Managing the Post-Cold War Watershed — An Ally's View

GENERAL SIR CHARLES GUTHRIE

A quick look at CNN or the pages of *The Herald Tribune*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, or even a less internationally oriented paper shows the extent of the "new world disorder." The brave new world forecast by some commentators when the Berlin Wall came down at the end of the Cold War, has, unsurprisingly to most military men, never materialised. In its place we have civil war in the former Yugoslavia and countries of the former Soviet Union. In Europe alone, our defence intelligence staff identify 35 potential or actual areas of conflict. Add to this Somalia and even the Gulf, where, despite one of the most crushing and complete military victories of all time, we have no lasting peace and the air exclusion zone still has to be imposed by the United States and her allies, principally France and Britain. Much of the world seethes with ethnic animosity.

In short, the old certainties of the Cold War, based on a balance of power between two superpowers, have gone. In their place we now have a world of dangerous uncertainty in which old security structures are in danger of becoming outdated. Even NATO's current restructuring could be said to be designed for a world that no longer exists, a world in which a united Soviet Union was still capable of posing a threat to the security of Western Europe.

Our challenge today is to design something to cope with a situation whose outcome we cannot forecast. In other words, we have to design solutions for tomorrow's problems today. It is a difficult task. How are we to anticipate what will happen? One has heard it said that it is the least likely scenario which is most likely to happen. Two years ago we had too few scenarios; we now have too many. I take comfort from the words of Mark Twain: "Prediction is easy, as long as you keep clear of the future."

I approach the business of offering an ally's view with a considerable degree of circumspection. As one of a number of America's European allies, we recognize that the United States, like Britain, in the words of the 19th-century

British Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, has "no eternal allies, and no perpetual enemies." Palmerston went on to say of Britain that "our interests are eternal and perpetual, and those interests it is our duty to follow." I make the assumption that what Palmerston said is almost an axiom of foreign policy, and equally applicable to the United States today. Having said this, in two World Wars, Korea, and most recently in the Gulf, British and American soldiers have fought and died together for the same principles of democracy and decency. So, however much our past and present divide us, they unite us at the same time. As the US Ambassador in London said recently: "The shape of our relationship is fashioned by international realities, not flickering images or contented reminiscences. And throughout this century, our two countries have shared similar global and strategic perspectives. Though not always harmonious, the relationship has prospered through mutual reinforcement."

Strategic Lessons of the Gulf War

My aim is to give an ally's view of the implications for us in the military of the post-Cold War world, seasoned by some personal reflections as both a British and NATO army commander. I take as my start point Desert Storm and the strategic lessons of that extraordinary operation. I do so because, despite being two years into the history books, the Gulf War was very much a watershed marking a complete break away from an era of Cold War and deterrence in Europe, and I judge that it was an historic point for our two armies. The world, and our strategic priorities, have changed. The old certainties have gone, and we need a wide understanding of the way in which military force is used to achieve a political purpose to carry us forward into the 21st century. Saddam Hussein, within months of the ending of the Cold War, brutally illustrated the end of the old world order, and what has happened has to be recognized.

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The first point to make is that in the world in which we find ourselves, strategy must take account of the realities of coalition warfare. There is really nothing new here. Marlborough practised coalition strategy during the war of the Spanish succession nearly 300 years ago; Wellington was forced to master it during the Waterloo campaign; the two World Wars were both won by coalitions, as was Korea; and an American, Eisenhower, was probably the 20th century's greatest master of coalition warfare. I say that because anyone who had to cope with such an impossibly difficult subordinate as Montgomery was, without doubt, a master of the art of coalition strategy. Coalition warfare has been with us a long time. Now, the end of the Cold War balance and sweeping changes in the world order simply mean that we have to relearn old lessons.

So what did Desert Storm teach us about strategy? First, that strategic objectives are very difficult to formulate, as, incidentally, we are seeing in the former Yugoslavia. The legitimacy of Desert Storm derived from the United Nations. UN resolutions—nine in all—grew progressively harder, but nevertheless were almost invariably the minimum necessary. In effect they could have meant all things to all men. With the benefit of hindsight, the Gulf War was relatively straightforward. Certainly the American leadership gave clear strategic direction in November 1990, in shifting from a defensive to an offensive posture. The British government was less positive in its dealings with the British military. This was not surprising as Britain was very much a junior member of the coalition. In fact, as the purpose of the military deployment changed—through defence, through deterrence, to attack—there was a distinct lack of political guidance from British politicians. It would be nice to say that as UN resolutions got progressively tougher, so the British commitment was gradually notched up accordingly. In fact, UN resolutions, although giving legitimacy, hardly affected the issue. As far as we British were concerned, our commitment, small though it was in comparison with the American, was gradually ratcheted up as a result of media pressure, the American decision to reinforce in early November 1990, and the need for Britain to keep a seat at the top table by deploying a credible, stand-alone force.

The second point to make is that the key to successful strategy may lie in keeping political demands at a low enough level to keep the coalition together, indeed to make people feel that they can come to the party in the first place. Coalition partners need a common goal, need to feel that they are in it together, and must show an abundance of good will. Coalition warfare is very much the art of the possible. In his book, General Schwarzkopf highlights some of the tensions inherent in keeping the coalition together, including the impact of noncoalition countries—like Israel—on coalition strategy. Thus the need to carry forward sometimes reluctant, or at any rate less-convinced, nations to preserve the coalition meant that the aims of the coalition were

dictated by what the coalition would take politically. Once the political aim—the liberation of Kuwait—was achieved, the cease-fire was both inevitable, in the absence of strategic objectives in relation to Iraq, and therefore essential to prevent the coalition falling apart.

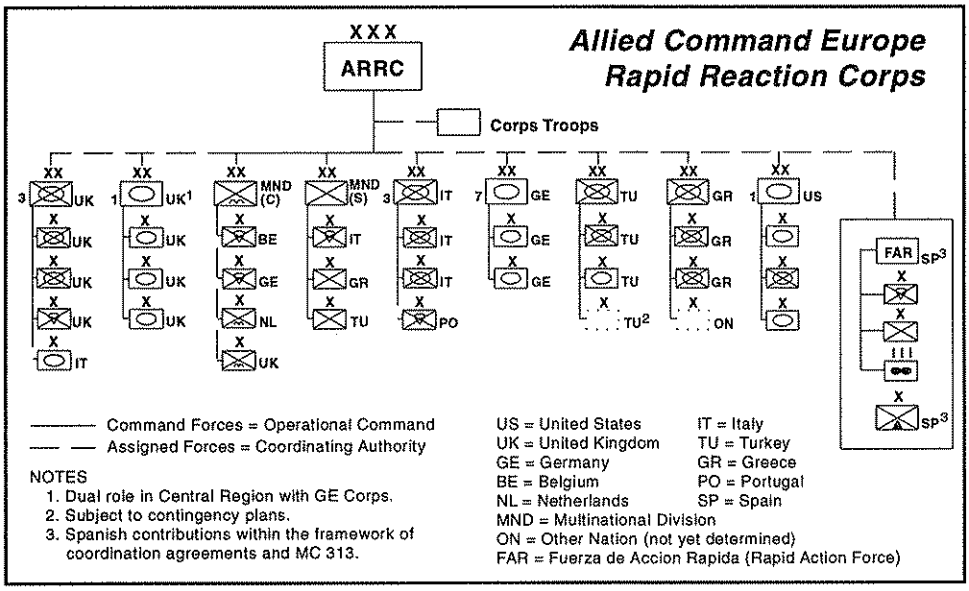
Strategy and Multinational Forces

So strategy is very much a multinational business. Certainly combined operations are more, not less, likely in future, either as part of one of the new structures in NATO (for example, the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps—the ARRC) or operating as agents for others like the United Nations. Now that we have a Security Council in the United Nations which makes decisions and is not subject to constant veto, the sort of resolution displayed by the UN over the Gulf could well happen again. Multinationality signals political resolve and ties in reluctant partners. It also gives a desirable and necessary political legitimacy to an operation, which is usually required even by a superpower like the United States.

Our assumption must therefore be that apart from purely national problems (for example, Panama or the Falklands), coalition warfare is here to stay. If nothing else, for political and economic reasons it is unlikely that nations will be able to project sufficient force unilaterally in future. Thus the concept of multinationality may well be the only way of generating the force levels needed and, of course, of avoiding the undesirable renationalising of defence.

But multinationality has its drawbacks. However important its political and military benefits, we must recognize the difficulties created by different training standards and terms of service between regular and conscript troops,

Adapted from *Field Artillery*



problems of command and control, and the need for a consistent political line during crisis management. To illustrate what I mean, of the five corps originally in Northern Army Group, two are wholly professional, those of the United States and Britain. The other three are dependent on conscripts drafted for between eight and 12 months. In 1990 and 1991, I was the corps commander responsible for preparing the bulk of the British troops for Desert Storm, and I was surprised by how long it took regular, professional troops to prepare for war—admittedly for a war very different from the one which had for 45 years been deemed most likely. How much more difficult would it be to prepare conscripts from countries with a maximum service of eight months? Ideally the key to multinationality is to have a lead nation which can lay down the ground rules for other members of a coalition. The United States provided such a lead during Desert Storm and the British were pleased to follow that lead. However, looking back, the Gulf was relatively easy. There was a clearly defined enemy, and, although it changed, the mission was straightforward. It is not always that way. For example, in Bosnia the participating nations under the UN were required to put together a force before they had a clear mission or concept of operations or any political guidance. The problem was compounded by the lack of a lead nation together with the view of some of the participants that it was indeed undesirable to have one, and that the operation could be commanded properly by a partnership of equals.

The Taxonomy of Conflict

Moving on, I wonder whether the distinction of high, medium, and low-intensity conflict is still useful and could not become something of a hindrance. On operation Desert Storm, we deployed forces designed for Europe out of the NATO area. Traditionally in the British Army, and I suspect in the United States Army, missions out of the NATO area are the prime role for predominantly light forces. In Yugoslavia, a peacekeeping and humanitarian relief operation, arguably low-intensity, the British have deployed Warrior armoured infantry vehicles designed for high-intensity conflict in Germany, and we do so without any difficulty. The amount of incoming fire the UN forces in Bosnia are taking more than justifies their deployment. Perhaps we should define high-intensity by the resources used in any given situation. The situation is further confused when one considers that many Third World countries have sophisticated missiles and modern armour, and that at least 34 countries currently have 1000 or more tanks apiece. In the British Army we see a need for a spectrum of capability ranging from heavy to light in which all capabilities may be needed concurrently. It has become very much harder to identify where the high, medium, and low parts of the spectrum begin or end.

For example, if the Vance-Owen plan, or something akin to it, is agreed to in the former Yugoslavia, it is not inconceivable that some elements could be

Danish UN troops provide a cordon around Bosnian President Alija Izetbegovic's headquarters in Sarajevo during a visit of senior European Community ministers in December 1992.

involved, within the confines of a small geographical area, in fighting of great intensity at the same time as others are delivering relief supplies or engaged in peacekeeping in traditional United Nations style. Certainly, as the only fully professional European army, we believe that this spread of capabilities is necessary to allow us to meet the requirements of the future. This means we must get the balance right between heavy and light forces. In a small army, such as the British, the paradox is that heavy forces guarantee a degree of flexibility which light forces do not. Heavy forces can go light, but light cannot go heavy. During Desert Storm, we had no difficulty taking tank crewmen off the streets of Northern Ireland and deploying them to the Gulf. Having the capability to cover the intense end of the spectrum allows you to cover the less-intense too. Following on from this, it will be very important in the coming years to remember we have, and design, armies for fighting. They may well have to peacekeep or deliver humanitarian aid, but we design them for that at our peril.

Structuring and Equipping Rapid-Reaction Forces

Turning now to future operations, it seems to me that the main task of both our armies will be to deploy a part of the army from a home base to project force overseas. It is unlikely that in the foreseeable future we will be in the business of committing the whole army in a war of national survival. A power-projection army must be mobile and capable of quick reaction. The days of more static, defensive armies such as made up the defense of Western Europe are gone—not that the United States Army was ever locked in a Maginot Line defensive attitude of mind. In this regard, conscripts who cannot be made to

deploy to operational theatres in peacetime are of limited value, and a high premium must be placed on experienced, well-equipped, well-trained, all-professional armies augmented by easily released, trainable reserves. We are already seeing the division of European conscript armies into first- and second-class formations. The appeal of rapid reaction capability is strong, as the current assignment of ten divisions to the Allied Command Europe Rapid Reaction Corps shows. Equally, it is clear that the concept of main defence forces is already withering on the vine. Rapid reaction forces is where the money will go. Two-tier armies should be avoided if at all possible. The tiers tend to grow apart.

With rapid reaction goes the need for high-quality, easily maintained equipment. We should remember though, as Karl Marx said: "Quantity has a quality of its own." This is easier for the United States than for many of its allies who cannot afford quantity as well as quality. The difficulties faced by allies should be recognized, as should their dependence on the United States for such things as strategic airlift and intelligence-gathering.

We do not start with a clean sheet of paper, and we must, therefore, adapt our existing structures to cope with new challenges. NATO is adapting to the new world, albeit slowly, and I have no doubt will change further. In this respect, the ARRC has made an excellent start since it was officially launched by SACEUR in October last year. It is militarily capable now of deployment as a headquarters. It remains to be seen if there is enough political will to deploy it.

Changing Role of the United Nations

Another organization which must evolve to cope with the changing world is the United Nations. Politically it has come far since the days of automatic veto by the communist bloc countries. Militarily, however, it still has a long way to go. I am not advocating a permanent United Nations army, but the shift in emphasis to peace enforcement will increasingly require heavily armed professional soldiers from countries skilled in the application of high-level military command. In order to coordinate and support such deployments, the United Nations needs a permanent military staff whose task should be to determine the principles for military intervention and outline the logistic support necessary. Operations staff are also needed to advise upwards to the United Nations Secretary General and give advice and orders downwards to commanders in the field.

We in the military must learn to understand the United Nations as much as the United Nations must learn to understand the military. We need each other if we are to manage security in the post-Cold War world. In this respect, we would do well to learn from the experience of establishing headquarters Bosnia-Herzegovina Command as a UN headquarters based on a framework found from my own Northern Army Group headquarters. Head-

quarters Bosnia-Herzegovina Command is very much a trail-blazer. The bulk of the staff are from nations who belong to the military structure of NATO, including, of course, America, and yet the commander, and much of the balance of the staff, are French. It is a new type of multinational headquarters in a new type of peacekeeping/humanitarian operation. Assuming that future UN operations are highly likely to be on the same lines as what is going on in former Yugoslavia, and that NATO is likely to provide similar frameworks of headquarters in the future, then we have much to learn from operations in Bosnia-Herzegovina, and we must get it right. We probably have to accept the fact that multinational headquarters will invariably be larger and more cumbersome than headquarters which are purely national.

The American, and certain other Western armies, are regarded with immense respect by many nations, but we must have no illusions about the suspicion with which NATO is regarded by many nonmembers. There is a definite perception of the alliance as a "rich man's club," and we must realise that we have no God-given right to intervene as an alliance in the security problems of the world without the agreement, and maybe under the command of, the United Nations. If the Vance-Owen plan is accepted by all parties in former Yugoslavia, there will be a clear need for an effective command and control system to control forces allocated to impose it. Only a national corps headquarters (which would probably be unacceptable to the United Nations

At the first meeting of mixed military working groups in Sarajevo, November 1992, the principals included General Milivoj Petkovic, Bosnian Croat Commander (foreground, left), General Ratko Mladic, Bosnian Serb Commander (foreground, right), and French Lieutenant General Philippe Morillon, Commander of UN forces in Bosnia-Herzegovina (head table, seated at the center of the UN flag).

and to some of the third world as well), or one based on a NATO headquarters, could do the job properly. I do question whether we should ever involve our forces unless we are comfortable with the command arrangements. However, we must recognise the understandable sensitivities felt by the United Nations at the prospect of a NATO headquarters deploying to the former Yugoslavia. We must recognize that there are other important players in the management of international security and expect them to fill key appointments within our headquarters. It is not enough to treat other nations merely as a supply of manpower and resources. Multinationality may be cumbersome, but it will be forced upon us by political realities.

Military Advice to Civil Authority

My next point concerns the nature of the civil/military relationship. Formulation of grand strategy is a function of civil government, but it is vital that the military adviser's voice is heard. It is, in fact, the duty of military advisers to give honest military advice to politicians, however unpalatable that advice may be, so that politicians may assess the risk of ignoring or modifying it if this is what they are obliged to do.

I think we have to try to extract from government a clearly articulated aim. It is not always easy for government to give us what we like as early as we would like it. We must recognise this and understand that it is particularly difficult for governments to give us concrete guidance during crisis management with all its restraints. Historically, political aims have always been subject to change, so it would be naive to think we can get a clear-cut aim at the beginning of a deployment. We should, however, try to get a desired political "end game" and highlight the military implications at each stage of the proceedings. In an ideal world, politicians would state the problem and the military would give a solution. However, we do not live in an ideal world. The principle of the government identifying the task and military showing how it should be done is, nevertheless, an important one.

Relating this to the post-Cold War world, a further complication is that if the requirement for intervention is largely moral in nature, as in Bosnia, it is only likely to be recognized as requiring an international response after it has passed the critical point. Thus, it may be an unfortunate law of international affairs, especially in the media age, that the point at which opinion can be mobilized to manage a localized crisis occurs after the point at which the crisis can be readily managed.

Yet, if the typical conflict reflects an unstable political situation, the basic objective of an intervention will be to stabilize the situation. The later the intervention, the more difficult the task of stabilization. The ideal intervention is therefore early, prior to chronic destabilization. Early intervention may avoid a later, greater commitment when the situation has become desperate. An

equally unhelpful, but nevertheless true, fact of life is that any success in stabilizing the situation may require a long-term military commitment, in that the removal of troops may trigger a recurrence of instability. While this is perhaps a lesson of the Gulf, it is certainly true in Bosnia. Perhaps the days of going in hard with overwhelming force and getting out quickly are over. Whatever happens, the unintended consequences of conflict will always be as great, if not greater, than the intended consequences. For example, one has only to look at the British involvement in the former Yugoslavia. We originally deployed a medical battalion to Croatia more than a year ago. This was followed by a battalion group to Bosnia to support the United Nations high commission for refugees' humanitarian relief efforts. We now face the possibility of much greater involvement should NATO deploy a large force to impose peace. Who knows where the consequences of such a deployment could take us?

The Nature of Future Conflict

Next, the business of actually fighting in future, and let me cover five issues I believe are important: maneuver warfare, the AirLand Battle, doctrine, political awareness, and technology.

- *Maneuver.* It seems to me that air superiority, if not supremacy, is a fundamental prerequisite if we are to be able to fight at the maneuver, rather than the attritional, end of the spectrum of warfare. The low casualties from Operation Desert Storm are likely to have reinforced views that politicians and the public already held about avoiding battle casualties; therefore, attritional warfare may not be a political option any longer. General Schwarzkopf reinforced this view by his regular references to the need to avoid unnecessary casualties. This means we will need balanced, self-sufficient forces with an air component capable of achieving air superiority.
- *The AirLand Battle.* My concern is that in the Gulf the AirLand Battle was effectively a separate air battle followed by a separate land battle. While I suspect this sprang out of a firm belief by some that air could win the battle alone, splitting the air from the land battle could be a dangerous precedent. Next time, unlike in the Gulf, we may have an enemy who can fight, and we will then need to employ the full range of offensive air support. Technology may allow us to strike deep and break the enemy's will to fight before contact. However, the close battle remains essential to complete the destruction of the enemy and force his surrender. In this context, I worry about recent decisions in NATO to establish a separate LANDCENT and AIRCENT, neither joint nor collocated, which threaten to unstitch all we have achieved in the area of land/air warfare in recent years in Europe.
- *Doctrine.* In the Gulf the ease with which 1 (UK) Armoured Division fitted in with VII (US) Corps was very much due to a common understanding of NATO procedures. There is a need to improve interoperability with other

nations and develop joint and combined staff procedures compatible with future allies. Binational and multinational training with potential allies in peacetime can help prepare the ground for interoperability in war. In an ideal world, all potential allies should operate according to the same doctrine. We, the British, are certainly taking steps to harmonise our doctrine, as far as possible, with US doctrine, but the continued (and increasing) importance of the European perspective must be recognized too. I have a real worry that achieving common doctrine, which is so important, is going to become harder now that we are not all preoccupied with the Warsaw Pact and are no longer necessarily planning to fight the same battles. One must resist the temptation of going one's own way, however maddening or unenthusiastic one's potential allies are.

• *Political awareness.* It is fairly clear that the lower one moves on the spectrum of conflict, the higher the political skills that will be required of junior officers. I have been immensely impressed by how much junior officers (captains, lieutenants) have achieved in dealing with local warlords in Bosnia. I have the same experience of Northern Ireland. In future, I believe, young officer training will need to emphasise media skills together with conciliation and mediation skills to a far greater degree than it does today.

• *Technology.* In the past 45 years, we have tailored our armies to suit a particular threat, one which no longer exists. Despite this change in the primary threat, war remains a constant of the human condition. We must make the assumption that we will have to fight again in the future, even if the threat has changed or is less easily defined. Our armies must, therefore, be capability-based. Technology must be able to provide us with a golf bag of appropriate weapons for whatever capability is needed. Of course, however sophisticated the equipment, the human operator is crucial. Operation Desert Storm proved the effectiveness of modern technology, but it also proved how important it is to have properly trained, well-led, and capable men and women manning that equipment.

High-technology equipment is equally effective at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. We British have up-to-date experience in Northern Ireland of how low-intensity conflict can be fought at the frontiers of technology. Much of the Provisional IRA's bombing effort in recent times has been dependent on high-technology electronics, and we have deployed very sophisticated methods to counter it. Risks have been greatly reduced by the application of technology.

My final comment on technology: the end of the Cold War may have been a watershed in the development of new equipment. I do not, of course, mean that time is now going to stand still and that we are not going to design or need new, state-of-the-art equipment. Major General J. F. C. Fuller, the eminent British military thinker of the first half of this century and one of the earliest exponents of armoured warfare, referred to that constant shift of advantage between new technology and equipment designed by an adversary to counter that new technology as the "constant tactical factor." A recent example

USAF photo, Sgt. Efrain Gonzalez

In November 1992, 160 members of the US 212 Mobile Army Surgical Hospital deployed to Zagreb, Croatia, as part of Operation Provide Promise. At left, Major Helen Reyna, head nurse of the Intensive Care Unit, and other soldiers set up hospital beds.

of this constant tactical factor is the design of explosive reactive armour on the tank to counter the effect of shaped-charge chemical energy antitank missiles. This, in turn, risks being countered by the development of the tandem warhead, itself designed to neutralise the effectiveness of explosive reactive armour. The Cold War nurtured the constant tactical factor by encouraging the design and procurement of new equipment simply because of the need to better the enemy's hardware, and money could be found from politicians by invoking "the threat." Now that the Cold War is finished, the threat is not so clear and our current in-service equipment, in almost every case, seems likely to better anything that a potential aggressor can field against us. There is, therefore, a danger that we will not have the spur or impetus to look always for the technological edge. We must be aware of the danger of complacency and ensure that worthwhile avenues of research continue to be explored.

Conclusions

Operation Desert Storm was very much the first of an era: the first of the post-Cold War conflicts. There has been a watershed. Coalition warfare is more likely. We need to understand it, prepare for it, and recognise that multinationality is here to stay. Shouldn't we now break away from some of

the old terminology and definitions which belonged to the days of the Cold War and recognise that we need a spectrum of capability ranging from heavy to light in which all capabilities could be needed concurrently? Set against this, the armies that America is likely to operate alongside are getting smaller. In a smaller army, specialization poses problems and hazards flexibility.

On the political front, we must recognise the increasing importance of the United Nations and the suspicion with which NATO is held by some crucial non-member nations. This suspicion is in danger of hamstringing the alliance's attempts to rise to the challenges of the post-Cold War world. Within our own countries, we must continue to recognise the principle of civilian government identifying the task and the military recommending how the task should be done. But, at the same time, we must recognise the difficulties politicians have in identifying a clear aim before an operation. Desert Storm showed us how the political aim can change. Bosnia shows us how sometimes a clear aim is almost impossible to identify. We must recognise too that it may be an unfortunate law of international affairs that the point at which public opinion can be mobilized to manage a localized crisis is past the point at which the crisis can be readily managed. Finally, of course, we must remember (and there is nothing new here) that the unintended consequences of conflict will always be as great as, if not greater than, the intended consequences.

In the business of warfighting, we must recognise the difficulties associated with attritional warfare and design an army which can maneuver. Maneuver requires air superiority, if not supremacy, and the air battle must be integrated. On the doctrinal side, we must be aware of the dangers of growing apart now that we do not necessarily have a common enemy. In our training, we must recognise the growing importance of political awareness in junior officers. Finally, the lack of a specific threat to act as the engine of technological change means that we must ensure that promising research is translated into capabilities.

I have highlighted what I believe to be the key areas we should concentrate on in managing the post-Cold War watershed. We may be at a time when, without the threat of the Soviet Union to unify our thinking and efforts, we could, unless we guard against it, drift apart. It was ever thus; allies who fight shoulder to shoulder in a common cause frequently lose that unity when the peace comes or a common goal recedes. However, if the Gulf was the watershed marking the first of the post-Cold War conflicts, then our two armies, fighting together with a British division closely integrated into and under command of an American corps, made the finest possible start in facing the challenges of the post-Cold War world. For the sake of our historical military links, I hope we will we continue to stand together. We, the British Army, have an enormous admiration for the United States Army. Whilst we recognize that you are very different in many ways, you have given us all a valued lead and you must go on doing so. ❑