British soldier prepares to attach load onto Chinook helicopter during resupply mission at Camp Bastion, Afghanistan

Royal Air Force (Graham Spark)

After 2015
The Next Security Era for Britain

BY JOHN MACKINLAY

The great international intervention in Afghanistan is due to run down to a token presence by 2014. Foreign troops are returning home already, and their continued reduction will change the nature of the operation there. Closer to Europe, the Arab Spring has displaced more than a million people along the north coast of Africa. The efforts of those refugees to migrate toward Europe could begin to unsettle the region. Meanwhile, the European economy seems to be heading for long-term decline, and last summer's rioting in the United Kingdom (UK) has alarmed

Dr. John Mackinlay is a Teaching Fellow in the War Studies Department at King's College London.

politicians and damaged British urban areas. Looking ahead, this article argues that 2015 may mark the start of a rather different security era, one in which the British government may have to determine whether the safety of its own population takes priority over supporting U.S. operations overseas.

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Following the relative calm of the Cold War, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) armies have experienced a turbulent 20 years of campaigning punctuated by several dramatic changes in their operational concept. After the collapse of the Berlin Wall, there have been three short but distinct security eras, starting with a period of peacekeeping led by the United Nations. Global disillusionment after Somalia, Rwanda, and the former Yugoslavia led to the next period, characterized by peace-support operations under NATO leadership. The current period, which began after September 11, 2001, has been dominated by coalition interventions led by the United States. Each of these successive chapters has been defined by a different leadership, an increasingly muscular approach, and a change of doctrine: "peacekeeping" was followed by "peace-support operations," which was followed by "counterinsurgency."[1] The start of an entirely different security era could arise in 2015. If that is a probability, should the British not be asking with greater determination what the approaching chapter might look like? Will the consequences of global change, climate change, migration, and above all popular opinion at home compel the British to abandon their expeditionary pretensions and alter the nature and role of their armed forces?

The next security era may bring the need for and prospect of a new type of armed force. For several centuries, the worst scenario facing most states has been invasion by another state. Armed forces could be raised for expansionist ambitions, but the worst-case scenario remained the possibility of invasion. For this reason, the role and status of the armed forces has for some time been fixed into the state's hierarchy by constitution, academic theory, and public sentiment. Their deployment or adaptation for any other purpose—such as emergency relief or even countering insurgency—meets with disapproval and resistance. Socially and constitutionally, the armed forces in most NATO countries have a rigid function that requires them to prepare constantly for an attack by the armed forces of another state. This role is enshrined by military conservatism, academic orthodoxy, and the prospect of the awful consequences of their failure to protect the state.

In 2011, the idea that being overrun by another state is the worst thing that can happen may be under pressure. Climate change and migration bring with them invasions of another kind that are just as violent and deadly as an attack by another state. In distant regions in Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, urbanization and desertification have shifted populations from rural areas, concentrating them along the coastlines. In 2004, when a tsunami swept across Southeast Asia, the wave and its aftermath could be regarded as the worst-case scenario for the 200,000 dead and the millions who were displaced. In Japan, the devastation of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, complicated by a nuclear emergency, was reminiscent of damage caused in 1945. Also in 2011, 29,000 children died in 90 days during an emergency in Somalia fueled by violence, drought, and famine; and in Pakistan, 1,500 died and 200,000 were

made homeless by repeated floods. Dealing with these catastrophes has been a major test for individual nations as well as for the international community, and it raises the question of whether the threat of invasion is the most likely worst-case scenario, especially for those devastated populations.

Is it unimaginable that Britain may soon find itself in need of armed forces that are much more versatile and have greater capabilities for dealing with other kinds of worst-case scenarios? In 2011, the short-term success of rioters and demonstrators associated with the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Algeria, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Iran, Libya, Bahrain, Oman, Djibouti, Kuwait, and Morocco seemed to push the techniques of political violence over the threshold of a new chapter. Across the region, the images and techniques of mass deployment by the population of one state seemed to incite violence in another. The crowds that surged into the streets were impulsive, leaderless, and without a deliberated manifesto. Their guidance through the streets relied on the widespread possession of cell phones and access to the Internet. In the UK, similarly leaderless crowds using similarly impulsive networking methods surged onto the streets of London, Manchester, and Birmingham.

Looking ahead, especially in view of the speed of these physical and social changes, there is a strong possibility that the next security era after 2015 may turn out to be surprisingly disconnected from recent experience. When the troops come home from Afghanistan, their future tasks may lie well beyond traditional military competencies. However, if these tasks are likely to be different and surprising, there are at least some factors and planning assumptions that can be anticipated.

In particular, there are three known issues that must influence the British approach to the next security era. First of all, the British may have reached the end of their brigade-level expeditionary competence, and future overseas operations, such as they may be, will have a different scale and purpose than the forces that went to Afghanistan and Iraq. Second, population migration and the effects of global change may start to put pressure on the UK's own stability as part of Europe. Third, the British at present have no plausible design for using armed forces in the nontraditional roles suggested by these changes and therefore need to develop one as a matter of urgency.

The Expeditionary Era Ends

A variety of factors oppose the notion that for Britain, the post-2015 era will be a continuation of the current security regime. For a decade, the British have accepted that overseas expeditions will be provided from the military, and the police will deal with terrorism at home. This tidy assumption is set to change. The likelihood of further military expeditions is diminishing, and their enormous cost in treasure and manpower sits badly with their tangible but minimal benefit. British politicians have not been able to explain to their constituencies how operations in Iraq and Afghanistan improve security in the streets of the homeland.[2] After several Parliamentary Defence Committee hearings, the population and its key communicators are measurably unconvinced about the necessity, success, and professionalism of military expeditions. News of the staggering cost of these operations comes at a time when Europe and the United States are struggling with the mother of all financial crises.

Moreover, the Bush-era security imperatives, which launched the war on terror and the military expeditions that followed, are eroding. Al Qaeda and its affiliates have altered their game, and their inspirational potency has greatly diminished. Military expeditions to deny al Qaeda the territory from which to plan and put together

their operations are not an absolute *necessity* for British survival. The government's insistence that the 120 or so UK-domiciled individuals who have so far been convicted for Islamist-related offences were inspired and mentored from al Qaeda bases overseas sits uncomfortably with nongovernmental research that finds 68 percent of these individuals "have no direct links with any organisation currently proscribed by the UK government."[3] In the next security era, the government cannot reasonably use the al Qaeda bogeyman to justify further expeditions. Politicians have begun to point out that the tenuous benefit to national interests in terms of improved home security does not warrant the human cost of a military expedition.[4] The public can see for themselves that al Qaeda is faltering, and that for several years it has failed to grab the front-page media space that it strives so hard to reoccupy. Hardcore war-on-terror enthusiasts will say that that is a victory for former President Bush and his antiterrorism strategy, but the continuing evolution of insurgency provides more powerful reasons why al Qaeda's significance is waning. During the violent surges of the Arab Spring, the only published pictures of al Qaeda's iconic leader were of a frail old man watching his best television moments on a home video shortly before his death.

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Public support for UK expeditionary missions has been in decline for some time, and a large-scale, regime-changing, regime-supporting intervention seems inconceivable after 2015. In 2003, the UK decision to send British tanks and troops to Iraq provoked the largest peacetime demonstration ever held in London.[5] UK politicians who had supported the U.S. invasion met with public abuse from their constituencies and some were dismissed in later elections. Looking ahead, regardless of failing public support, the Foreign Office will argue for its continuing desire to influence events overseas using British armed forces. However, at present there is no plausible strategy that justifies or underwrites a brigade-level intervention capability. Moreover, in the present fiscal climate, hopes to retain or, at some future date, resuscitate that capability are unrealistic. To be credible, a UK strategy would have to show that intervening overseas would be an act of absolute necessity and not merely a desire to retain that choice. The British population is more certain that "boxing above its weight" with the United States is not intelligent, adds little to security, and that the cost in terms of dead and wounded is more than it needs to pay.

Converging Pressures on Europe's Domestic Stability

Meanwhile, in the UK, the scale of immigration since 1948 and its social consequences have become a condition for disaffection. In May 2001, several months before the attacks on New York City and Washington, DC, rioting between Muslims and "white youths" in the greater Manchester area caused £25 million (approximately USD 38.7 million) worth of damage, and more than 200 police officers were injured. A Home Office commission found that the cultural isolation of migrant communities had encouraged separation, ignorance, and fear between the immigrant communities and the UK's majority culture.[6]

Although in the intervening decade there has been a great effort by successive governments and the Home Office to encourage social cohesion, the continuing concentration of immigrants

into particular boroughs is now being reinforced by internal migration. White populations are moving out of areas with a high ethnic minority population, which has resulted in a rapid increase in the relative size of migrant communities living in the same areas. Integration becomes more difficult to achieve in these large and socially isolated communities, and when pressure on schools, public services, social care, and housing becomes acute, then interethnic tension begins to rise. Meanwhile, migration into the UK continues to increase, and in 2010, the annual net migration was the highest figure on record.[7] Looking ahead, we need to know whether the Home Office has set right the problems of cohesion and exclusion that have led to interethnic rioting. According to the 2010 Parliamentary Commission on the *Prevent* Strategy, it has not been wholly successful. If this is correct and the UK is barely managing to keep its head above the water in this respect, then the obvious questions for the next security era seem to be how much more migration we can safely absorb, and what is likely to happen if demographic change overloads the UK living space to an unbearable degree.

Europe is unprepared for a security era dominated by insecure and migrating populations. Its defense reviewers acknowledge that population growth and climate change are increasing the scale of disasters in other regions of the world, but they seem less concerned to know whether these massive upheavals will stress domestic stability in Europe. We must hope for the best-case scenario and that Europe will be a responder to tragedies in other regions rather than to massive disturbances on its own territory. But the less-than-best-case scenario is that the effects of global changes may impinge visibly on the European homeland population.

Recent events in North Africa are worth considering. The southern and eastern Mediterranean states from Syria to Morocco are, at the time of this writing, in violent transition. Huge segments of their populations are below the age of 20. All of the countries have high rates of unemployment, and in most cases their young people have been living under governments that are authoritarian and corrupt.[8] Rioting and violent repression have created large populations of internally displaced people, as well as refugees fleeing to bordering states. In some cases, a fresh upheaval adds to an existing tide of displaced people—for instance, to the 1 million Iraqi refugees who are already in Syria having fled from their own country in 2006.[9] In Libya, there are a quarter of a million internally displaced refugees and a staggering 1 million who have temporarily moved out of the country to Tunisia, Egypt, Algeria, Niger, and Chad.

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It is impossible to see the long-term consequences while these massive disturbances in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean are still continuing, but it is probable that the movement of large displaced populations so close to Europe has already resulted in an increased flow of unregistered migrants into Europe. This pressure falls on Europe as a whole and not on individual states. European border security is in principle systemic; without effective internal borders, refugees landing in Italy, Spain, or Greece from the sea have comparative freedom of movement until they reach a natural obstacle such as the English Channel. A European state's ability to monitor or control migration is dictated by the weakest point at the outer edge of the system.

At present, Europe seems reluctant to face the possibility of further stress on its living space; its borders are poorly secured, its moral position is weak, and its migration controls are systemic and therefore governed by the inadequacies of the weakest member state. It is crucially disabling that there is no Europe-wide policy or strategy for dealing with massive upheavals overseas and their effects. In the longer term, getting a consensus to deny entry by force to a new wave of migrants may not be possible, especially when a rising number of the ethnicities are also represented in the homeland population. When it comes to taking measures to head off future waves of uprooted families fleeing from the effects of global change and civil war, the moral argument favors the incoming migrants. Our own scientists and government institutions point out that it is our European industries and lifestyle that are the major contributing factors to climate change and the consequent environmental damage that now threaten the world's bottom billion.[10] So it will be morally difficult for rich and safe Europeans to deny entry to a new wave of migrants when it is Europe's prosperous lifestyle (and support of the wrong dictators) that has contributed to the situation. Weakened by economic problems and without a consensus for preemptive action, the possibility that Europe may drift into a security era dominated by its own domestic pressures has to be a planning assumption for the after-2015 security era.

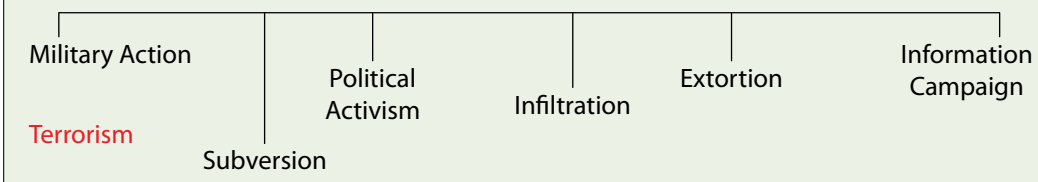
Finding a Relevant Operational Design

During the 9/11 security era, British forces have narrowly and intensively focused on counterinsurgency, in particular in Afghanistan where they ultimately adopted a successful method for dealing with the Taliban uprising. Although the British army is now operationally more fit, experienced, and professional than at any time since the end of the Cold War, this excellence may have little application after 2015. The Taliban arises from a uniquely poor and underdeveloped society, and the UK and U.S. doctrines for dealing with it offer a strong continuity to the past, but not to the future. The latest version of British and American counterinsurgency doctrine is essentially derived from a methodology to counter Maoist insurgencies; its principles can be traced through the DNA of previous British doctrine back to 1934. The problem is that while British and U.S. troops have been dealing with the ancient societies of Afghanistan, the rest of the world has been moving on at a fast pace, especially in the European region.

In stark contrast to Afghanistan, in postindustrial societies the techniques for uprising and insurgency have continued to evolve rapidly and, particularly after 9/11, the relationship between terrorism and insurgency has altered in an important way. Understanding this progression in the techniques of insurgency is now crucial to what may arise after 2015. A traditional Maoist insurgency was (and in traditional societies still is) largely a political process in which the insurgent's success hinged on having the support of a population that was territorially defined. The insurgency's objectives were tangible: overthrowing a regime, decolonization, secession, and so forth. The significance of the terrorism-insurgency relationship was that terrorism was subordinated to the overall insurgent purpose; it was just one of several techniques that could be used (see figure).

Without popular support, a purely terrorist organization *on its own* could not become a successful uprising, and by definition a terrorist organization that acquired a political wing

Figure. Insurgency Techniques



to organize popular support was on the way to becoming an insurgent movement.

In postindustrial societies, the terrorism-insurgency relationship has become inverted. The pressures of mass migration, diffusion of mass communications, and increasing facility for the man on the street to view televised images from another city or country in real time made it easier for insurgent organizations to challenge fragile governments. It no longer required labor-intensive preparation to organize an insurgency; it was possible to reach a disaffected population spread over several countries and to push them toward activism by other means. Images of terrorist acts transmitted by satellite news channels across the world have an instantly rousing, activating, and recruiting effect. Insurgents were swift to see this, especially in populations where there was a high use of social media or mass communications. In less than two decades after the publication of British counterinsurgency doctrine in 1969, insurgencies arising from swiftly modernizing societies had moved on to become the antithesis of Maoist phases and structure.[11] Insurgency was losing its Maoist definitions; it was now more complex, deterritorialized, leaderless, and horizontally structured, with a bottom-up creative energy and an amoeba-like capacity to regrow itself organically.[12] The vertical structures of the 1950s and 1960s began to resemble the hubs and chains of the Internet; the individual terrorist now lay prominently at the center of a network of activists. The overall insurgency's aims had become ethical and less concerned with physical outcomes. The terrorist act—the bomb blast that would become the visual icon for the movement—was now top priority, and the object was to stage one attack after another.

The problem caused by this inversion is that politicians and security officials failed to understand that insurgency had evolved into other forms. Faced by the effects of a post-Maoist uprising, they made counterterrorist responses to what they hoped was terrorism. Certainly terrorism, was now the visible and sensational start point for every security discussion, but there remained a significant and barely understood anomaly: the violence they faced was more than terrorism, because to survive in the past, the terrorist group had to have effective popular support from its local populace. That was no longer a condition for postmodern terrorism, which can draw on support from a global audience.

The danger by 2015 will be the tendency to see every new form of political violence as terrorism. Political leaders like to blur definitions, and they prefer to call insurgents "terrorists." Their

defense officials have to be more precise; they cannot rely on opting for a counterterrorist campaign if they are faced by something that is fundamentally insurgent. The planners who are looking ahead must recognize that in a post-industrial society, insurgency evolves more rapidly than their ability to conceptualize a response. This realization becomes crucial to Britain's domestic security and its ability to alter the game in its favor.

Responding to Smart Mobs

Insurgency and the techniques of uprising have recently evolved in other ways. In addition to counterterrorism, government forces will have to deal with the outrage of disaffected communities within the population, and in the future this may become a more serious and difficult task. In the North African region, several factors facilitated the Arab Spring—in particular the possibility that while the government institutions in many affected states were structured vertically (in the fashion of a 19th-century bureaucracy), the young effervescent populations they sought to control, in stark contrast, were organized horizontally in a very 21st-century manner. The result was that the 21st-century populations easily outwitted the slow moving 19th-century metropolitan authorities.

Looking ahead, Europeans should learn from this experience. Summer rioting in UK urban areas has become a growing phenomenon, and according to damage and disruption statistics, the August 2011 riots greatly exceeded those of 2007. The fact that UK summer rioters and their counterparts in North African cities, politically speaking, have absolutely nothing in common is not important. In respect of the security of our populations, what is far more interesting is that there are now more effective techniques for outraged communities, *whatever their cause*, to assemble and cause irrepressible violence and disorder. This is not about the targets and the causes but rather the "smart mob" techniques that are now being used.

Anticipating this as a possible scenario for the next security era, the problem for future planners is that they will not find many control structures on the government side suited for stabilization in a European context. A campaign to anticipate excessive migration into Europe, secure borders, counter terrorism, deal with urban disorder, and make a humanitarian response to overseas disasters would require an extensive redesigning of the UK's own 19th-century security structures. The first Duke of Wellington would instantly recognize Whitehall's existing arrangements for ministerial control, the vertical lines for operational direction, layered decisionmaking apparatus, and on the ground, the basic military and police units; they still have a familiar 19th-century rigidity.

But in North Africa and Europe, the people in the streets have moved on; they live in the horizontal plane; they form relationships by joining communication highways with their mobile phones and the Internet and as a result have much faster collective decisionmaking cycles than their governments. In a disaffected community, when outrage boils over, they can quickly take over public spaces where they move and communicate spontaneously like a huge flock of starlings in flight, changing direction at a moment's notice to head off to a new destination. As an organism, they have no formal leadership structures, and they act impulsively and change their short-term direction much more quickly than the vertically organized security forces that seek to contain them. The convulsions of the Arab Spring (using the same principle as the urban rioters in the UK) seem to demonstrate that a smart mob can seize the guts of a city and bring it to a halt. What

happens after that is still unclear, but the initial success of the Arab Spring is undisputed.

British thinking in response to this latest evolution is at a standstill. In Whitehall, setting up a relevant comprehensive structure is discussed but not practiced. Throughout the post-9/11 security era, government structures to conduct expeditionary operations overseas have been separated from the ongoing counterterrorist operation in the UK. Doctrinally, the British do not have a bank of researched ideas to help them find a pathway into the next security era. Existing counterinsurgency doctrines describe a concept for campaigning in the world's poorest and most backward societies, but not in London, Manchester, Birmingham, or further afield in Europe where the proliferation of mass communications is, comparatively speaking, sky high.

At the ground level, planners will need to think in terms of a security force that is relevant to a 2015 Europe. In addition to existing police and warfighting arms of the military, a new security force might take the form of gendarme-style units, made up by local reservists with the collective ability to patrol an international border, quell a riot, speak relevant languages, understand how to do stabilization, and travel abroad at short notice. A debate on these lines would recognize the evolutionary gap that has opened at ground level between Europe's 21st-century populations and the 19th-century government structures that are supposed to protect them.

Conclusion

In 20 years, the British have moved with uncomfortable speed through three distinct security eras in which primacy has been given to their expeditionary forces. Each era has demanded a different approach. Consequently, British forces have had to adapt themselves to peacekeeping, peace-support operations, and counterinsurgency. After 2015, UK planners once again will face the uncertainty of transitioning to the next security era. In this case, the growing relevance of global change, climate

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change, mass migration, a collapsing European economy, and more immediately the effects of the Arab Spring raise the possibility that unimaginable contingencies will confront them. These contingencies will have little continuity with the past. Defense officials cannot reasonably be expected to plan for the unimaginable; however, it is possible to reduce surprise by identifying some anticipated conditions, which may influence the future. These conditions should become planning assumptions:

- The end of expeditionary operations. The British public and many members of Parliament are not likely to mandate future expeditions on anything approaching their previous scale to support U.S. military missions. After more than a century of overseas campaigning, ending the primacy of expeditionary forces will have a radical effect on the role and organization of the armed forces.
- Giving primacy to domestic security. In a decade dominated by the unexpected, it must be considered a possibility that the net effect of global changes, migration, a failing European economy, and failure to secure European borders will erode the stability of Europe's urban populations.

- The need to keep up with the evolution of insurgency. Insurgencies reflect the societies from which they arise. Current doctrines address a 20th-century form of insurgency, which is relevant to traditional societies but not to the kind of insurgency that is being experienced in post-industrial Europe. In addition, European governments have fallen far behind in developing an acceptable response to smart mobs, which can seize control of urban spaces.
- The need for unimaginable changes. The next security era will *not* be a continuation of the previous century of expeditionary campaigning. Unimaginable changes may be needed to the controlling structures of British security forces and to the role and nature of the forces themselves. This will require an unimaginable change of attitude in Whitehall and some effort to organize a deliberate program to engage a wider community of experts in consideration of these possibilities. This effort should begin now, not in 2015. PRISM

Notes

[1] Each period is represented by a unique doctrine: United Kingdom (UK) Army Field Manual Vol. V, *Peacekeeping Operations* (London: Ministry of Defence, 1988); UK Permanent Joint Headquarters (JWP 3–50), *Peace Support Operations* (London: Ministry of Defence, 1996); UK Army Field Manual Vol. I, *Countering Insurgency* (London: Ministry of Defence, 2010).

[2] House of Commons Defence Committee, "Fourth Report: Operations in Afghanistan," July 6, 2011.

[3] Robin Simcox, Hannah Stuart, and Houriya Ahmed, *Islamist Terrorism—the British Connections* (London: Centre for Social Cohesion, 2010).

[4] House of Commons Defence Committee.

[5] BBC News claims over 1,000,000 protestors, but police counted 750,000 on the streets of London. See "'Million' march against Iraq war," BBC News, February 16, 2003, available at <news.bbcco.uk/2/hi/2765041.stm>.

[6] See Home Office, *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team*, available at <http://image.guardian.co.uk/sys-files/Guardian/documents/2001/12/11/communitycohesionreport.pdf>. See also Bradford Vision, *Community Pride, Not Prejudice: Making Diversity Work in Bradford*, available at <www.bradford2020.com/pride/report.pdf>.

[7] Official for National Statistics, *Migration Statistics Quarterly Report November 2011—Statistical Bulletin*, available at <www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/migration1/migration-statistics-quarterly-report/november-2011/msqr.html>.

[8] From a consolidation of United Nations–researched figures made by Migration Watch UK, "Demographic Pressures and Political Instability in North African Countries," Briefing Paper no 9.29, n.d., available at <www.migrationwatchuk.org/pdfs/briefingPaper_9.29.pdf>.

[9] Chris Ulack, "Arab Spring's Looming Refugee Crisis," *Foreign Policy Online*, June 23, 2011, available at <http://mideast.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2011/06/23/the_arab_spring_s_looming_refugee_crisis>.

[10] David King and Gabrielle Walker, *Hot Topic: What We Can Do About Global Warming* (London: Bloomsbury, 2008). Sir David King was once the UK Chief Scientific Advisor.

[11] UK Army, *Counter revolutionary Warfare* (London: Ministry of Defence, 1969).

[12] Not all insurgencies across the world are equally evolved; in less developed parts of the world, there are less evolved insurgencies that are still essentially Maoist.