



CHACR TAKE AWAY NEWSLETTER ISSUE: 2

MARCH 30 - APRIL 3, 2020

INTRODUCTION

This is the weekly CHACR Take Away newsletter, which we will issue regularly from now on. In these newsletters, you will find links to the latest products by CHACR, but also links to key reports and studies by external experts and institutions which we think you should pay attention to. The aim is to continue advancing the mandate of CHACR to enhance the conceptual component of Fighting Power for the British Army. **The views expressed or studies shared in this document in no way represent the official views of the British Army, Ministry of Defence or any components thereof, but only that of its authors and are shared to stimulate thinking and discussions.**

LATEST FROM CHACR

Many thanks for positive feedback on our CHACR Take Away videos. For those of you who have not seen the first one in the series, you can watch it [here](#). It is a discussion with Michael Stephens on the current developments in Saudi Arabia. We will shortly release video discussions with Tim Marshall on the Sahel region, Thomas Hegghammer on international jihad and Mark Galeotti on Russia. Meanwhile, the CHACR team has been reflecting on the Coronavirus pandemic, looking at historical lessons and the shifting strategic context. Dr Matthias Strohn wrote a thought-provoking briefing on what lessons can be learnt from epidemics and pandemics that have occurred in Europe and what the current crisis might mean for the British Army. [You can download the briefing here](#). [This short article by Director CHACR](#) seeks to provide a quick horizon-scan giving some seeds of thought that may be worth germinating over the coming weeks and months.

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

The immediate focus of the Army, rightly, is on doing everything that it can to help the government and the NHS deal with the COVID avalanche that has hit the country and the world. That gives very little capacity for thinking about other things. Nevertheless, CGS has set up a team to think hard and long about what things will look and feel like once we are the other side of this pandemic. Early thinking, in broad terms, suggests that we will be confronted with two major post-COVID challenges, one shorter- and one longer-term. The first, short-term, challenge will be the inevitable effects of the pandemic on the Integrated Review. It will be delayed, but the bottom lines and questions in it will also look very different from those that Whitehall was asking itself only three months ago. Whitehall will have a very different bank balance as the population of Britain emerges blinking from the gloom of isolation and gathers together the remains of countless livelihoods and businesses. We have in the UK, over the last twenty or thirty years, developed an extraordinary mindset of 'entitlement', and, once COVID has receded, that sense, stoked no doubt by an aggressively questioning media, will demand that more and more of that empty bank account should go to those who now need help (i.e. almost everybody). Yet, at the same time, because humans always look at the immediate last problem and expect it to be retro-solved, there will be a public expectancy that the NHS will receive a lion's share from the Treasury. The second, long term, challenge will be exacerbated by that first challenge, because the second big challenge will be that the Army will certainly have learned from this pandemic that Just-in-Time mindsets, that reliance on civilianisation and private logistic chains, that a neglect of reserves (both physical and human), and that a reliance on policies written by folk who believe that they can predict ahead and make ten-year plans that can foresee likely exact needs and take 'calculated' risks with 'spare capacity' simply isn't wise. So the Army is going to have to continue to work out how to operate in the ongoing 'constant competition' of world affairs, while at the same time maintaining reserve capacity (one of those immutable Principles of War, after all) to step up to the mark without hesitation when contingent events demand - against a background of empty pockets in the Treasury. So, we are faced with a big problem right now; but once we've dealt with this one there is another big one, possibly a bigger one for the long-term health of the Army, heading down the tracks. Best that all spare thinking capacity is bent on getting ahead of that foreseeable problem....

Maj Gen (Ret) Dr Andrew Sharpe

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

The integration of artificial intelligence has the potential to increase the efficiency of military activities and decision-making. Yet, it could also present unprecedented challenges to multi-national coalition operations. [In this article, the author explores](#) how the speed and efficiency offered by AI could further complicate the coordination of decision-making and exacerbate tensions arising from different approaches to technological application, in addition to known friction over policies, equipment and tactics. AI also offers a potential vulnerability to be exploited by adversaries. Yet, with the right policy and institutional frameworks AI offers coalitions additional capacity to counter threats.

ISIS, COUNTER TERRORISM

The pandemic rightfully consumes most of our attention, but the concurrency of the threats we face demands us to keep an eye on a wide range of issues. ISIS is one. There were reports of ISIS inmates overwhelming SDF guards in riots in Ghouran prison in Hasakah, with reportedly [some ISIS militants escaping](#). The Coronavirus pandemic has implications on the capacity of regional security forces in responding to terror networks and prisoners. [Charles Lister makes this point well in a blog entry](#) on the MEI website.

RISK OF VIRUSES IN WARFARE

Throughout history, armies have often been thwarted, not just by opposing forces, but by disease. Only in the 20th century did losses from battle injuries sustained outstrip losses inflicted by disease. Advances in modern medicine, widespread programmes of immunisation, and antibiotics have reduced the threat of some illness. Yet, as we have seen in recent weeks, there are still diseases for which there are no vaccines. The risks of diseases, particularly in urban environments, could pose a significant challenge. [This article looks at historical examples of disease management in World War II](#), and how modern armies should prepare for similar future threats.

DISINFORMATION

The EU External Action Service launched a good project to document and counter disinformation around the Covid-19 pandemic. [An updated report on current narratives can be found here.](#)



CHINA NAVAL MODERNISATION

The US Congressional Research Service released [an informative background briefing on China's naval modernisation](#), which raises questions on what this means for the US Navy. The briefing notes that China's naval modernisation has been part of a broader Chinese military modernisation, which has been underway since the early mid-1990s, and that it has transformed China's navy into a modern and capable force, which is active in near-seas region but also in the Western Pacific, the Indian Ocean, and waters around Europe.

WE REMEMBER

Lance Corporal Brodie Gillon, 26 year old Reservist Combat Medical Technician, was buried in a private service this week. She was killed at Camp Taji on 11 March 2020. #ShineBrightBrodie



WWI AND INFLUENZA

The American military experience in World War I and the influenza pandemic were closely intertwined. The war fostered influenza in the crowded conditions of military camps in the United States and in the trenches of the Western Front in Europe. The virus travelled with military personnel from camp to camp and across the Atlantic, and at the height of the American military involvement in the war, September through November 1918, influenza and pneumonia sickened 20% to 40% of U.S. Army and Navy personnel. These high morbidity rates interfered with induction and training schedules in the United States and rendered hundreds of thousands of military personnel non-effective. During the American Expeditionary Forces' campaign at Meuse-Argonne, the epidemic diverted urgently needed resources from combat support to transporting and caring for the sick and the dead. [Influenza and pneumonia killed more American soldiers and sailors during the war than did enemy weapons.](#)

MENTAL HEALTH

The pandemic and off site work and home isolation have immense psychological impacts on all of us. There are some good mental health tips out there, ranging from importance of regular exercise, limiting alcohol, taking regular breaks, keeping in comms with colleagues and making sure we are all kind to each other. [One article by an academic has a good point to make:](#) ignore the trap of pressure you feel for doing stuff and process the complex days we are facing. It has important lessons for us in the Army. If you are looking for practical resources for self development, the Army's Educational & Training Services have produced a very helpful resource for staff and their families. [Download here.](#)

THINGS TO KEEP ON YOUR RADAR SCREENS

- **Negotiations, Afghanistan**

[An update on where things are with the peace deal.](#) and why the stakeholders need to pursue it.

- **North Korea Missile Tests**

[North Korea conducted new missile tests, featuring a new short-range ballistic system: KN24](#)

- **Marine Corps' Shift to China**

It is important to pay attention to historic reorientation of the Marine Corps after more than a decade of focusing on counterinsurgency. [This is a good reflection by Marc F. Cancian](#) on the developments.

- **India**

As the Coronavirus spreads in India with millions of labourers returning to their home cities, [hunger is a real concern.](#)

- **Bad Samaritans**

The Russian DoD uploaded pics of a plane sent to US with medical supplies. Both China and Russia continue the PR campaigns. [Elisabeth Braw asks for caution.](#)

- **Missiles over Riyadh**

[Two injured as Saudi intercepts missiles over Riyadh and Jizan.](#) Houthi rebels claimed responsibility.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

On 1 April 1939, the Spanish Civil War officially came to an end with the surrender of the last Republican Forces. In many ways, it was a precursor of the Second World War: it was a clash of different ideologies and was also the testing ground for new equipment and tactics that would then be used by the belligerent nations in the Second World War. Franco's Nationalists were supported by the Italians and the Germans (in particular the famous Condor Legion) while the Republicans received support from the Soviet Union and the so-called International Brigades, groups of volunteers with different political views, stretching from democrats to die-hard communists. The casualty figures of this war are still disputed today, but, as with so many civil wars, the blood loss of the civilian population was higher than amongst the military. Franco remained in power until his death in 1975, and only after his death did Spain open itself for democracy. The war has shaped Spanish history and society and its importance for the Spanish nation cannot be overestimated. The scars of the war have not healed and it continues to influence political debate in the country to the present day. [In this podcast Melvyn Bragg examines the causes, events and repercussions of the Spanish Civil War.](#)

WHAT CHACR TEAM IS READING

Hugh Thomas, *The Spanish Civil War*

Since its first publication in 1961, Hugh Thomas's *The Spanish Civil War* has become established as the definitive one-volume history of a conflict that continues to provoke intense controversy today. What was it that roused left-wing sympathizers from all over the world to fight against Franco between 1936 and 1939? Why did the British and US governments refuse to intervene? And why did the Republican cause collapse so violently? Hugh Thomas's account presents one of the most objective and unbiased analysis of a passionate struggle where fascism and democracy, communism and Catholicism were at stake - and which was as much an international war as a Spanish one.

Francis Fukuyama, *Identity: Contemporary Identity Politics and the Struggle for Recognition*

Issues of identity have become an increasingly dominant feature of present-day politics. Narrow, exclusive categories of ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, have supplanted more inclusive concepts of belonging and community. There is a rise in nationalism throughout Europe and North America. Fukuyama traces the development of the modern concept of identity, starting with Plato's republic and progressing through Luther and the Protestant reformation, Rousseau and the Enlightenment. He argues that the human need for social recognition is a root cause of identity politics, and that growing urbanisation and secularisation of western society gave rise to identity politics. Fukuyama blends psychology, philosophy and political science into a readable extended-essay style book, more accessible than his treatise on "The End of History." The topics of identity and identity politics are vast and deep; this is a good introduction.

Ben Hubbard, *MBS: The Rise to Power of Mohammed bin Salman*

The Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed bin Salman, is a truly fascinating and complex figure, and arguable one of the most powerful leaders in the Middle East today. In a short amount of time, he rose to height of Saudi power, and is now set to assume the throne of the king. This book by a leading journalist with in depth knowledge of the region and Saudi Arabia, traces the story of the MBS like none other out there. It draws from the hundreds of interviews and behind the scenes information to capture how a young prince is now shaping his country's, and also the region's future.

BAR SPRING/AUTUMN 2020

[Download the latest BAR released this week!](#)



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