian lives, they live and work'.¹⁶

We need to look at a low-cost model that truly provides a reserve capability – to involve and engage the community, to provide for unforeseen demands, to give greater flexibility of use, and to have a 'fall back' national defence and national security capability.

This needs to include a strong civilian element.

We must assume we start from a fragmented society – increasingly secular in nature – in which it is difficult to discern a shared perception of the 'common good'. Our aim must be to build a bridge between the underlying cultural factors and the political and military ethic which motivates people to volunteer to serve the country.

The picture has been obscured over the last few years by two unpopular wars, although public opinion surveys show strikingly that support for the military remains very high, in spite of heavy criticism of the political process that has committed our forces to those operations. However, a fundamental question remains over whether in security matters we wish to be an independent power facing the Atlantic Seaboard or a Continental European power, the answer to which bears heavily on our standing vis-à-vis the rest of the world.

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We are told by our politicians that we are by some measures the world's fourth largest economy. However, after the USA the two ahead of us are Japan and Germany, who are subject to strong military inhibitions. So in military terms we are not 'punching above our weight' if we see ourselves as the leading player after the USA in defence of free world values. An understanding and acceptance of this stance is crucial to answering questions about why we are asking people to mobilise and what are we expecting them to do. National security and defence still plays a part, but a much less significant one since the end of the Cold War. The risk from terrorism at home is clearly real, but the population needs to be reassured that our policy abroad has not encouraged or brought forward terrorism, and that we are not inviting attack by playing a leading part in security operations around the world. On the contrary, the threat of terrorism tends to bring people together and sharpen resolve.

There may be a deeper motivation at work here, one which could be used to lead people to support the concept of establishing a UK 'Citizens' Corps' or 'National Service Corps'. This is an idea which has the potential to be developed further by the existing reserve forces from their position within local communities.

The key is how to establish an understanding between power and people – 'power' being the state government and 'people' being an increasingly less homogeneous society. One message cannot suit everyone or every situation. At the core of the issue is the 'social contract' – what it is that makes people want to make a contribution, and to join up. It can be argued that we need to adopt a Comprehensive Approach locally to encourage participation from all sections of the community – young people today do not have the same service ethic that the post-war and Cold War generations grew up with.

We need to regain a balance between looking after our own and helping others. We cannot simply rely on the 'Blitz spirit' at times of need – we must promote a willingness to serve the nation and find a means of harnessing it. People's perception of the military is already high, but new ways of gaining participation are needed.

The media must be involved, and encouraged to take an active part. We need to create a positive agenda, emphasising the benefits of serving, but also emphasising the personal nature of the contribution that individuals can make. People want to make a difference, and to get involved, and they can easily be given a choice of ways to do so.

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There is some evidence of national and local political aversion to an overt military presence in society, which has led to local actions such as banning recruitment for the armed forces in schools, closing drill halls etc. In contrast to and in spite of this opposition, participation in Cadet Forces has been increasing in recent years, and there is a strong case for Cadets to be encouraged in schools, along with Scouts, Guides and other community service activities. The benefits of education in civic participation and 'citizenship' could be encouraged more here as they are in the USA. The position, utility, core values and role of the Armed Forces could be taught positively as part of the National Curriculum in schools.

Local businesses and employers should be encouraged to be involved as part of the local Comprehensive Approach framework. This includes seeking their support for their employees' membership of the Reserve Forces, and their participation in activities which promote citizenship and core values within each community.

The military presence in the community can be emphasised in key areas for recruitment by wearing uniform in public, participating in local activities, supporting schools etc. Young people are the target for attention, and young servicemen should be seen to be actively involved. However, the military must not be politicised. A clear distance must be maintained between the political decision making that commits us to operations, and the Armed Forces themselves and their conduct of those operations. Winning positive media coverage is essential to this. MoD Media Operations across the board need to get better at promoting the Community Engagement message. Our relationship with the media grows more and more important every year.

The Military as a whole needs to take recruiting more seriously into the community, by getting involved in local affairs, and commending local servicemen as role models. The traditional military values – loyalty, duty, courage, integrity, and selflessness – and strengths – self-development, adventure, challenge, opportunity, and companionship – are at the core of the proposition being put forward.

The Threat

It is no longer fashionable since the end of the Cold War to talk about 'The Threat' we face. Our national security has taken second place to our role as a 'Force for Good' in the world. The focus is on our ability to support sometimes dangerous but often non war-fighting operations in distant places where it is international stability and our commercial

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and economic interests which may be at risk. Nevertheless the Threat remains.

Russia has not yet found a niche in the 21st Century world, and NATO has pushed eastwards towards her borders. Russian relationships with, and policy towards, for example, Georgia, Ukraine and even Poland demonstrate a fragile co-existence which has already led to commercial disputes over gas supplies to Ukraine, and to military intervention in Georgia in August 2008.

Argentina has not given up its ambitions towards the Falkland Islands, and a lack of preparedness by the UK to defend the islands, or by our allies to support us, could at some stage encourage an opportunistic attempt at a further invasion.

Northern Ireland has not gone away as a potential conflict area, and recent events in the province have reminded us that a risk to national security remains.

Other terrorist threats also exist within the UK, and further attacks such as those in July 2005 are always possible, in spite of the sustained efforts of the Police and security services.

All of the above underline the point that we need to retain something *in reserve*. If our existing full time and part time forces are tied up at or beyond maximum effort and supporting necessary augmentation then where is the reserve capacity to come from?

A New Concept for Reserve Forces

‘Finding a new concept for Reserve Forces is today the most important single organisational issue for all countries and armed forces in order to develop their capability to deal effectively with new security threats.’

*Chris Donnelly*¹⁷

In considering the above comment, we should not see this as a case of an organisation trying to find itself a role (which is how much of the discussion around this issue tends to read). Instead our task is to agree a role, and then to decide how to structure our reserves to meet the challenge that role presents.

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The traditional role of UK Reserve Forces (especially the TA) has been to provide home defence, plus a 'professional' cadre to fill specialist auxiliary needs (medical, engineers, signals etc). Their present role is as a small mobilisation resource to top up the regular forces in meeting current operations' needs, with very little held truly in reserve.

There is also a compelling argument for non-military reserves, embracing civil administrators, Police and Customs officers, utilities specialists, lawyers, cultural advisers, linguists, teachers and a wide range of other specialists and generalists.

Our National Security capability is made up of the following components:

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Military Component | Regular Military Forces Military Reserves Specialist Reserves (e.g. UK Sponsored Reserves) |
| Civil Component | Civil Government Agencies Police, Customs, Utilities etc NGOs Civilian Aid Agencies Charities Private Security Companies |
| Plus | <i>Civilian Reserves?</i> |

How can we create a part time professional military and civil reserve without conscription? There is an increasing distance between the military and society, and no perception at all of civilian 'national service' or service to the community. In the UK 'Community Service' is a punishment handed down by the Courts. There is no real perception in the country of a threat to our own security – our home base is not under attack, current overseas operations are far away, and not really our business anyway, and terrorism, even at the height of the Northern Ireland troubles, has not so far been an issue which people will rally round to defeat.

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The need for a civilian reserve capability has been put forward elsewhere, including the following by Ambassador Petersen and Professor Binnendijk¹⁸ in a recent NATO paper:

‘Unfortunately, unlike military capabilities, civilian resources are rarely available and ready on the massive scale required for deployment to current crises. It can take considerable time to identify and deploy necessary civilian resources. Allies should consider organizing a standing civilian corps for international crisis response. Such a capability could be used under NATO or the EU so long as it was available to both organizations. Merely compiling a list of volunteers and skills is not sufficient. These resources should be afforded specialized education and exercise opportunities that expose them to the operational environment they will have to manage.’¹⁹

Elsewhere Daniel Korski has suggested that: ‘to create the necessary civilian capabilities in crisis situations for both common and unilateral use, the UK and like-minded allies should consider establishing a European civilian reserve – a reserve corps of 2,000 civilian specialists – with European citizens on stand-by for deployment’.²⁰

Korski’s proposal is based on the premise that the EU is a more likely vehicle for raising a civilian reserve than NATO with its military focus. However, the specialists will have to come from the individual nations, and one imagines will be paid and administered by them. The UK’s share of a 2,000 strong corps would presumably be provided from the Stabilisation Unit’s register of Deployable Civilian Experts. When Prime Minister Gordon Brown announced the UK National Security Strategy in March 2008 he promised a 1,000 strong ‘UK Task Force’ to fill this very role. So far nothing more has happened, but it must be assumed that the ‘Task Force’ refers to the list of people who are expected to appear on the SU’s database, and who will have no commitment to deploy, but simply a willingness to do so if it suits them and if the terms and conditions are right at the time. The EU Security Strategy²¹ declares that the EU is prepared to provide assistance in areas such as community policing, setting up court systems, and rebuilding schools and health clinics. However it is still not clear how this is intended to be achieved.

A National Reserve

There can rarely have been a more apposite time for considering a new National Reserve in the UK. The Armed Forces need to engage

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more closely with the civilian community, and our national security depends on joint civil-military operations under the Comprehensive Approach. At a time of economic insecurity such as the present there is a heightened awareness among people that funds are short but much needs to be done. Now is therefore a good time to appeal to the volunteer instinct – the Public Service (or National Service) ideal.

Joining a volunteer force offers many challenges and opportunities, whether it is full time or part time. It is particularly relevant post-school, post-college or university, at the start of a career or during a gap year, to ask young people to think how they might serve their own country, and the rest of the world. The proposition on offer is a form of non-compulsory 'National Service', with opportunities for civilian, as well as or instead of military service.

It is now the norm for young people in the UK to take a year after school, and/or before or after a university or other further education course, to travel or do something different before embarking on a career. The Armed Services have already targeted this with a Gap Year Commission, and there are plans for a similar scheme for non-commissioned ranks. A joint civil/military scheme linked with the Comprehensive Approach is an opportunity to involve even more people, and to stay in contact with them as their careers progress.

A new National Reserve might be based on the following lines:

- Recruitment at age 18, with the aim of retaining people for life, or at any age up to retirement;
- Open links to all branches of the Armed Forces;
- Open links to other organisations, for example Cadets, Scouts, St John Ambulance, Charities, Salvation Army, and VSO;
- An 'Operations First' policy, with the ethos built around the need to provide deployable military and civilian personnel;
- A theme of service to the nation, readiness to act when needed, but freedom to choose a level of commitment that varies over time, and matches with career, lifestyle or other arrangements;

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- Flexible, 'portfolio' careers – the ability to move between full time and part time service, or between military and civilian service, according to skills and opportunities, and in and out of service;
- Payment for work done, including a bounty varying according to the level of liability accepted and training done in any given year;
- Military and Civilian Service categories, with facility to choose, or to switch categories;
- Variable readiness and commitment levels, from a minimum of one or two weekends a year and no callout liability, to full time deployed service;
- Operational and Home Service roles – military and civilian, including Warfighting, Stabilisation and Development, and Homeland/National Security;
- A wide availability of skills – military and civilian; skills which are available in civilian life but scarce in the Military should be targeted – especially those in new, high tech areas and those which are difficult to train within the military.

The key is flexibility, with a scale of rewards and opportunities matched to the chosen level of commitment. The ideal is a means of switching from regular or full time service to reserve or part time commitment, and even to a 'dormant' state at some periods in a career.

Many joining the Reserves today stay for one operational mobilisation and then move on. (There is a parallel and similar issue among the Regulars.) We should try to keep those people in the loop as long-term reservists, accepting that many may want to drop to a very low commitment level for a while. The flexibility of the proposed system would allow people to 'switch on and off', while not losing contact with those who have experience of deployed operations.

Training and education would be centred on preparing for operational tours, and could be part time or full time. Once trained a basic annual commitment could be continued, so that the level of input each year could be varied. Civilian skills could be utilised either in a military or civilian context.

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The All-Party Parliamentary Reserve Forces Group has considered new engagement schemes for military reserves, which would also work well with a new civil and military structure. For example, it addressed one of the worrying issues connected with the move to an augmentation force – that reserve officers are unlikely to have the chance to lead their troops on operations, and so young officer recruitment has slumped drastically.

‘A more radical solution may be needed to tackle the parlous state of young officer recruitment. We recommend that a new type of engagement be considered which would consist of a year of service in those parts of the regular army (e.g. the infantry) where recruitment is most difficult followed by 4 years on the reserve. The first year would consist of basic training on the same basis as recruits for the Regular Army followed by 6 months overseas training or operations. At the end of the year those suitable would take a TA officer training course and usually then move to University. There they would receive an additional student loan which would be repaid by service for 4 years in the Reserves either initially in the OTC for further training or in a TA unit. Those who were not commissioned would receive vocational training funded jointly by their civilian employer and the Services and the cost of this would have to be repaid if the individual did not complete the 4-year service and stay with the same employer. Any mobilisation would be avoided if possible in the first 3 years (with the 4th earmarked for mobilisation) so that the employer would have a proper return on his training investment.’²²

We cannot as in Cold War days train and organise for a ‘most likely’ scenario – events today move too quickly. Adaptability is at the centre, based on education rather than training so that personnel can think for themselves and react to changing circumstances. The underlying direction must therefore be towards a process of continuous force generation.

The contentious issue of when it is convenient to be mobilised is a problem for many reservists. The system as it works currently allows a degree of self-selection, where individuals let it be known informally that they are or are not prepared to go when next called, but this could be better managed for everyone’s benefit. The cost of making up the difference between civil and duty pay on mobilisation is sometimes an

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issue – the proposed new National Reserve might give higher priority to using civilian skills, in or out of uniform, instead of using, say, lawyers as expensive truck drivers.

As a starting point the following structure for Civilian Reservists is suggested:

- Firstly, a standing team to deploy early in an operation in order to prepare the ground, take over a clearly defined mission command from the Military, and address immediate issues such as maintaining law and order, repairing and restoring basic services and utilities, and co-ordinating humanitarian relief (with military backup as required);
- Secondly, an on-call Reserve consisting of:
 - People with relevant experience and expertise, including medical, legal, law enforcement, cultural, language, education, power, water, engineering and construction specialists;
 - A body of volunteers able to provide practical support on the ground, doing for example clerical, driving, communicating, building and maintenance, watchkeeping, and many other everyday tasks. At the same time they would be gaining experience in a demanding context, and developing their own practical, leadership, negotiation and administrative skills.

The former group would be supporting the deployed government departments, mainly DfID but including the FCO and both the military and civil sides of the MoD, and working alongside members of the standing team as the mission ‘ramps up’. The latter group might be assisting any of the force components, including private sector humanitarian and aid agencies.

Private Security Companies are also a part of the picture. The Military and its civil partners work alongside them, sometimes very effectively, but they raise numerous issues, not for this paper. There is a question whether some of the tasks currently contracted out could be done more efficiently by new reserves. This is still a grey area in which a joint civil-military reserve approach might have a part to play.

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In the USA, the idea of creating Civilian Reserves has been supported at the highest level, as in the following extract from former President Bush's 2007 State of the Union Address. So far, however, the move has not received support from Congress, and there appear to have been difficulties within the State Department and the US Agency for International Development (USAID) over working together and with the Department of Defense in this way. A detailed structure and plan has therefore not yet emerged.

“One of the first steps we can take together is to add to the ranks of our military so that the American Armed Forces are ready for all the challenges ahead. Tonight I ask the Congress to authorize an increase in the size of our active Army and Marine Corps by 92,000 in the next five years.

“A second task we can take on together is to design and establish a volunteer Civilian Reserve Corps. Such a corps would function much like our military reserve. It would ease the burden on the Armed Forces by allowing us to hire civilians with critical skills to serve on missions abroad when America needs them. It would give people across America who do not wear the uniform a chance to serve in the defining struggle of our time.”²³

The proposal to increase military strength by a number almost as great as the entire British Army is in stark contrast to the UK's reluctance to build its own capability. The establishment of a civilian reserve would enhance the USA's already substantial reserves. By comparison the UK is out of line with the USA (and with most allies with similar armed forces) in having a much smaller proportion of its total strength in its volunteer reserves.

The Way Forward

The National Audit Office said in a recent (2006) report:

‘The turnover of personnel in the volunteer reserves is high and total number of personnel is significantly lower than that required. The department recognises that full manning is unlikely to be achieved in the foreseeable future.’²⁴

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It is therefore imperative that we make the best possible use of our small reserve pool and that we find ways of enhancing its effectiveness. An increase in our military strength appears not to be a political option for the present, and the UK Government's recent decision to decline President Obama's request for more fighting troops for Afghanistan signals our unwillingness to accept greater levels of commitment. The provision instead of a smaller contingent to oversee elections is perhaps a task to which a joint civil military reserve would have been well suited.

It appears likely that in the future we will find ourselves routinely working in fluid environments under the Comprehensive Approach, where overt military operations are not the only, or even the main component of the task. In those circumstances there are many factors which support the notion of a bespoke joint civil military force generation process in which reserves play a key role. For example:

- It may not always be necessary for the Military to go in first. A civilian or combined force (civilian with military protection) may be more effective in many cases.
- A change in managerial culture is required. DfID must think beyond local aid projects and take a more strategic position. The MoD must fully accept the notion of intelligence sharing with its partners from other government departments. There must be pre-mission sharing of corporate knowledge by all parties, and a willingness to learn from previous experience.
- The nomination of supported and supporting commands might be a useful concept – for example DfID or FCO could work with a military supporting command securing its working space. The arrangement could change as necessary during different phases of the operation, with the military command and control structure taking the lead where the situation demands.
- The introduction of reservists may help to break down the barriers between organisations working within their own stovepipes. It may be worthwhile considering cross posting between military and civilian posts to help and support better collaboration.
- A system is needed to ensure that a fully coordinated approach to local involvement is adopted. A joint civil-military National

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Reserve will be well placed to facilitate such an approach, both at home and in theatre.

Conclusions

- The Ministry of Defence must continue to engage with other government departments, and with a range of other civilian agencies, to ensure the success of the Comprehensive Approach.
- In the UK Defence spending is shrinking while International Development spending is increasing. The bulk of our military commitments are to Stabilisation and Development Operations under the Comprehensive Approach, which are largely civilian tasks. It is therefore realistic to ensure that future operations are funded and supported by the military only as far as necessary, and that the International Development budget bears its full share of the cost.
- It is absolutely essential that the Military – regular and reserve – engages with the community, and is seen as an integral part of the fabric of daily life. The quality and quantity of its flow of recruits depends on the way it connects with the nation.
- We need to nurture the idea of a true Reserve – a body held in readiness *within* the community and with a long term standing commitment to serve the nation. This should include a strong civilian element. This paper proposes a new National Reserve, including both military and civilian membership.

* * *

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by Robyn Lloyd Hughes

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