The Contemporary Strategic Environment: a Model

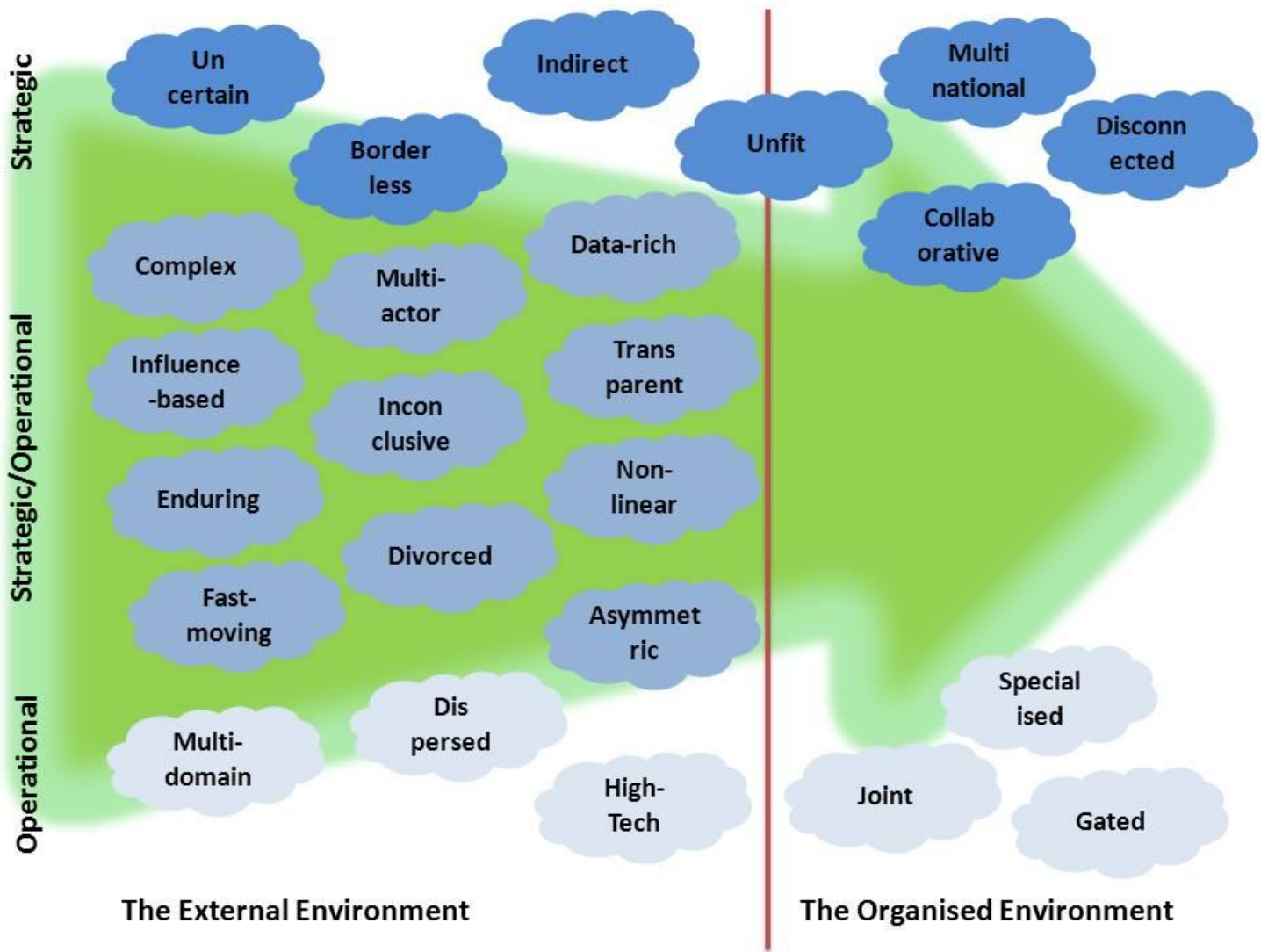## Tony Lawrence and Tomas Jermalavičius

The figure and table below present a fuller version of a model of the contemporary strategic environment presented in our *Defence Studies* paper which explores the degree to which various arrangements for the strategic level of defence are able to respond to the challenges this environment poses (Lawrence, Tony and Tomas Jermalavičius, "Fit for Purpose: How Should the Higher Levels of Defence Be Organised in the Contemporary Strategic Environment?" *Defence Studies* 12, no.4: 503-522).

The first column of the table identifies, with a single adjective, a feature of the environment which has been derived from a study of the literature. Our intention is that the identified features should together provide a full picture of the environment with no overlaps. The second column of the table provides a fuller (but not a formal) definition of each feature. The third column provides supporting references.

The list of features is divided vertically into three groups, shaded from darker to lighter. The first group contains features that primarily challenge our strategic-level defence organisations directly at the strategic level, for example, the inability to predict where, when and in what manner we will be required to act. The third group contains features that challenge more the operational and tactical levels, but may in turn have implications for the strategic level. The second group contains features which simultaneously challenge both the strategic level and operational/tactical level. The divisions between these groupings are blurred, just as the boundaries between the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war have become blurred in contemporary conflict. There is no significance to the ordering of features within each group.

The list of features is also divided horizontally into two groups. The first group describes features of the external environment itself. The second group describes ways in which western states have organised themselves to deal with the external environment and which, in turn, become features of the environment in which our defence organisations must operate. Multinationality is an example of this group, since it is both a response to the contemporary environment (few states are willing or able to operate alone today) and a feature of the environment within which states must operate (requiring, for example, active measures to manage coalitions). We refer to these two groups respectively as the 'external environment' and the 'organised environment'.

The figure presents some features of the model in a graphical form.

RKK
ICDS

The External Environment

The Organised Environment

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

2

RKK
ICDS

Group I: The External Environment		
Feature	**Commentary**	**References**
Uncertain	It is very difficult to foresee where, when and in what manner we will be required to act.	"One of the great problems that confronts American strategists and military planners is the conundrum of preparing for wars that remain uncertain as to their form, location, level of commitment, the contribution of potential allies, and the nature of the enemy. The only matter that is certain is that joint forces will find themselves committed to conflict against the enemies of the United States and its Allies, and in defense of its vital interests."[1] "Expect to be surprised. To win as a defense planner is not to avoid surprise. To win is to have planned in such a manner that the effects of surprise do not inflict lethal damage."[2] "… the development of a number of major trends will produce a wider range of potential threats to stability than we have previously faced, many of them transnational in nature. It will be harder to predict which threats will emerge as the most significant, leading to a future international context characterised by uncertainty."[3]
Indirect	Conflicts are rarely existential; their immediate connection to our own security is not always obvious. We are able to choose whether or not to engage and, if the former, at what scale and with what means.	"The armed forces' tasks in the contemporary security environment are generally more indirect or long term. They aim either to prevent direct threats before they arise or to curtail the knock-on effects of regional instability. These kinds of missions also represent a shift from what we call 'campaign wars' to 'iterative wars'. In the former, military action is premised around reaching a clear and identifiable victory point – in most cases the defeat of an opponent's military forces. The latter concerns the long-term management of conflict and instability and is likely to be far more ambiguous and complex in both outcome and prosecution."[4] "Many contemporary threats to advanced nations are no longer direct but indirect; they are not about territory but are projected across territory into permeable open societies."[5]
Borderless	The distinction between internal and external security has been eroded; adversaries attack wherever it is advantageous to do so.	"The post Cold War environment is one of increasingly open borders in which the internal and external aspects of security are indissolubly linked."[6] "Even in a regular war, potential opponents, engaged in a life and death struggle with the United States, may engage U.S. forces across the spectrum of conflict. Thus, the Joint Force must expect attacks on its sustainment, its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities, and its command and control networks. The Joint Force can expect future opponents to launch both terrorist and unconventional attacks on the territory of the continental United States, while U.S. forces, moving through the global commons, could find themselves under persistent and effective attack. In this respect, the immediate past is not necessarily a guide to the future."[7] "Liberal democratic governments face the reality that many security challenges are now seamless and transcend domestic, foreign and defence policies. Moreover, such challenges are characterised by complex interactions that link, rather than divide, streams of events from the local to the global – from Bali and Birmingham to Basra and Baghdad to Kandahar and Cambridge."[8]

Complex	The problems posed by modern security situations are complex or 'wicked'. In complex situations and systems, global behaviour emerges from a set of local interactions, but even perfect information about initial conditions is not sufficient to predict behaviours and outcomes, and it is not possible to establish cause and effect relationships between them.[9] When problems are wicked, the challenges are greater even than those posed by complexity. Wicked problems are those which are impossible to formulate (without proposing a solution), are essentially unique, have no fixed set of solutions and no objective measures of success, are 'one-shot' since each attempt to impose a solution creates another set of wicked problems, and are themselves symptoms of another higher order wicked problem.[10]	"Complexity is significant to commanders as a characteristic of operational problems. An *operational problem* is a discrepancy between the state of affairs *as it is* and the state of affairs *as it ought to be* that compels military action to resolve it … with slight modification [Professor of Design at UC Berkeley, Horst] Rittel's description of [wicked problems] captures well the challenge posed by operational problems in the modern era."[11] "Irregular conflict is neither neat nor fair. Definitionally, it is hard to describe, including as it does conflicts ranging from Somalia to Bosnia to Sierra Leone to Colombia to Iraq to Afghanistan (to say nothing of Sudan, the Philippines, or Yemen). Hybrid, counterinsurgency (COIN), stability operations, counterterrorism, and civil war have all been utilized as descriptions, often in combination. But if defining irregular conflict is difficult, even more difficult is knowing how to respond, especially for an outside intervener like the United States. Doctrine has now been developed, but in practice the context of an irregular conflict is generally so complex and contradictory that it is difficult to put the full doctrine effectively into practice."[12] "It is that complex: where you build the well, what military operations to run, who you talk to. Everything that you do is part of a complex system with expected and unexpected, desired and undesired outcomes, and outcomes that you never find out about. In my experience, I have found that the best answers and approaches may be counterintuitive; i.e. the opposite of what it seems like you ought to do is what ought to be done. When I am asked what approach we should take in Afghanistan, I say 'humility'."[13]

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

4

RKK
ICDS

Influence-based	Conflicts are not concluded formally by treaty, but instead end when the facts on the ground are accepted as 'good enough' by all stakeholders. Our goal is to influence these stakeholders.	"Modern wars are fought in more than simply the physical elements of the battlefield. Among the most important of these are the media in which the "battle of narratives" will occur. Our enemies have already recognized that perception is as important to their successes as the actual events. … The battle of narratives must involve a sophisticated understanding of the enemy and how he will attempt to influence the perceptions not only of his followers, but the global community. His efforts will involve deception, sophisticated attempts to spin events, and outright lies."[14] "Success in future conflict, especially against adaptive and agile adversaries, *will* require a shift away from kinetic to influence activity, underpinned by a greater understanding of the enemy. This understanding *will* require more emphasis on intelligence gathering, cultural awareness, individual and collective training, and focused comprehensive approaches."[15] "The decisive combat [in irregular warfare] occurs in an about the minds of civilians, not on the battlefield."[16]
Data-rich	Traditional, social and internet-based media provides information, of uncertain veracity and in substantial quantity, alongside or ahead of our own information sources.	"In 2011, the world watched in awe as Tunisians, and then Egyptians, rallied together against their respective governments, using social media first to spark awareness and then to capture the world's attention, as they brought down two of the Middle East's long-standing dictators within weeks … These movements were not the first to use digital tools for activism, nor will they be the last. But the successes of online activists in Tunisia and Egypt have profound implications, both for activists and for policymakers."[17] "There is a new media which stretches the definition far beyond the traditional understanding and assumptions of what 'media' involves. Most profound is the transparency and mass power to bear witness created by the ubiquity of new, cheap digital technology … This proliferation of tiny cameras, mobile phones, PDAs and ever more available bandwidth is not just in the urban sprawls of developed countries. It should now be taken for granted in the most obscure, unlikely and remote locations of the globe."[18] "Electronic/digital media move vast amounts of data in split seconds across networks of consumers. It is in the nature of digital communications networks that when ideas or images find sympathetic viewers, surges spread virally and exponentially through populations distributed across international borders."[19]
Transparent	The actions of our leaders and forces are subject to constant scrutiny.	"In coming decades, interconnectedness plus the dispersion of power and information will make the need for consensus decisionmaking even more important. States will have to justify the use of armed force."[20] "In the fast-moving events of modern war, leaders have less and less time to digest the information at their disposal, to assess its quality and to make decisions. These decisions and their outcomes will be scrutinized just as quickly thus adding to the 'telescoping' pressures. The performance of NATO in Kosovo, and even more of the coalition forces in Iraq, are testament to this process."[21] "The actions of our armed forces, at home and abroad, have never been under greater scrutiny than they are today. Our forces are operating - in this hazardous new environment - under a microscope and that microscope is here to stay. And this is why I believe British troops are now forced to operate on what I call "an uneven playing field of scrutiny". Real time analysis of our forces' actions down to the level of a single private soldier, whilst the enemy which refuses any scrutiny at all and endeavours to exploit our highly prized free media against us. There is now asymmetric - uneven - scrutiny of warfare. And it is unlikely to go away so long as we fight terrorists who oppose our democratic way of life."[22]

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

5

Inconclusive	It is not possible to define, or even to recognise victory or defeat and thus to determine when it is reasonable to withdraw from a problem. Inconclusiveness, or the lack of a 'stopping rule', is another feature of wicked problems.[23]	"The US President George W. Bush's declaration that 'major combat operations' were completed and the war in Iraq had been won on 1 May 2003 is in need of qualification, given subsequent developments. This may imply the possibility that war termination may not equal victory or defeat. The conceptual problem is therefore that victory and defeat may not be a meaningful description of all potential outcomes in all wars. Are the concepts of victory and defeat mutually exclusive and do they cover all possible outcomes of wars? Is winning equal to not losing? Can the war against terror be won? How can we measure victory and defeat? What time perspective should be applied to the notions of victory and defeat? What constitutes victory and defeat in modern war?"[24] "Well beyond prevailing in combat on the battlefield, strategic victory necessitates achieving interrelated informational, military, political, economic, social, and diplomatic objectives. Each of these six elements … represents a continuum ranging from absence of strategic victory on one end to presence of strategic victory on the other end. This definition of strategic victory does not entail complete success in every element; nonetheless, since the elements are interconnected, attaining certain minimum thresholds in all may be necessary … To determine whether strategic victory is present, one must decide (1) how long after the war, and in whose perception, judgments should be rendered; and (2) what threshold is minimally acceptable for each element."[25] "Who is winning [in Afghanistan]? The answer to this question depends on who you ask. This is not like a football game with points on a scoreboard; it is more like a political debate, after which both sides announce that they won. That matters because we are not the scorekeepers: not NATO ISAF, not our governments, and not even our press. The perception on all those entities will matter and they will affect the situation, but ultimately this is going to be decided in the minds and perceptions of the Afghan people of the Afghan government and of the insurgents, whether they can win or are winning, and, most importantly, the perception of the villager who casts his lot with the winner."[26]
Non-linear	The problems posed by modern security challenges are disproportionate – outputs are not proportional to inputs and may be disruptively large or small; and non-additive - synergistic interactions mean that the whole is not equal to the sum of the parts.[27] Non-linearity, is a feature of complexity.	"In many cases, the individual Marine will be the most conspicuous symbol of American foreign policy and will potentially influence not only the immediate tactical situation, but the operational and strategic levels as well. His actions, therefore, will directly impact the outcome of the larger operation; and he will become, as the title of this article suggests - the *Strategic Corporal.*"[28] "In conducting their business the generals, colonels, captains, and occasionally corporals have a political effect, it is they who deal with the local leaders and with other agencies, both military and political, be they governmental or non-governmental; the fire department or police, UNHCR or Human Rights Watch, or the media. The result is that our decision process, and our staff systems including its [sic] supporting technology are often found to be unsuitable; authorities and decision points shift, different information is required, small tactical actions have unforeseen consequences at the strategic level, and so on."[29] "The character of current operations has the increasing effect of collapsing the levels of war – tactical, operational and strategic – into each other, with the operational narrative becoming the strategic narrative, and the operational conduct of war itself being shaped by tactical possibilities and tactical events."[30]

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

6

Enduring	Individual operations are long-lasting, campaigns longer so.	"Our conflicts tend to be timeless, since we are seeking a condition which then must be maintained until an agreement on a definitive outcome, which may take years or decades."[31] "Although we must maintain our ability to be expeditionary, the Army is moving away from the short lived doctrine that all campaigns can be short in duration. 'Go First, Go Fast, Go Home' had a very short shelf life as a policy aspiration. We must have an increasing capacity to endure, which implies not only greater mass of people, but enough depth in joint enablers to allow wider concurrency together with greater endurance."[32] "Time is a key –sometimes the key – resource, and one which our opponents are likely to hold in far greater quantity than do we."[33]
Fast-moving	Events evolve very quickly.	"One of the most important determinants of success for 21st century militaries will be the extent to which they are faster than their opponents ... *Strategic* speed will be equally important as a determinant of success in future armed conflict. In the broadest sense, this entails making a lighter, more transportable military force [and] faster decisionmaking."[34] "As events accelerate, response times shorten. Deliberation, formation of ad hoc responses and coalitions, and sifting through alternatives all become luxuries once a threat is immediate. In this century events and their repercussions will not wait for a country to organise itself and its allies. A strategy of ad hoc reaction will not work."[35]
Divorced	Combat operations take place without the participation of the wider public, or their understanding.	"A final pressing issue for military–society relations in Britain relates to the wider social legitimacy of the expeditionary role itself. The wars the armed forces are currently fighting appear distant to most people and rarely impact on their everyday lives. We have already noted that the contextual ambiguity of many expeditionary operations makes the link between the armed forces and national defence more complex and indirect than it was during the Cold War period. This in turn leads to a series of dilemmas about how UK armed forces maintain and sustain legitimacy and public support."[36] "Large segments of the public rely upon political leaders to vet the often complex issues involved in prospective and ongoing military interventions. These groups respond predictably when the leaders they find most credible begin to question—or decide to oppose—an intervention." [37]
Multi-actor	Conflict is fought simultaneously by a wide range of actors, including states, their proxies and non-state combatants.	"The sub-state features of many wars are prominent, as they are increasingly fought by militias, paramilitaries, warlord armies, criminal gangs, private security firms and tribal groupings, so that the Westphalian state's monopoly of violence is increasingly challenged both from outside and inside. This has been notable in conflicts such as those in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan and Bosnia."[38] "There is nothing new about irregular forces. But globalisation and the fragmentation of state authority in unstable regions has meant that the reach and impact these non-state groups can have is now global and not limited to a single country or region. Moreover, the diversity and proliferation of these groups is a new phenomenon."[39] "The security environment will include conventional, irregular, terrorist and criminal elements in mixed modes of operations. Adversaries show no respect for distinctions drawn between civil and military operations, and exploit them to threaten the Alliance's territories, populations and forces."[40]

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

7

RKK
ICDS

Asymmetric	Adversaries are able to avoid engagements that would play to our traditional strengths, and instead deliberately target our vulnerabilities; they can quickly adapt their strategies as we find ways to defeat them and will often operate without the political, legal or ethical considerations that constrain our own actions.	"Throughout history, the "paradox of war" reveals that thinking adversaries avoid strengths and gravitate towards areas of perceived weaknesses. In this tradition, enemies will avoid conventional military operations in which they are unprepared to confront NATO forces. Instead they will attack in ways NATO might consider irregular or asymmetric, but are anything but asymmetric to them."[41] "However, potential US adversaries will continue to try to level the playing field by pursuing asymmetrical strategies designed to exploit perceived US military and political vulnerabilities. In the future, advanced states might engage in counterspace strikes, network attacks, and information warfare to disrupt US military operations on the eve of a conflict. Cyber and sabotage attacks on critical US economic, energy, and transportation infrastructures might be viewed by some adversaries as a way to circumvent US strengths on the battlefield and attack directly US interests at home. In addition, the continued proliferation of long-range missile systems, anti-access capabilities, and nuclear weapons and other forms of WMD might be perceived by potential adversaries and US allies alike as increasingly constraining US freedom of action in time of crisis despite US conventional military superiority."[42] "Asymmetric tactics are used to overcome conventional military superiority with violence that humanity generally considers unacceptable. States and societies do not have the luxury of assuming chivalry in their enemies."[43]
Multi-domain	Conflict is fought in many domains simultaneously, including non-traditional domains such as the cyber- and information- domains.	"We have to conclude that the future does not portend a suite of distinct challengers with alternative or different methods but their convergence into multi-modal or Hybrid Wars. 'Hybrid Wars' blend the lethality of state conflict with the fanatical and protracted fervour of irregular warfare … This could include states blending high-tech capabilities, like anti-satellite weapons, with terrorism and cyber-warfare directed against financial targets."[44] "Hybrid conflicts are assessed as the *most likely* form of conflict facing the United States. Few states, if any, are capable of matching America's overwhelming conventional military combat power. Because of our conventional superiority, adversaries will seek more indirect forms of conflict. We expect opponents to blend different approaches and integrate various weapons (lethal and nonlethal), tactics, and technologies to deny us access and freedom of action. They will be particularly effective in the information environment, exploiting both modern media and cybertechnology."[45] "Containing the expansion and escalation of conflicts will become more problematic in the future. The advancement of weapons capabilities such as long-range precision weapons, the continued proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the employment of new forms of warfare such as cyber and space warfare are providing state militaries and nonstate groups the means to escalate and expand future conflicts beyond the traditional battlefield."[46]

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

8

Dispersed	The battlespace, such as it exists, is composed of widely dispersed, inter-connected centres of activity. Combatants are likewise thinly dispersed, but locally concentrated.	"Activity, including our own and that of the enemy, will continue to gravitate towards the inter-connected nodes. The nodes are centres of activity that will be threatened with attack and disruption, and will require protection and offer opportunities for exploitation. Nodes range from critical military infrastructure such as air and sea ports, and satellite ground stations, to strategic locations including centres of governance in urban areas and maritime choke points, and also where the adversaries' strategic interests are clustered, such as areas of major narcotics production and distribution. These nodes will be of importance in all environments."[47] "U.S. Army combat experience since 2001 and the anticipated demands of future armed conflict highlight the need to decentralize command as a critical element of operational adaptability. The uniqueness of local conditions and uncertainty associated with the interaction of Army forces with the enemy and complex environments will confound efforts to develop an aggregated common operational picture as a basis for centralized decision making or control of forces."[48]
High-tech	High technology is a feature of our own armed forces, but is also increasingly available to our adversaries.	"The growing availability of sophisticated off-the-shelf (OTS) weapon technology for non-state actors will increase NATO's vulnerability significantly. Strikes against high-value targets (military and civilian) could have potentially catastrophic consequences and may necessitate that NATO enhances force protection for military and essential non-military components most at risk."[49] "The accelerating pace of innovation and possible rewards will increase the likelihood and frequency of breakthroughs. Any of these may result in unintended consequences; some are likely to be positive. However, some may have catastrophic effects or present potential threats, perhaps through perverse applications, such as the use of genetic engineering to produce designer bio-weapons. The rapid asymmetric insertion and exploitation of extant commercial technologies by adversaries, and the extent to which they can render existing defence capabilities obsolete or ineffective, will be of significant concern. The rate of innovation and adoption by society of certain technologies will pose significant challenges when compared to the traditional, long-term requirement and acquisition cycles. Conversely, there may be political pressure to adopt a precautionary approach, deliberately restraining such development."[50] "Technological advantage will remain a vital component of military effectiveness. The Army must continue to develop countermeasures to future threat capabilities and pursue technological opportunities. Enemies and adversaries, however, will counter technological advantages through emulation, adaptation, or evasion. It is because of this continuous interaction that the Army must take an evolutionary, rather than revolutionary or "leap ahead," approach to force development. Understanding how human beings apply technology will continue to be more important than the technologies themselves."[51]

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

9

RKK
ICDS

Group II: The Organised Environment		
Feature	**Commentary**	**References**
Unfit	Our armed forces are not well suited to the environment in which they operate.	"However, while every alliance member voted for Libya mission, less than half have participated at all, and fewer than a third have been willing to participate in the strike mission. Frankly, many of those allies sitting on the sidelines do so not because they do not want to participate, but simply because they can't. The military capabilities simply aren't there … In particular, intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets are lacking that would allow more allies to be involved and make an impact. The most advanced fighter aircraft are little use if allies do not have the means to identify, process, and strike targets as part of an integrated campaign."[52] "The 27 EU member-states have half a million more men and women in uniform than the Americans; yet they can only deploy a fraction of the troops that the US does on expeditionary' operations – those far from home bases, which is where all recent conflicts have been fought. The reasons for this relative weakness vary. Too much heavy Cold War weaponry remains in place in Europe; it is expensive to maintain and, unless modernised to include up-to-date electronics, nearly useless. EU countries also spend one third of what the Americans spend per soldier: this means that fewer EU servicemen and women get the expensive equipment and training necessary for overseas operations. But, chiefly, EU countries underperform because with 27 different governments managing, equipping and commanding 27 militaries they never enjoy the economies of scale the US does."[53] "The current budgetary shortfall and overstretch in the British military is real and is happening now. It stems in large part from a mismatch between the ambitious roles the armed forces have been asked to fulfil and the organisational and financial constraints they face in doing so."[54]
Multinational	States do not operate alone, but in alliances or coalitions.	"In almost every case, [Joint Force commanders, their staffs, and their subordinates] will find themselves working closely with partners, a factor which will demand not only a thorough understanding of U.S. political goals, but coalition goals as well."[55] "… traditional ideas of complete national independence in defence are increasingly unsustainable and unrealistic. The UK defence and security environment does not exist in a geopolitical vacuum. The British armed forces are located in multinational networks of alliances, shared interests and habits of security cooperation, incorporating the countries of NATO and the EU as well as others."[56]
Collaborative	Armed forces/defence ministries do not operate alone, but in conjunction with other ministries, IOs and NGOs.	"Healthy partnerships provide an opening for NATO to pursue solutions to complex problems that affect its security; in most instances, the preferred method will be a comprehensive approach that combines military and civilian elements. NATO is strong and versatile but it is by no means well-suited to every task. Other organisations, national governments and nongovernmental entities can lead the way toward such vital goals as economic reconstruction, political reconciliation, improved governance, and the strengthening of civil society."[57] "It is now commonly accepted by strategists that contemporary COIN is, in sociological jargon, a 'wicked problem'. To deal with it requires an integrated, comprehensive approach across government, with multinational partners, and a host of other entities."[58] "The security risks, threats and challenges, as well as the eventual opportunities that characterise the security environment require almost by default an inter-agency approach, not only at national level but also at international level. Moreover, these national and international cooperative engagements on security and defence matters are elaborated not only in military terms, but also at political, economic, intelligence and other levels."[59]

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

10

RKK
ICDS

Disconnected	Commanders on the ground will often have a different understanding of a situation from their superiors, or an understanding that their superiors simply lack. They may thus have to operate with a paucity or absence of guidance.	"To [exercise operational art] needs direction; it requires of policy a degree of clarity and consistency of purpose which can frequently be at odds with the realities and contingencies of politics. In 1952, when General Douglas MacArthur was recalled by President Harry Truman, his sin was to have called for a change in strategy; by contrast, McChrystal just wanted a strategy."[60] "In the past nine years, British military command has been compromised by poor strategy and ad hoc, often incoherent campaigns in which the use of resources has not been coordinated in theatre. Local in-theatre commanders, rotating on a six-monthly basis, sought to muddle through on the basis of intuition and professional ethos in the absence of clear strategic direction and inadequate resources."[61]
Joint	Operations do not take place in a single domain, but involve the coordinated efforts of all services/branches.	"At increasingly lower echelons, Army leaders must be able to integrate the actions, activities, and capabilities of joint assets into operational campaigns. Joint capabilities consist of the complementary and reinforcing effects that the capabilities of one service offer to the forces of other services. Joint capabilities make Army forces more effective than they would be otherwise."[62] "Joint operations have become the norm. Our ability to integrate our activities across land, sea and air - including in the enabling functions of logistics and communications - has meant that the sum is greater than the parts."[63]
Specialised	There is a (limited) degree of role specialisation in our armed forces.	"While it may be some years before EU members feel confident enough to go down the route of military role specialization, there is a degree of unco-ordinated specialization by default taking place as nations give up capabilities under resource pressures. EU members should discuss their future defence planning options early enough to achieve a more coherent approach."[64] "Through specialisation, individual nations or groups of nations share the responsibility for providing a particular capability. We have already pursued this approach most successfully in training. Our Centres of Excellence are hosted by a particular nation, and provide training support in a specific field – cyber defence training in Estonia, medical training in Hungary, and the Belgian-Netherlands Naval Mine Warfare Centre of Excellence -- these are all successful examples of this approach. The next step is to move from training specialisation to capability role specialisation."[65] "Not all members need to have the same capabilities. As part of a larger alliance, it is possible, and in fact preferable, that smaller Allies concentrate on particular capabilities that are often in high demand. This makes both fiscal and strategic sense. The smaller Allies cannot be expected to develop large expeditionary forces, but they should be encouraged to develop deployable units in particular high-demand areas."[66]
Gated	Force protection an important consideration in the disposition of forces and the conduct of missions.	"But above all, in blowing up as many enemies and as few civilians as necessary, [Western political leaders] aim to avoid many of their own soldiers or aircrew getting killed. Indeed, if averting risk to military personnel means increasing the risk of civilians being killed or harmed, then that unfortunately is a price that civilians must pay … I call [this] *risk-transfer* war because it centres on minimizing life-risks to the military – and hence all-important political and electoral risks to their masters – at the expense not only of 'enemies' bust also of those whom the West agrees are 'innocent'."[67] "We fight so as not to lose the force, rather than fighting by using the force at any cost to achieve the aim."[68]

RKK
ICDS

Notes

[1] US Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment 2010* (Suffolk VA: US Joint Forces Command Joint Futures Group, 2010), 62.

[2] Colin Gray, "The 21st Century Security Environment and the Future of War," *Parameters* XXVIII, Issue 4 (Winter 2008-9): 16.

[3] Ministry of Defence (UK), *Adaptability and Partnership: Issues for the Strategic Defence Review*, Cm 7794 (London: The Stationery Office, 2010), 15.

[4] Timothy Edmunds and Anthony Forster, *Out of Step: The Case For Change in the British Armed Forces* (London: Demos, 2007), 27.

[5] Michael Evans, "The Twenty-First Century Security Environment: Challenges for Joint Forces," *The RUSI Journal* 154, No. 2 (April 2009): 65.

[6] European Union, *A Secure Europe in a Better World: European Security Strategy* (Brussels: European Union, December 2003), 2.

[7] US Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment*, 64.

[8] Michael Evans, "The Twenty-First Century Security Environment," 66.

[9] David S Alberts, *The Agility Advantage. A Survival Guide for Complex Enterprises and Endeavours* (Washington DC: DoD Command and Control Research Program, 2011), 56-57.

[10] Horst W J Rittel and Melvin M Webber, "Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning," *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973): 160-167.

[11] US Army, *Commander's Appreciation and Campaign Design*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-5-500 (Fort Monroe VA: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2008), 8-9.

[12] Franklin D Kramer, "Irregular Conflict and the Wicked Problem Dilemma: Strategies of Imperfection," *Prism* 2, No. 3 (2011): 75.

[13] Stanley McChrystal, special address at International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, UK, 1 October, 2009.

[14] US Joint Forces Command, *The Joint Operating Environment*, 58.

[15] Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (UK), *Strategic Trends Programme: Global Strategic Trends – Out to 2040* (Shrivenham: DCDC, 2010), 17.

[16] Colin Gray, "Irregular Warfare: One Nature, Many Characters," *Strategic Studies Quarterly* 1 no. 2 (Winter 2007): 43.

[17] International Institute for Strategic Studies, Strategic Survey 2010 (London: IISS, 2011), 97.

[18] Nik Gowing, '*Skyful of Lies' and Black Swans: The New Tyranny of Shifting Information Power in Crises* (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 2009), 12-13.

[19] Neville Bolt, "The Leak Before the Storm: What Wikileaks Tells Us About Modern Communication," *The RUSI Journal* 155, No. 4 (August/September 2010): 48.

[20] Steven Metz, *Armed Conflict in the 21st Century: The Information Revolution and Post-Modern Warfare* (Carlisle PA: US Army War College Strategic Studies Institute, 2000), 75.

[21] Christopher Dandeker, "Surveillance and Military Transformation: Organizational Trends in Twenty-First-Century Armed Services," in *The New Politics of Surveillance and Visibility*, ed. Richard V. Ericson and Kevin D. Haggerty (Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2005),239.

[22] John Reid, "The Challenges of Modern War" (speech delivered at Kings College London, 20 February 2006).

[23] Rittel and Webber, *Dilemmas in a General Theory of Planning,* 162

[24] Jan Angstrom, "Introduction: the problem of victory and defeat in modern war," in *Understanding Defeat and Victory in Contemporary War*, ed. Jan Angstrom and Isabelle Duyvesteyn (Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 2007), 3.

[25] Robert Mandel, "Reassessing Victory in Warfare," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, No. 4 (2007): 468-469.

[26] Stanley McChrystal, special address at IISS.

[27] Alan Beyerchen, "Clausewitz, Nonlinearity, and the Unpredictability of War," *International Security* 17, No. 3 (Winter 1992/93): 60.

[28] Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines Magazine*, January 1999.

International Centre for Defence Studies | Toom-Rüütli 12-6 | Tallinn 10130 | Tel: +372 6949 340 | Faks: +372 6949 342 | info@icds.ee | **www.icds.ee**

12

RKK
ICDS

[29] Rupert Smith, "Wars in our time – a survey of recent and continuing conflicts," (speech at World Defence Systems, 3 February 2001), quoted in Paul Cornish, "Cry, 'Havoc!' and Let Slip the Managers of War" The Strategic, Military and Moral Hazards of Micro-Managed Warfare," Manfred Wörner Fellowship Report (Brussels: NATO, 2002), 8.

[30] Hew Strachan, "One War, Joint Warfare," *RUSI Journal* 154, no. 4 (August 2009): 22

[31] Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World* (London: Allen Lane, 2005), 17.

[32] Richard Dannatt, "The Land Environment – Moving Towards 2018," (speech at RUSI Land Warfare Conference, 12 June 2008).

[33] John Kiszely, *Post-Modern Challenges for Modern Warriors*, The Shrivenham Papers, no. 5 (Shrivenham: Defence Academy (UK), 2007), 7.

[34] Steven Metz, *Armed Conflict in the 21st Century*, 74-75.

[35] Gary Hart, "After bin Laden: Security Strategy and the Global Commons," *Survival* 53, no. 4 (August-September 2011): 21.

[36] Edmunds and Forster, *Out of Step*, 60.

[37] Eric V Larson, *Casualties and Consensus: The Historical Role of Casualties in Domestic Support for U.S. Military Operations* (Santa Monica CA: Rand, 2010), 102.

[38] Michael Sheehan, "The Changing Character of War," in *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations, 4th* edition, ed John Baylis, Steve Smith, and Patricia Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 222-223.

[39] Richard Dannatt, "A Perspective on the Nature of Future Conflict," speech at Chatham House, London, 15 May 2009.

[40] NATO, *Multiple Futures Project: Navigating towards 2030. Final Report* (NATO, April 2009),47.

[41] NATO, *Multiple Futures Project*, 47.

[42] National Intelligence Council*, Global Future Trends 2025: A Transformed World* (Washington DC: National Intelligence Council, November 2008), 97.

[43] Sean Kay, *Global Security in the Twenty-first Century: The Quest for Power and the Search for Peace*, 2nd edn (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 11.

[44] Frank G Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars* (Arlington VA: Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, 2007), 28.

[45] US Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Vision and Strategy 2025* (USMC, c. 2008), 12.

[46] National Intelligence Council*, Global Future Trends 2025*, 72.

[47] Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (UK), *Global Strategic Trends*, 25.

[48] US Army, *The Army Capstone Concept. Operational Adaptability: Operating under Conditions of Uncertainty and Complexity in an Era of Persistent Conflict, 2016-2018*. TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-0 (Fort Monroe VA: US Army Training and Doctrine Command, 2009), 28.

[49] NATO, *Bi-SC Input into a New NATO Capstone Concept for the Military Contribution to Countering Hybrid Threats*, Enclosure 1 to 1500/CPPCAM/FCR/10-270038 5000 FXX 0100/TT-6051/Ser: NU0040, 25 August 2010, 12.

[50] Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre (UK), *Global Strategic Trends*, 136.

[51] US Army, *The Army Capstone Concept*, 15.

[52] Robert Gates, speech at NATO, Brussels, 10 June 2011.

[53] Tomas Valasek, *Surviving Austerity: The Case for a New Approach to EU Military Collaboration* (London: Centre for European Reform, 2011), 1-2.

[54] Edmunds and Forster, *Out of Step*, 40.

[55] US Joint Force Command, *The Joint Operating Environment*, 61.

[56] Edmunds and Forster, *Out of Step*, 40-41.

[57] NATO, *NATO 2020: Assured Security; Dynamic Engagement. Analysis and Recommendations of the Group of Experts on a New Strategic Concept for NATO* (Brussels: NATO, May 2010), 10.

[58] Andrew Rathmell, "Adapting Government for Stabilisation and Counter-Insurgency Operations," *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 6 (December 2009): 10.

[59] Hari Bucur-Marcu, *Essentials of Defence Institution Building* (Vienna and Geneva: National Defence Academy (Austria) and DCAF, 2009), 84.

[60] Hew Strachan, "Strategy or Alibi? Obama, McChrystal and the Operational Level of War," *Survival* 52, no. 5 (October-November 2010): 158.

RKK
ICDS

---

[61] Anthony King, "Military Command in the Last Decade," *International Affairs* 87, no. 2 (March 2011): 388.

[62] US Army, *The Army Capstone Concept*, 21.

[63] Ministry of Defence (UK), *Adaptability and Partnership: Issues for the Strategic Defence Review*, Cm 7794 (London: The Stationery Office, 2010), 18.

[64] Paul Keetch, "A Liberal Democrat View of UK Defence Policy,"RUSI, http://www.rusi.org/analysis/commentary/ref:C4BA248B065F78/.

[65] Anders Fogh Rasmussen, address at the Belgian High Institute for Defence, Brussels, 26 April 2010.

[66] John Shimkus, *Progress on the Prague Capabilities Commitment*, NATO Parliamentary Assembly Sub Committe on Transatlantic Defence and Security Cooperation Report, 170 DSCTC 05 E bis, 2005.

[67] Martin Shaw, *The New Western Way of War* (Cambridge and Malden MA:Polity, 2005), 1.

[68] Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force*, 17.