

Jointery and the Emerging Defence Review

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Future Defence Review Working Papers

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Issue

'Jointery', the development of co-ordination and integration of elements of the three armed services of the United Kingdom, should be examined in the green paper work and subsequent Defence Review.

Context

There has been a progressive increase in jointery since the formation of a single Ministry of Defence in 1964 with particularly rapid change in the 1990s in the formation of a joint operational command, logistics organisation, doctrine and concepts centre and staff college for higher military education. Since 2000, this process has stalled and has arguably been modestly reversed. There is a need to determine whether an optimal balance has been struck between discrete services and full integration, whether jointery should evolve further, or whether the process has gone too far.

Key Findings

- The movement towards greater service co-ordination and integration has deep roots but evolution appears to have halted
- The UK does not yet have the optimum balance between single service identities and areas of autonomy on the one hand, and 'team defence' and capability management on the other
- The Defence Review should examine the operation of joint bodies and consider whether they should be expanded or rolled back as part of the overall effort to optimise the capability derived from the resources available
- Structures intended to deliver capability management and the management of the individual services must be reconciled
- The strength of the Capability Sponsor must be sufficient to match its responsibilities
- Wider issues include the relative roles and responsibilities of civil servants, military personnel, and the private sector.

Analysis

We ... are determined both to practise a wholly corporate approach to our business, in the interests of defence as a whole, and to communicate that collective leadership to our people.

(Ministry of Defence response to the Cabinet Office Capability Review of 2007)

Only 20 per cent of staff said in 2008 that 'MoD as a whole is well managed' (early 2009 figures indicate that this has risen to 27%) compared with the central government benchmark of 32 per cent.

(Cabinet Office Capability Review of the Ministry of Defence, March 2009)

The forthcoming Defence Review and arguably the green paper currently in preparation must not only address UK aspirations and commitments: they must also pay attention to defence management overall, and how the capabilities desired for the armed forces are to be generated efficiently and effectively. Within this area, a key question concerns the extent to which the Army, Royal Air Force and Royal Navy should be relied upon as single services, and where matters are to be arranged on a joint, tri-service, defence-wide basis. Joint arrangements do not necessarily mean centralisation, with joint agencies demonstrating that some elements can be delegated on a defence-wide basis.

From the end of the First World War onwards, there have been pressures to erode the autonomy of the three services in the interest of producing a more integrated and efficient defence machine. These pressures have normally been resisted by the single services, which have been keen to maintain their separate spheres of competence, identity, ethos and culture.

The improved co-ordination and integration of service activities first required the creation of a strong Ministry of Defence headed by a secretary of state, which began to be put in place only after 1964. A key development came with the 1981 Nott Review when the Navy Minister, Keith Speed, refused to accept the proposed naval cuts and had to resign. The defence minister at the time, John Nott, then decided to abolish the single-service junior ministers, replacing them with officials holding functional defence-wide responsibilities.

Front Line First: The Defence Costs Study (DCS) in 1994 introduced a series of changes, not least of which was the ending of single-service advanced staff training, replacing it with the emergence of the Joint Services Command and Staff College and the institutionalisation of the Advanced Command and Staff Course. The DCS changes were focused on reducing the duplication of specialist capabilities, creating larger-scale bodies covering defence as a whole. As the then-Secretary of State for Defence Malcolm Rifkind wrote, 'we will be conducting many more command, training and support activities on a joint basis because we expect almost all future operations to be joint'.¹

The Strategic Defence Review of 1998 moved things on yet further, although not without resistance from the single services. The changes included the creation of a Defence Logistics Organisation for the support of all defence equipment. This brought together much activity in the areas of storage, transport, maintenance and repair and procurement, which had previously been handled by the individual services. Moreover, a Permanent Joint Headquarters (PJHQ) was created for the direction of UK military operations, replacing the practice of allocating the command of an operation to the single service that was predominantly involved. Joint Force Harrier and the Joint Helicopter Command were also created as means of securing more value from air assets and a Joint Concepts and Doctrine Centre (JCDC) was set up to articulate and develop defence-wide thought.

The pressures for increased joint elements within the UK military machine have come from two sources: the need for enhanced efficiency in the use of funds during the preparation of military capability; and the need for optimum military performance on operations in an era when joint and coalition operations are commonplace. As these pressures evolve over time, it can be argued that jointery will not reach a steady state and should be seen as a continuous process rather than a particular end state.² Even if the separate identities of the three services were abandoned altogether, it would still be necessary to consider issues regarding the co-ordination of defence forces with other elements of the security sector; while, of course, pressures may also arise to break up the armed forces once they were united.

Since 2000, however, the move towards jointery in the defence sector has stalled. There has arguably been movement in the other direction. It is difficult to discern significant consequences from the outputs to date of the JCDC (today the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre, DCDC). While the formation of the Defence Equipment and Support Organisation in 2006 created a huge institution responsible for almost half the defence budget, it constituted the merger of two already joint bodies: the Defence

Logistics Organisation and the Defence Procurement Agency. The single services were also given responsibility for specifying service-level agreements for both the support of individual systems and the use of funds by the DE&S to deliver that service level. In other words, the services began to act as true customers responsible for both what was needed and how funding should be prioritised and managed.

A key development was the Navy's initiative to merge the organisations and Top Level Budgets (TLBs) of the Commander-in-Chief Fleet (the 'front-line commander') and the Second Sea Lord. The former had been responsible for the generation of naval forces at specified states of readiness, involving significant collective training activity. The latter was in charge of the recruitment, retention, career development and individual training of naval personnel. By merging these two bodies the Navy generated some savings (an irresistible offer to the government) but at the same time made it much more difficult for the Ministry to increase the joint element of the personnel function. Any thought of a 'Defence Personnel Organisation', to sit alongside the Defence Logistics Organisation, became less feasible. The other services, which also had separate force preparation and personnel structures, were aware of the implications of the Navy's move. They took themselves in the same direction: the Commander-in-Chief Air Command had a single budget for training and people from 2007.³ With its larger number of people, it took the Army longest to make this change, and the single Army TLB was created only on 1 April 2008.⁴

The MoD itself then reinforced single service structures by restoring the financial roles of the single-service chiefs. Under the separate front-line command and personnel structures introduced with the Strategic Defence Review in 1998, the service chiefs were not TLB holders and their offices were funded from the MoD Central TLB. However, after the services had merged their personnel and training sections at the individual level, the Ministry decided that the single chiefs would become the TLB holders for their services in order to improve the match of 'accountability with delivery responsibility'.⁵

A further sign of the stalled move towards jointery was the status of the role of Chief of Joint Operations, which was created in 1998. The services are understood to have resisted this appointment becoming a four-star position during the SDR process. Despite the prominence of operations in the UK's military activity since 1998 and the fact that the MoD sees support to operations as its 'overriding priority', the post remained at the three-star level although four of the five commanders to have held the post have gone on to take up four-star positions. Intriguingly, the Cabinet Office Capability Review of the MoD in 2007 omitted even to mention the

role of Chief of Joint Operations even in an advisory role: 'military operations are the responsibility of CDS, drawing on the advice of the three single Service Chiefs of Staff and the VCDS, within the Chiefs of Staff Committee which CDS chairs'.⁶

Finally, attention should be drawn to the evolution of the former Equipment Capability Customer (ECC) area, these days called the Capability Sponsor (CS). This body replaced the 'Systems' area that existed until 1998. The defining idea of the ECC organisation, whose role was to define military requirements and to generate the financial plan for their procurement, was that it should operate in 'capability' terms and should not serve single-service agendas. It was organised so that its component elements (Directors of Equipment Capability, now Heads of Capability) would cross single-service boundaries. However, for military officers serving there, their next appointment and possible promotion depended (and depends) on their 'home' service. An officer thinking of a change in capability that would damage that home service or even a particular branch of a service must also consider the impact of such a choice on his or her career.

In the years since its formation, the responsibilities of this organisation have widened beyond equipment so that its staff are charged with oversight of all the various elements associated with turning equipment into useable capability and with the examination of solutions to capability gaps that involve the redeployment of existing resources rather than new equipment. They must chair a large number of stakeholder meetings, with the services having significant voices, which are concerned both with capability planning and capability delivery.⁷

In the Ministry's management structure, the CS is formally accountable for the timely provision of all the Defence Lines of Development (DLoD) needed to generate capability. In addition to equipment itself, these lines of development comprise training, people, infrastructure, doctrine, organisation, information and logistics. The CS can only hope to persuade the Top Level Budget holders responsible for these elements to do what is needed, as it directly controls no funding itself.

In the years since 1998, the MoD has sought to manage its funding along both 'capability' and single service lines, a far from comfortable matrix arrangement. In this evolving situation, the ECC and then CS staff has repeatedly been cut – most recently as a result of the MoD 'streamlining' exercise. It thus has to depend on others to generate the information it needs and physically to draft the detail of requirements. The formal justification for this is that the CS should be concerned with decision-making at the strategic level

and with requirements articulated at the high level. This, however, fails to take account that with many requirements the devil (much of the technical challenge, the cost and the risk) is in the detail. The workloads of Heads of Capability and their military staffs, and the short periods that they occupy in that post, mean that they can struggle to absorb all aspects of the requirements they support.

The financial planning role of the CS is weakened by the practice of the DE&S retaining responsibility for the in-year financial management of equipment spending (by slowing or accelerating projects, the DE&S, and on occasion ministers, affects the long-term costs of all projects). The CS is also headed by a three-star officer. Of the four officers who have held this post, just one so far has been promoted to a four-star position. In short, the Capability Sponsor organisation has important responsibilities for capability management and development, but lacks personnel numbers and political weight. This is perhaps understandable once it is appreciated that, the stronger the Capability Sponsor, the weaker the individual services.

So perhaps jointery has gone as far as it should. Certainly, some distinguished military figures feel that the defence 'business space' – capability preparation activities – should not be exposed to any further 'centralisation'.⁸ There is also a case for reorganising the Capability Sponsor itself largely along single-service or environmental lines, and for ending the capability-based approach introduced in the Smart Procurement initiative of 1998. The DE&S itself has an extensive single-service manifestation, since it has in its structure three three-star officers (Chiefs of Materiel) responsible for relations and deliveries to fleet, land and air.

Reorganising the Capability Sponsor organisation along largely single-service lines would have two dangers. Most obviously, it could encourage 'replacement' thinking, in which the services look for better versions of existing equipment, rather than radical possibilities opened up by new technology which could disrupt existing organisations and cultures.⁹ Secondly, it could lead to neglect in investment by the key enablers of capability, C41STAR¹⁰ and logistics, which are essentially joint in nature.

A further point is that anecdotal evidence strongly indicates that service chiefs rarely think in 'defence' terms and are driven centrally by their perceptions of their own service's interests. As members of the Defence Board, they should be concerned always with the interest of the Ministry as a whole, but few in Whitehall believe that the service chiefs often adopt such a stance. There is a need to recognise two sources of single-service rivalry: on the one hand, there is the drive to protect key projects that are seen as capturing

the importance and the nature of the organisation: Typhoon for the RAF and the carriers for the Navy appear to fall into this category. The Army, as a more people-centric body, has often focused on the protection of units rather than projects. On the other hand, the fact that defence resources are relatively fixed and increasingly scarce means that a competition for resource is inevitable among organisations and sub-organisations staffed by people who believe in the importance of what they do. Even within the Army, the Royal Armoured Corps sometimes feels in competition with the Royal Artillery, and so on. It is scarcely surprising that someone who spent the first twenty-plus years of his or her career with a particular service finds it difficult to put 'defence' first in the Defence Board while being responsible for the management of that service in the 'day job'.

Significantly in the public domain the Cabinet Office Capability Review of the Ministry of Defence in 2007 pointed to the challenge of developing a corporate perspective in the Defence Board.¹¹ In the years since, resource pressures have intensified and financial threats – rather than organisational – to service standing have increased. This period has been marked by RAF efforts to take over naval air power¹² and Army-led complaints about the resources being taken up by major projects such as Typhoon and the carriers, and it is hard to believe that collegiality has increased.

The 2009 Capability Review of the Ministry of Defence stressed the progress made by the Ministry in reducing its headcount and in building relations with other ministries. However it also said the Ministry needed to do more to improve its corporate decision-making, to strengthen its capacity for 'tough resource decisions', to improve prioritisation, and to develop 'a more robust overarching strategy for the department'.¹³ Service rivalries manifested in the Defence Board cannot make such progress easier.

Rather than seek vainly to press the service chiefs to think in defence terms, one possibility would be to accept their orientation. Their central role would be recognised as 'providers' of force elements at specified rates of readiness but, to use the language of the Ministry, they would not have a 'decider' role with regard to when and how those forces might be used. They would not form part of the Defence Council or the Defence Board. In terms of advice to ministers, the chief of defence staff would maintain his current predominant role supported on operational matters by the chief of joint operations and on managerial/business space questions by the vice chief of the defence staff. The service chiefs could and presumably would feed their views to the vice chief, CJO or CDS himself, depending on the issue at hand, through the Chiefs of Staff Committee. Arguably, the Ministry itself has moved in this


sort of direction by giving more prominence to the Group of Four (CDS, VCDS, the permanent secretary and the second permanent secretary).¹⁴

It is possible (but unlikely) that the MoD could choose to organise its armed forces as a whole, and not just its equipment-based planning, on a capability rather than an environment basis. The MoD recently divided defence into thirty-six or so areas of capability, many of which cross single service frontiers. The single services as such could be wound up and the uniformed armed forces re-organised around these capability areas. This would be a massive organisational change, which would pose significant risks to the moral element of UK fighting power. It is not going to happen. But the MoD cannot simply ignore the logical tensions between simultaneously planning its armed forces on a capability and on an environmental service basis. Some changes should be considered at least in the personnel sections of the armed forces to allow Equipment Sponsor staff in particular to act as well as think in capability terms without having to worry about the impact of such behaviour on their career prospects.

Conclusion

This paper suggests that the jointery issue should at least be opened for re-examination. In the past, the MoD has seen joint organisations as improving the performance of UK forces on operations, and as a means of rationalising the peacetime and wartime management of the Ministry's resources. By reducing unnecessary duplication of function and by running training and other bodies on a larger 'defence-wide scale', the MoD has sought to improve the efficiency with which it uses its resources. The emerging Defence Review should look at the operation of joint bodies, and consider whether they should be expanded or rolled back as part of the overall effort to optimise the capability derived from the resources available. There is also the question of the reconciliation of structures intended to deliver capability management with the management of the individual services, and of the apparent need to align the strength of the Capability Sponsor with its domain of accountability. This argument in particular resonates with some of the findings generated from a different starting point in the recently published Gray Report.¹⁵

The issue of the possible further integration of the single services is far from the only organisational matter to be addressed in the Defence Review. It is necessary to consider the wider definition of 'purple' bodies to include the relative roles of responsibilities of the civil servants, military personnel and the role of the private sector, in both the generation and delivery of capability. But it would not appear that the UK yet has the optimum balance between single

service identities and areas of autonomy on the one hand and ‘team defence’ and capability management on the other. This paper has sought to show that the movement towards greater service co-ordination and integration has deep roots, that evolution appears to have halted, and that there are significant areas that are at least worthy of debate. 

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Notes

¹ Malcolm Rifkind, ‘Introduction to the Ministry of Defence’, in *Front Line First: The Defence Costs Study* (London: Ministry of Defence, July 1994), p. 1.

² See Trevor Taylor, ‘Jointery: Military Integration’ in Teri McConville and Richard Holmes, *Defence Management in Uncertain Times* (London: Frank Cass, 2002), p. 70.

³ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report & Accounts 2007-8 Volume II* (London: The Stationery Office, 21 July 2008), p. 290.

⁴ Ministry of Defence, *Annual Report & Accounts 2008-9 Volume II* (London: The Stationery Office, 20 July 2009), p. 213.

⁵ Civil Service Capability Review, ‘Ministry of Defence: Progress and next steps’, March 2009, p. 11.

⁶ Civil Service Capability Review, ‘Capability Review of the Ministry of Defence’, March 2007, p. 12, <http://www.civilservice.gov.uk/Assets/Capability_Review_MOD_tcm6-1066.pdf>, accessed 3 September 2009.

⁷ Capability planning is undertaken through Capability Management and Capability Planning Groups in London, with delivery overseen by around thirty-six programme boards, chaired by ES but supported by programme support offices based at the DE&S premises in Abbey Wood.

⁸ General Sir Richard Dannatt, speech at the International Institute for Strategic Studies, 30 July 2009.

⁹ For a detailed exposition of some relevant historical experience in this regard, see Terry C Pierce (ed), *Warfighting and Disruptive Technologies: Disguising Innovation* (London: Frank Cass, 2004).

¹⁰ Command, Control, Communication and Computers, Information/Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance.

¹¹ Civil Service Capability Review, *op. cit.* in note 6, p. 23.

¹² See, for instance, Michael Smith 'Head of Royal Navy threatens resignation over push to scrap Harriers', *The Sunday Times*, 7 December 2008; Thomas Harding, 'Harrier dispute between Navy and RAF chiefs sees Army "marriage counsellor" called in', *Daily Telegraph*, 4 February 2009; Lewis Page, 'Navy glovepuppets minister in carrier battle against RAF', *theregister.co.uk*, 17 February 2009.

¹³ Civil Service Capability Reviews, 'Ministry of Defence: Progress and next steps', March 2009.

¹⁴ The Group of Four is not mentioned in Ministry of Defence, 'How defence works: the Defence Framework', but it is referred to positively in Civil Service Capability Reviews, *op. cit.* in note 5, p. 8.

¹⁵ Bernard Gray, *Review of Acquisition for the Secretary of State for Defence: an Independent Report by Bernard Gray*, (London: Ministry of Defence, 2009).

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