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Paper no 2

Multinational
Defence
Co-operation



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Multi-National Defence Co-operation



German, French, Dutch and British officers working together in the Balkans

Introduction

1. Multinational co-operation has been the main currency of Britain's conventional defence since the North Atlantic Alliance was founded in 1949, and it will continue to be so in the 21st Century. This paper explains why we believe that now is the right time to extend that co-operation, examines the benefits and risks of doing so, and sets out our plans for the future.
2. We define Multinational Defence Co-operation (MDC) as any arrangement where two or more nations work together to enhance military capability. This can include exchanges and liaison, training and exercising, common doctrine, collaborative equipment procurement, or multinational formations. Nations can either co-operate on a roughly equal basis, or with one or more taking the lead and providing a framework within which others make smaller contributions. In most co-operative arrangements, nations can - and usually do - retain national control over their own forces.

The British Experience of Multinational Defence Co-operation

3. As a key member of the NATO Alliance, and a leading player in the development of new arrangements for European security and defence, the UK has a wealth of experience of co-operating with its European and North American Allies. NATO remains the bedrock of our security and its success is itself testament to the benefits of multinational co-operation: the Alliance as a whole is far greater than the sum of its parts.
4. Britain's armed forces have extensive experience of routine and operational co-operation within NATO formations. We contribute, together with many other nations, to NATO's Naval Forces in the Atlantic and Mediterranean, and to its Mine Countermeasures forces. The UK/Netherlands Amphibious Force, in which British and Dutch Marines work alongside each other in a fully integrated force, is a longstanding example of successful co-operation. The UK provides the leadership and much of the infrastructure for the Allied Command Europe (ACE) Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC), which brings together 16 nations; we also contribute to a variety of other NATO land formations. We provide some 25 per cent of the NATO Airborne Early Warning Force; and the seven-nation European Air Group (EAG), responsible for improving the interoperability of member air forces, is based at RAF High Wycombe. Overall, co-operation with NATO Allies is the norm rather than the exception.
5. But co-operation extends well beyond the NATO and European context. In the East Timor peace support operation, for example, UK forces worked within an Australian-commanded coalition. In the Gulf - an area which the Strategic Defence Review recognised as being of particular strategic importance to the UK - we continue to develop our interoperability with partners in times of crisis through a comprehensive exercise programme with key Gulf states and through co-ordinated contingency planning with the United States and Kuwait.
6. In 2000, the Royal Navy's Flag Officer Sea Training (FOST) provided operational sea training for 15 major surface vessels from eight different countries, involving some 3000 overseas naval personnel. Further afield, membership of the Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA) provides all three Services with regular opportunities for joint exercises and training with Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore, thus enhancing interoperability with those partners and promoting UK interests, and peace and stability, in the Asia-Pacific region. Naval Task Group 2000, for example, participated in a number of FPDA exercises, as well as visiting over 30 countries world-wide.
7. Overall, the Ministry of Defence has over 350 military exchange and liaison officers overseas. There is also extensive co-operation with Allies, the UN and partners in a range of other operations, including peacekeeping and peace support, search and rescue, disaster relief and counter-drugs operations. Many of these activities would not be possible without such co-operation.
8. Equipment co-operation is another well-developed area. For example, the collaboratively developed and manufactured Eurofighter will provide a highly effective air combat capability well into this century for several Alliance partners, bringing with it improved interoperability. The four partner nations also share the benefits of common logistic support contracts and best practice experience through regular contact and reviews. The four nation (the UK, France, Germany and Italy) armaments agency OCCAR achieved legal status on 28 January 2001.

OCCAR will provide improved management of collaborative defence equipment programmes involving European partners.

Building on Success

9. The UK experience of Multinational Defence Co-operation has been predominantly positive, and the conditions are now right to build on this success and take co-operation a step further.

Co-operation as a fact of life

10. The Department's recently published pamphlet "Defence Policy 2001" reiterates the Strategic Defence Review's conclusion that we need to work through strong partnerships and alliances - including NATO and the EU - and with the wider international community through the United Nations. The last few years have clearly demonstrated the importance of multinational operations across the world, with British Forces contributing from the Balkans to East Timor. We need to operate effectively alongside Allies and partners in a wide variety of missions. Routine co-operation on exercises and during peacetime is an important means of building the experience, understanding and joint practices essential for effective operations.

Resources

11. Instabilities and tensions continue on the periphery of Western Europe, and are likely to cause problems for European security for some time to come. There are also tensions further afield, particularly in the Middle East and Africa. Operational demands are therefore unlikely to diminish, placing continued pressure on Britain's armed forces. We need to find ways of relieving that pressure, and of guarding against overstretch.
12. At the same time, defence budgets are finite. We need to make the best possible use of resources, placing a premium on realising economies of scale and on co-ordination of national efforts. Sharing the burden through enhanced MDC is one solution.

International Peace and Security

13. Under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding signed with the UN in 1999, the UK has agreed to contribute to multinational efforts to enhance international peace and security by declaring a range of capabilities from its Joint Rapid Reaction Forces as potentially available for UN commanded peacekeeping operations. The capabilities declared include command and control, logistics, and other sophisticated support assets not readily available from other large troop contributing nations.

NATO's internal adaptation, and the European defence dimension

14. NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiative (DCI), launched at the 1999 Washington Summit, is working to improve capabilities across the Alliance: When complete, the Alliance's Force Structure Review (FSR) will create a force structure within which these capability improvements

will have maximum effect. Both initiatives underline the need for Allies to co-operate in the interests of enhanced capability. The same considerations apply to the European defence initiative, which is seeking capability improvements to underwrite the EU's Headline Goal to be able to deploy, by 2003, up to 60,000 troops (with appropriate air and maritime support) capable of undertaking humanitarian intervention, rescue operations, peacekeeping, and crisis management. This Headline Goal will not work without effective multinational co-operation.

Communicating with the wider world

15. Globalisation affects defence as much as any other activity, and we need continually to find avenues for putting across our point of view to colleagues overseas, as well as learning ourselves from successful innovations being implemented elsewhere. Multinational solutions within NATO, Europe and globally provide important opportunities to communicate to Allies and partners at an operational level our view of the world, and our way of doing business, and to enter into a dialogue on approaches to the range of security and defence issues.

New Opportunities

16. We are exploring the opportunities for further co-operation with a number of like-minded Allies and partners; details of these initiatives are set out in the section of this paper dealing with future plans.

The Benefits

17. Multinational Defence Co-operation offers a range of benefits:
 - ◆ **Enhanced Interoperability.** Co-operation is most successful when Allies and partners have interoperable weapons and systems, but the experience of co-operation is itself a spur to improved interoperability. Many naval communications systems, for example, enjoy good interoperability with those of NATO Allies, thereby allowing the Royal Navy to train with them and operate in a complex multinational environment.
 - ◆ **More efficient provision of military capability.** Co-operation can provide economies of scale, which in turn mean more capability for the same level of resources, or the same capability for less. An example is the development of an agreement between the European Air Group nations to enable more shared usage of transport and refuelling aircraft, thereby reducing the number of occasions when they fly empty or with part loads.
 - ◆ **A reduced tendency towards purely national approaches to defence.** Nations which operate together are less inclined to duplicate unnecessarily Allies' and partners' capabilities, and are more attuned to identifying complementary solutions to national requirements. Luxembourg's agreement to purchase a single A400M aircraft, which will be operated as part of the Belgian fleet, is a good example of a nation taking a broad view of a national requirement.

- ◆ Innovative solutions to capability shortfalls and operational requirements. Co-operation opens up opportunities for new and innovative approaches to enhancing capability and maximising efficiency and effectiveness. An example is the development of an adaptor which allows RAF, German and Italian Tornados to use French test rigs in operations with French involvement; UK Tornados used this coupling during the Kosovo campaign when operating from Corsica, thereby reducing the requirement to airlift UK equipment to the French base.
- ◆ Greater transparency. Multinational Defence Co-operation helps build trust and confidence between Allies and partners. Co-operation with Russian forces on the ground in Kosovo and the development of a bilateral naval co-operation programme, for example, provide a good basis for our wider defence relationship with Russia. More generally, Partnership for Peace has achieved a great deal in increasing trust and transparency between partners (for further details see Ministry of Defence Policy Paper No 1, Defence Diplomacy).
- ◆ Ability for nations to contribute to capabilities that they could not otherwise sustain individually. This factor is particularly relevant for NATO and European defence, where burdens need to be shared as fairly as possible. The Benelux nations offer a number of good examples in this respect: Luxembourg's participation as part of the Belgian contribution in the Balkans; the Belgian-Dutch Deployable Air Tactical Force, which operated successfully in the Kosovo campaign; and Dutch/Belgian naval co-operation based on the operational HQ at Den Helder.
- ◆ Increased capacity of other nations to contribute to operations. By sharing our experience with other nations' armed forces - whether through training, placement of defence advisers or more informal contacts - we can increase the capacity of others to participate in operations, thereby enabling a more equitable sharing of the burden and helping to reduce overstretch on our own forces.
- ◆ Opportunities for the UK to underline its role as a key member of the Alliance and a leading member of the international community. Co-operative arrangements in which the UK plays a significant part provide an opportunity for us to focus international efforts to the benefit of Euro-Atlantic and wider security. By being proactive, we can also help to channel resources into multinational initiatives which promise genuine improvements in military capability, rather than just window dressing.
- ◆ Access to capabilities that the UK does not need independently. Co-operation with other nations can give us access to capabilities that we would not wish to provide solely on a national basis. An example is medium-range ground-based air defence, which is not a priority for the UK and in which a number of Allies have an extensive capability which would protect UK forces in multinational operations.
- ◆ Acting in unison. When the international community acts together, particularly where intervening to resist aggression or for humanitarian reasons, the political effect of military action is much greater than when individual countries act alone.

The Risks

18. Multinational defence co-operation works well provided we are also alive to the potential difficulties, and select areas for co-operation carefully. We need to take account of the following factors:

- ◆ Acting independently. Multinationality is not a substitute for the provision of essential national capabilities for any operations where the UK is likely to act alone. Great care needs to be taken, therefore, to ensure that we do not prejudice our essential national requirements and capabilities.
- ◆ The Economics of Co-operation. These should be straightforward, but can often be difficult to realise in practice. For example, collaborative procurement projects are vulnerable to partners' decisions and, when there are differing business practices and divergent requirements, can lead to time and cost overruns. We need to be sure on a case-by-case basis that entering into a co-operative arrangement is a cost-effective option.
- ◆ Decision-making structures. We need to guard against arrangements which lead to inefficiency and delay in decision-making, and which therefore carry the danger in operational situations of increasing the risk of failure and the danger to our personnel. We need, for example, to ensure that Allies collectively agree that the NATO Force Structure Review will deliver High Readiness Headquarters which, like the ARRC, deliver genuine operational capability.
- ◆ Pitching co-operation at the right level. Operational co-operation at too low a level can present a range of difficulties – from language barriers, through poor interoperability, to inefficiencies of scale – and can therefore prejudice operational effectiveness in certain circumstances. While a common language and joint training prior to an operation can overcome many of the practical difficulties, the priority must be forces tailored to meet the operational need.
- ◆ Training. A significant amount of time and major training effort is required for national components in a multinational formation to reach an operating standard that is acceptable to all participating nations. This requires a careful balance between investing in multinational training while maintaining the national training standards which provide the basis of the UK's operational capability.
- ◆ Burdensharing. Multinational Defence Co-operation is not an excuse for Allies and partners to opt out of roles, activities or operations unilaterally and at short notice. This increases the burden on others, including the UK.

Guiding Principles

19. Taking both pros and cons into account, we believe that Multinational Defence Co-operation should be pursued when it:

- ◆ Enhances military capability.
- ◆ Does not prejudice our capacity to maintain capabilities that are required to safeguard national security interests where we may have to act alone.
- ◆ Relates, in the Alliance and European contexts, to capabilities required for the implementation of NATO's Defence Capabilities Initiative and Force Structure Review or to fulfil the European Headline Goal.
- ◆ Helps to ensure that all participants bear their fair share of the burden, across a range of activities and capabilities.
- ◆ Is compatible with, and does not threaten our links to, the US and NATO.
- ◆ Involves participants who can make a worthwhile contribution.
- ◆ Ensures that there is a broad enough distribution of specialised capabilities amongst Allies and other potential coalition partners to provide "coalitions of the willing" able to respond to specific situations.
- ◆ Helps to alleviate actual or potential overstretch.

What we plan to do next

20. We plan to develop Multinational Defence Co-operation in a number of ways. We will:

- ◆ Give top-level direction within the MOD to ensure that we always consider MDC as one of the first options when looking to enhance capability, within the guidelines set out above.
- ◆ Seek also to increase MDC's profile in NATO, within the European defence dimension, and with partners further afield.
- ◆ Build on the range of existing co-operation outlined in this paper, with both Allies and non-NATO partners.
- ◆ Explore innovative approaches to MDC, including learning from Allies' and partners' experiences.
- ◆ Work within NATO and with European partners to ensure that multinational solutions to

capability shortfalls identified by the Defence Capabilities Initiative and Headline Goal are pursued. NATO has already initiated work on this in which the UK is playing a full part.

- ◆ Pursue a variety of new bilateral and multilateral initiatives, including:
 - ▲ Building on recent work with Finland, France, Germany, Italy, The Netherlands and Norway to increase co-operation in a number of areas, particularly medical, air manoeuvre (including helicopters), air to air refuelling, search and rescue, unmanned aerial vehicles and training.
 - ▲ Work with Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden to help develop their Nordic Brigade.
 - ▲ The European Amphibious Initiative, launched in December 2000, in which we will be developing closer co-operation on amphibious issues with France, Italy, Spain and The Netherlands.
 - ▲ Development with Italy and Germany of the potential for improved co-operation on the key Suppression of Enemy Air Defence (SEAD) capability, where each nation's Tornado aircraft have somewhat different, but complementary, SEAD weapon systems.
 - ▲ Develop the NATO concept of the European Multinational Maritime Force, designed to enable a maritime force to be formed from NATO assets and capabilities for a WEU-led operation, to ensure that the concept is similarly applicable to an EU-led operation.
 - ▲ Joint training with the Dutch and Norwegians on the new WAH-64 Apache attack helicopter, and co-operation on concepts, tactics and doctrine.
 - ▲ Increased co-operation between the RAF and the Finnish Air Force, with plans for joint training between RAF Harriers and Finnish F18s, and training (with an RAF VC10) for Finnish pilots in air-to-air refuelling.
 - ▲ Building on the success of French ship attachments to UK task groups, and RN involvement in French exercises during 2000.
 - ▲ Discussions with the Australians about our future strategic tanker and offensive air system programmes to explore the potential for co-operation.
- ◆ participate in NATO work to improve co-operation in the Electronic Warfare area.

- ◆ build on the establishment of OCCAR and the recent six nation Framework Agreement - two European initiatives to improve collaboration in which the UK is playing a key role. We are working in similar ways with the United States as well as in other multinational fora.
- ◆ play a major role in developing and enhancing multinational training and promoting increased exchange arrangements at all levels of training.
- ◆ support the Brahimi Report into the effectiveness of UN peace operations. The Report has set out a series of key recommendations and proposals aimed at achieving more rapidly deployable, efficient, effective and coherent forces supported by greater standardisation of training and equipment improvements within the UN's strategic planning processes.
- ◆ explore other areas ripe for co-operation with Allies and partners, including air-to-air refuelling, education and training, and more widespread 'twinning' of units.



An RAF Tornado, VC10 tanker and a French Mirage operating together

Conclusions

21. Multinational Defence Co-operation is already an important feature of our defence activities. It can play a key role in enhancing capability or providing the same level of capability at less cost. The reality of modern coalition operations, the need to encourage others to improve their military capabilities and take a greater share of the defence burden mean that we must seek more innovative ways of co-operating with partners and Allies - whilst preserving our essential national capabilities. The UK has an opportunity to take the initiative and to ensure that Multinational Defence Co-operation plays a key role in future Euro-Atlantic and global security. We intend to respond by developing and furthering our MDC arrangements, where it makes sense to do so.

Further information

A wide variety of public documents are available for those seeking further information on British Defence. Statistical and historical data can be found in "UK Defence Statistics" and the "MOD Performance Report" both published annually by the Stationery Office. The Ministry of Defence publishes a selection of information leaflets covering general issues and more specific, in depth, policy papers. These are available from:

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Further information is also available at the MOD website: www.mod.uk

