



CHACR TAKE AWAY NEWSLETTER ISSUE 7

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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 the 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 warfighting for the British Army personnel. **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

While we continue long term book projects and support specific Army tasks, we are also increasing our regular public outputs to provide you with analysis and insight on issues of relevance for the Army.

Our **Commentary** page is building up well. This week, our own Dr Strohn [offered his reflections on why the WWII still matters](#) and why we need to continue to reflect on it in its 75th anniversary. We also featured an article by Andrew Ehrhardt on [Britain's Grand Strategic Reset, 1900-1905](#). The era, and the Foreign Secretary of the day, has some relevant insights on today's strategic challenges facing the UK. Our latest In Depth Briefing (that the Director refers to) looks at [The Spanish Flu and the First World War](#).

This week we also released a new **CHACR Lectures on the Go** video. It features a leading expert on the countries that make up the GCC, discussing how the rift between Qatar and the GCC emerged and where it is heading, and what this means for the UK and other external actors. More videos and articles are scheduled for this month. Watch this space!

A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Last week I mentioned the research that the CHACR has done on the Spanish Flu epidemic of a hundred years ago, and commented that it reminded us that context was one of the most important ingredients in assessing any event, and in how people and, indeed, nations react to them. I return to the Spanish Flu this week. I have been struck, as we seem to have passed the peak of COVID-19 in the UK, how the very same voices and faces on our radios and televisions that were asking us to ask ourselves whether the government had ordered the lockdown 'too late' are now, those self-same people, asking us whether the government is leaving us in lockdown for 'too long'. There is an impatience to return to as close to normality as possible. There is an eagerness (quite understandable in all of those small to medium businesses who have struggled to survive) to get the ebb and flow of normal life back on track and to get custom back across the thresholds of those small businesses. But the second big lesson to pass on from our study of the Spanish Flu was that it was not the first wave that did the real damage. Once that first wave was over (in 1918) the context still set much higher priorities for the nations who were struggling to reset a whole 'new normal' economically and socially after the upheavals of the First World War. Getting the economy working and re-finding a social balance were at the top of the agenda. The rush to address those issues put keeping the Spanish Flu at bay in the background. It was the subsequent (second and third) waves of the Flu in 1919 and 1920 that were so devastating. Our strategists seem to understand this. We need to remind ourselves of it. The trademark of successful emergence from COVID-19, surely, is going to be patience. **Maj Gen (Ret) Dr Andrew Sharpe**

WATCH THE QATAR-GCC LECTURE



COVID-19

You might be already suffering from fatigue of seeing way too many charts and infographics on the pandemic. [This short video \(you need a non MoDNet computer/phone to see this\) provides a very good introduction](#) to how to read those charts, and what common mistakes are in making sense of them. [Channel 4 has produced a brilliant short video](#) on how the pandemics look like around the world, with clips to capture experiences from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. [LSE has launched a helpful blog](#), bringing together research and insights by their academics in short and accessible formats.

THE MAKHLOUF INCIDENT

It has been fascinating to watch videos posted by one of Syria's richest persons, Rami Makhlouf, decrying pressure his business are getting from Assad's security forces. Makhlouf is Bashar Al-Assad's cousin, with an asset value of more than \$10 billion and has used his personal finances to support the regime's fight. These two articles captures why this is a remarkable moment to pay attention to: , [First one by Charles Lister](#) arguing this might be a 'irreversible dagger blow to Assad'. [Second one by Faysal Itani and Bassam Barabandi](#) puts a deeper context behind the man and the crony economy that enables Assad regime.

IRAQ: ISIS & ECONOMY

Two important reports on current developments in Iraq: First one is on the economic impact of the dual challenge of both sinking oil prices and the coronavirus lockdown. [This Washington Post report](#) notes that the current conditions "pushed Iraq's economy to the brink of catastrophe, experts say, with the outbreak aggravating the risk of public desperation and renewed social unrest if the needs of millions of Iraqis are not met by sweeping reforms." [This study released by CGP](#) makes the worrying observation that in the past few months, ISIS activities in Iraq demonstrates its resilience, and how it is exploiting the current conditions in Iraq. Its attacks are spreading in key cities, with groups of 9-11 men carrying attacks in Iraqi security forces in Central and Southern Iraq.

WHAT IS DEFEAT?

What do we mean by the term 'defeat'? [This article suggests that our understanding of defeat](#) is too narrowly focussed on the tactical level of war, and that instead we need to define and describe defeat more accurately across the three levels of warfare. A more robust definition will strengthen the linkages between tactical tasks to the strategy. In a modern-day fight with a rival great power, a peer, near peer or nuclear state, defeat or stalemate might be preferable to the consequences of escalation.

THE FUTURE OF GROUND WARFARE

US forces are at a transition point, shifting from the Air Land Battle doctrine that has been predominant since early 1980s, and shifting instead to a new concept of multidomain operations. Air Land battle doctrine relied on bespoke, exquisite, highly sophisticated and hugely expensive platforms. However, these legacy platforms may impede success in a world of multi domain operations where abundance, affordability and in some cases, autonomy, will be key attributes of equipment, providing great strategic, operational and tactical mobility. [This article makes a compelling case](#) for the introduction of affordable, abundant and autonomous platforms to replace aging legacy platforms that are less adaptable. The authors investigate why the transition to abundant and affordable systems is so slow, from domestic political considerations to the lack of relevant recent examples of interstate conflict.

AI: GLAMOROUS VS ROUTINE

Artificial intelligence is one of the emergent technologies that has the potential to change the shape of day-to-day civilian life and revolutionise the face of warfare in the near future. Visions exist of AI systems making better, more accurate and swifter decisions than their human counterparts, and replacing humans in both dangerous missions and dull and mundane routine tasks. The war-winning possibilities of AI are heralded, and we are often warned of the consequences of failing to remain at the cutting edge of this new technology.

[As this article acknowledges](#), the capabilities and consistency of AI technology is developing rapidly, and at some time in the future it could replace many decision-making functions. However, AI systems currently lack abilities that are critical to military success: an ability to multitask and understanding of context. Moreover, they are vulnerable to adversarial attacks. Due to this critical vulnerability, AI tools may instead be best applied to the routine, monotonous tasks performed by military personnel in uncontested environments rather than making crucial decision making. It is in these less glamorous but necessary functions that we may first see AI applied.

THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO

The battle of Waterloo continues to fascinate and the battlefield is still regularly visited by British Army units and formations. Much has been written about the battle, the soldiers who fought in it and, naturally, Wellington, the commander of the Allied forces (using the term "British here would not do justice to the men of the King's German Legion and the Dutch and Belgians who fought under Wellington's command). [In this podcast, the historian Saul David from Buckingham University reassesses the battle](#) and analyses the factors that led to the defeat of Napoleon. He challenges some widely accepted general views of the battle: for David, the key winning factors were the steadfastness of the Allied infantry, and the arrival of the Prussians in the late stage of the battle. The battle of Waterloo was indeed a "close-run thing" as Wellington said, but, according to David, Wellington's mistakes made it so. He therefore concludes that the battle is not a great indication of Wellington's generalship.

USE OF HISTORY FOR TODAY

Napoleon once famously remarked that "history is a set of lies agreed upon". Our understanding of and links to the past are not always straightforward and direct. They need constant re-evaluation and re-interpretation. Often, the interpretation of history tells us more about the interpreter's views than about the events themselves. This also means that history can be used as a strong tool in the politician's toolbox to explain and justify actions of today with references to yesterday. The Second World War is not immune to this. Understanding the ways history is constructed and used by other nations and politicians is crucial to understanding the international cultural space the Army operates in. [In this article Katie Stallard-Blanchette analyses](#) how Russia and China have used the history (and interpretation) of the Second World War for current political agendas.

THINGS TO KEEP ON YOUR RADAR SCREENS

- **ZOOM Fatigue**

A [fascinating explanation of why we find it difficult](#) to do video calls and conferencing.

- **NATO—Baltics**

[The Baltics, and how it plays a role as 'listening posts'](#) in NATO-Russia competition

- **A Coup Attempt?**

A [surreal story of how in May a handful of expats](#) and two former US soldiers tried to topple Venezuela government.

- **India's Foreign Affairs Strategy**

A [very good analysis on India's foreign policy](#) challenges, drivers and long and short term goals.

- **Warning on Cyber Targeting**

[UK-US Goves warn of attempt by foreign states](#) targeting organisations, individuals, companies, labs responding to COVID-19 challenge.

- **COVID-19 as new Tiananmen**

An [internal Chinese report captures worries](#) in Beijing on international reactions due the pandemic.

THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

This week sees the 75th anniversary of the end of World War Two in Europe. After 5 and a half years the bloodiest conflict in European history came to an end (the Japanese held out until September 1945). [The actual surrender of the Germans](#) was a somewhat staggered process: On 4 May 1945, Field Marshal Montgomery accepted the unconditional surrender of the German forces in the Netherlands, northwest Germany, and in Denmark. This surrender took place on Lüneburg Heath, which had served as a military training area before the war. The British erected a small monument in the place where the surrender took place. When the training area was returned to the German Bundeswehr in 1958, the monument was moved to Sandhurst, where it still stands on the parade square of New College. Too big were the British concerns that a German tank might "accidentally" run over the monument the moment the Bundeswehr started training in the area again. On 7 May 1945, General Jodl, representing the German High Command, signed the unconditional surrender of all German military forces with effect from the following day. This took place at Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) at Reims, in north-western France. From a legal point of view, this was the end of the war. However, the Soviets insisted on another ceremony in Berlin, because they had not been represented at Reims. Thus, the German Wehrmacht capitulated a second time. On 8 May the representatives of the German Armed Forces and of the Allies assembled in Berlin, in the headquarters of the Red Army, the former Wehrmacht engineer school, to carry out this act. The final document was signed only after midnight, on 9 May at 00.16am. The end of the war in Europe should therefore really be commemorated on either 7 May or 9 May- as is still the case in Russia today.

CHACR TEAM RECOMMENDS

Hermann Buschleb, David Dorondo. *Operation Crusader: Tank Warfare in the Desert, Tobruk 1941*

The port of Tobruk, Libya, was besieged by German and Italian forces in April 1941. Following an abortive attempt in June, the Allies tried to relieve the siege in late November, when the Eighth Army launched Operation Crusader, which aimed at destroying the Axis armoured force. After a number of inconclusive engagements, the British 7th Armoured Division was defeated by the Afrika Korps at Sidi Rezegh. Erwin Rommel was then forced to withdraw his troops to the defensive line at Gazala, making the operation the first Allied victory over German land forces in World War II. The book tells the events from the other side of the hill, i.e. through the German lens. It also discusses some of the more timeless parameters of battle: the terrain, weather, visibility, logistics, intelligence, and the forces involved. It thus offers insights for the military even more than 75 years after the event and is useful reading for any military of today.

Jonathan Fennell. *Fighting The People's War*

In this wide-ranging study of the Second World War Jonathan Fennell weaves a great mixture of military, political and social history together to view the campaigns and battles of the war through the differing lenses of the principle nations of the Commonwealth. If you are interested in how different armies fight, and why they do, and in what makes the individual contributors tick in coalitions in conflicts this is a very thought-provoking work. It is not just a very insightful study of the Second World War, but also a window onto behaviour on current operations and in modern Britain.

BRIEFING ON THE GIUK GAP

The Greenland-Iceland-United Kingdom (GIUK) Gap is one of the world's most strategic maritime transit routes, and it is a major strategic concern for NATO. [This in depth briefing is a good orientation to the issues](#), and the need for a fresh evaluation on the region as geopolitical, climatic and technological developments raise new questions and interests by sovereign states.

ABOUT THE CHACR

You can learn more about the CHACR at www.chacr.org.uk

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Doris Kearns Goodwin. *No Ordinary Time*.

No Ordinary Time begins in 1940, when the United States was isolationist, wary of involvement in international activities. Domestically, American society was still suffering the effects of the Great Depression. Yet within five years, America emerged from the experience of World War II as the preeminent economic and political power in the world. *No Ordinary Time* is not a typical history of World War II, as it focuses on the home front rather than the fighting. Goodwin combines a great deal of well-researched detail into three story lines: the Roosevelt Presidency, Eleanor Roosevelt's career as and accomplishments First Lady, and the complex and often confrontational partnership between the two. President Roosevelt was committed to victory over Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany. He engaged with world leaders to develop a strategy for the war and gained the cooperation of American industry that was so vital to the war effort. Meanwhile, Eleanor became one of the most vocal and visible first ladies in history. She wrote a daily newspaper column, made frequent radio broadcasts, and travelled across the country and overseas on her husband's behalf. She was deeply committed to a vision of a more inclusive postwar America, and often clashed with her husband in her desire to reform social welfare provision and civil rights. This Pulitzer-prize winning chronicle details the personalities and policies that shaped America's wartime ascendancy.