



# CHACR TAKE AWAY NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 17, JULY 13 - JULY 17, 2020

## INTRODUCTION

This is the weekly CHACR Take Away newsletter. The aim of our newsletters is to continue advancing the mandate of CHACR to enhance the British Army's conceptual component of fighting power. In these newsletters, you will find links to latest CHACR products and links to reports and studies by external experts and institutions that may be of interest. **The views expressed or studies shared in this document do not represent the official views of the British Army, Ministry of Defence or any components thereof, but only those of their authors, and are shared to stimulate thinking and discussion.**

## LATEST FROM THE CHACR

CHACR continues to fulfil its mission with multiple activities and initiatives in support of the Army while in remote working conditions.

Dr Ziya Meral conducted a CHACR Take Away Interview with the author and journalist Sam Dagher on Syria and the Assad regime. The interview can be found on the CHACR website or by using this [link](#).

Dr Matthias Strohn wrote a commentary on the use of military history for the Army of today and the pitfalls that shallow analysis can present. The commentary can be found on the CHACR website.

Check out our website or follow us on Twitter @CHACR\_Camberley to keep up to date with our outputs.

## A WORD FROM THE DIRECTOR

Having a hard look at history helps us to understand many things. If we manage to detach ourselves and look at the past as objectively as we can then we learn a great deal about ourselves - not least of all is why it is so hard for us to look at things as objectively as we can. Last year the CHACR conducted a Staff Ride in Delhi, a small group of British army officers along with officers from the Indian Army and Air Force studied the events that took place there in 1857. From the point of view of the Brits we were discussing 'The Indian Mutiny', or, for the slightly more sensitive and attuned Brits, the '1857 Uprising'. For the Indians we were discussing 'The First War of Independence', or, for the slightly more sensitive and attuned Indians, the '1857 Uprising'! It took a couple of days of the five-day exercise for both groups to become friends and to start to trust each other sufficiently to stop being wary and careful, and to start being much more open and honest in what they thought. One of the big lessons was just how different the lenses were through which the participants were looking, and thus how very different their conclusions were inevitably going to be about exactly the same questions. And yet, paradoxically, the second big lesson was just how similar the views of the participants turned out to be on most of the questions that delved right to the heart of the matter under debate. In short, once the participants stopped trying to be careful and started trying to explain what they *really* felt they started learning a huge amount more both from each other and about each other (and, interestingly, about themselves). And they left at the end of the week very much the better for it. So what? The bottom line is that I think that it is so hard to study history effectively because of the in-built biases that we carry - but that (and there are endless quotes from the great and the good, aren't there) regardless of how difficult it may be, we *must* study history if we are to make sense of the present. And, in a final twist, the best way to understand our own biases, so that we can better study history, is to study our own history (and, if we are lucky enough to be able to do so, to study that history aided by those whose own experiences have been as different from ours as possible).

**Maj Gen (Ret) Dr Andrew Sharpe**

## GLOBAL ANALYSIS

Notes from Global Analysis stream, lead by Dr Ziya Meral

### ASSAD REGIME

CHACR's Global Analysis Programme has produced more than a dozen short Take Away interview videos and longer lecture videos featuring leading experts since April as it adjusted to fulfilling its role in the lockdown. [The last video of the season has just been released, featuring award winning author, Sam Dagher](#), for a discussion on Assad regime and why and how Syrian war began and how it escalated. Reflecting on what happened last 10 years is key for future forecasts and assessing realistic proposals to re-engage with Assad regime. [You can also listen to a podcast](#) of the video on ModNet computers here.

### IRAN

Recently, we released a [CHACR Take Away video that focused on Iran](#). The conversation remains highly important, though few seem to remember the strike on Qasim Soleimani and worrying few weeks that followed that incident. A series of explosions in Iran nuclear enrichment facilities last couple of weeks has once again reminded us that the tensions are from over. [This new study](#) by the Centre for Global Policy delves into an analysis of Iran's conventional military capabilities. It highlights how sanctions and pressure on the country slow down conventional defence but lead to asymmetric warfare.

### NEXT GAP WEBINAR

Following the success of our first webinar a couple of weeks ago that featured a discussion with Angus Lapsley, DG Strategy and International MoD, next week we will host a new webinar on 17 July with Samantha Job, Director Defence and Security International at the FCO. The discussion will explore 'changing international security context', giving Samantha Job the opportunity to make some preliminary remarks, followed by a discussion with Dr Meral on the questions that you will be able to raise. Please get in touch to register a place in what promises to be a fascinating discussion with a senior FCO diplomat with decades of experience on key issues that impact security and defence.

### COMPETITION FOR A VACCINE

We are all eagerly waiting the news of a breakthrough in vaccines against COVID-19, which might be a year or two away. However, optimism and anticipation over some sort of return to normality in our lives often overlook how contentious the vaccine issue can get. [This opinion editorial](#) captures the not so inspiring aspects of what is happening in political, diplomatic and social worlds. We already see states becoming aggressive over securing particular medicines, and signalling their ambitions to own the vaccine and thus use it along national interests. Conspiracy theories and anti-vaccine groups are already undermining reach and reception of the vaccine. Difficult times lie ahead with a much-desired medical breakthrough.

### THINGS TO KEEP ON YOUR RADAR SCREENS

- **Egypt—Libya**

An analysis of [military limitations Egypt faces in Libya](#)

- **Nagorno-Karabakh**

As news of Azerbaijan-Armenia clashes break in, [an overview of the decades - long conflict](#).

- **Iran-China**

Iran and China have agreed to a new strategic partnership. Here is [a good explanation on what is happening](#) and criticism of the deal.

- **Taliban**

A [fascinating report](#) with pictures on clashing views within the Taliban on Afghanistan's future.

- **Sahel**

A good [report on expanding Jihadi activities](#) in West Africa's coastal states.

- **Turkey—Maghreb**

Turkey is becoming more entrenched in Libya and wider Maghreb. [A good analysis of Turkey's presence in the region](#).



## HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

Notes from Historical Analysis stream, lead by Dr Matthias Strohn

### WHY STUDY MILITARY HISTORY?

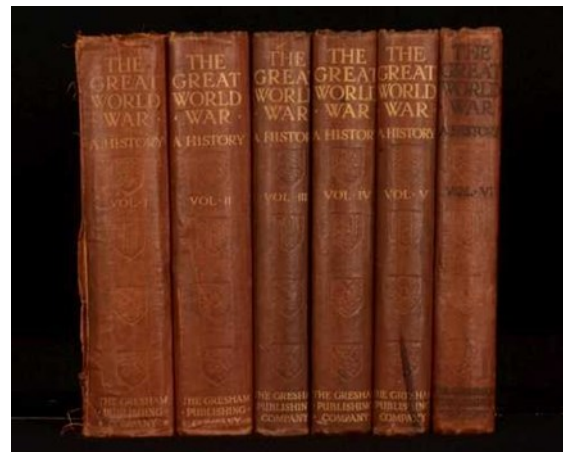
In addition to the on-going work on three books and the preparation of several battlefield studies, the historical analysis section has been busy working on a commentary dealing with the usefulness of military history for the Army. The starting point for anybody engaging with this matter has to be a lecture (then turned into an article) by the late Professor Sir Michael Howard. The text was shared in a previous newsletter, but it is of such importance that the reader's attention is drawn to [it again](#). Building on Sir Michael's analysis, and using Sir Michael's lecture title, Dr Ian Speller wrote an insightful [piece](#) defining the term military history and showing how it can be useful for the military of today. And by military we mean every man and woman wearing a uniform. The study of military history should not be dependent on rank or position. This is convincingly argued in [this short article](#), first published in 1992 by the former US Army Command Sgt. Maj. Wade P. Hampton.

### THIS WEEK IN HISTORY

In July 1995, during the Bosnia War, several thousand Bosniaks were murdered by Bosnian Serbs under the command of Ratko Mladic in what became known as the Srebrenica massacre. In April 1993 the United Nations (UN) had declared the besieged enclave of Srebrenica— in the Drina Valley of northeastern Bosnia— a "safe area" under UN protection. However, the UN failed to both demilitarise the Army of the Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina (ARBiH) within Srebrenica and force the withdrawal of the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) surrounding Srebrenica. UNPROFOR's 370 Dutchbat soldiers in Srebrenica did not prevent the town's capture by the VRS—nor the subsequent massacre. The International Court of Justice subsequently cleared Serbia of direct involvement in genocide during the Bosnian war, but ruled that Belgrade did breach international law by failing to prevent the 1995 Srebrenica genocide, and for failing to try or transfer the persons accused of genocide to the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia.

### THE QUESTIONS OF STRATEGY

The question of what strategy is, how it is understood and how this understanding of war has shaped recent operations is one that continues to be discussed. This is not merely an academic discussion, but one in which the military needs to play an important role and needs to make its voice heard – eventually, it is the military that has to ensure that strategic aims -however defined- are met on the field of battle. In this short [video](#), Professor Sir Hew Strachan, the strategic thinker of our time, elaborates on some of the concepts behind the term and argues that history plays its part in the shaping of strategy.



## CHACR TEAM RECOMMENDS

### Timothy Snyder, *On Tyranny: 20 Lessons from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*

*On Tyranny* draws lessons from the rise of authoritarianism in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to provide insights into preventing its resurgence in the 21<sup>st</sup>. Over the course of 20 short chapters, award-winning historian Timothy Snyder identifies and illustrates the propaganda techniques that enabled fascist ideologies to unseat democracies. The book also suggests different ways of identifying and questioning political messaging, promoting civil society, and of maintaining an independent, critical mind amid group behaviour. The book is not intended as a history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century horrors of fascist regimes; Snyder's other works, *Bloodlands* and *Black Earth*, offer far more comprehensive histories of that topic. While its long essay format only touches the surface of a huge and complex topic, *On Tyranny* promotes reflection of our current political climate, our own behaviours, and it will certainly provoke lively discussion.

### Hans Speidel, *Invasion 1944*

The Normandy campaign is perhaps the best-studied operation of the Second World War, at least from the Allied point of view. The knowledge of the German side is, in particular in the English-speaking world, far less developed. *Invasion 1944* is a good starting point to inform oneself about the other side of the hill. Speidel was Rommel's Chief of Staff during the Normandy campaign, and he was thus ideally suited to write about the German planning, its shortcomings and also the political context. The book was written in 1949 and is characterised by Speidel's personal views and interpretations of the campaign. It should therefore be read with an understanding of the historical context of the immediate post-war developments in Germany. This book is recommended to everybody with an interest in the Normandy campaign, and in particular to those who are planning a battlefield study to this part of France

### Rudyard Kipling, *Puck of Pook's Hill*

Most soldiers have a brushing familiarity with Rudyard Kipling - whether it's because they empathise with *Tommy* or because, unknowingly, they may occasionally have sung one of his *Barrackroom Ballads*. In *Puck of Pook's Hill* Kipling explores, through the minds of two Edwardian children, the history of their little piece of England. To return to the theme in the Director's opening observations, if you have any interest in British history, and you haven't yet read it, then you would do well to spend a comfortable weekend in the sun reading through this timeless classic.

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## ABOUT THE CHACR

You can learn more about the CHACR at [www.chacr.org.uk](http://www.chacr.org.uk)

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