British ‘Contingency Operations’ since 1945: Back to the Future

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Outline of Presentation

- British Military Operations since 1945
  - Cold War
  - Post Cold War
  - British Ops and Doctrine: What does this experience tell us?
- What is a contingency operation?
- Related Concepts: What is their connection to contingency operations?
- Caveat Emptor: Avoiding Meaningless Jargon
Cold War: British Operations 1

- **Internal Security Ops**: Palestine, Canal Zone, Cyprus, Aden/South Arabia
- **Far East/Africa**: Kenya
- **Malaya**: JSP1 Manual of Joint Warfare

- **Single Service**

- **Doctrine**

- **Contingency Ops**: Op FORTITUDE, Jordan, Op VANTAGE, Kuwait, Tanganyika, Borneo

- **Operation Names**:
  - 1944: Athens
  - 1945: Surabaya
  - 1946: Korea
  - 1947: Op MUSKETEER, Suez
  - 1948: Op FORTITUDE, Jordan
  - 1949: Op VANTAGE, Kuwait
  - 1950: Tanganyika
  - 1951: Borneo
  - 1952: Greece
  - 1953: Malaya
  - 1954: Aden/South Arabia
  - 1955: Palestine
  - 1956: Canal Zone
  - 1957: Cyprus
  - 1958: Aden/South Arabia
  - 1959: Malaya
  - 1960: Aden/South Arabia
  - 1961: Canal Zone
  - 1962: Cyprus
  - 1963: Aden/South Arabia
  - 1964: Malaya
  - 1965: Aden/South Arabia
  - 1966: Malaya
  - 1967: Aden/South Arabia
  - 1968: Malaya

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Phase I 1945-1968

- 1956-1968 period of ‘Contingency Operations’
  - Capability
  - Joint Doctrine Development
- Doctrinal distinction between ‘Internal Security Operation’/ ‘Emergency’ and ‘Intervention Operation’
- Emergence in 1960s of binary focus in doctrine on
  - European (Soviet threat)
  - World-Wide commitments (Intervention and Internal Security)
Contingency Strategy: Seaborne/Airborne Concept 1960s

RAF: Air Transport

Army: Strategic Reserve UK
3 Div + 16 Abn

RN: Strike Carrier, Commando Carrier and Royal Marines

Overseas Bases

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Joint Commands and Theatre Bases 1960s

Middle East Command 1959-1968

Far East Command 1963-1971

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Study made of 63 Cases of Intervention between 1957 and 1967

Warning Time:

- Ample 45 Cases
- Adequate for Systematic Deployment 9 Cases
- Little or No warning 9 Cases

‘In the 50 cases of military deployment, only theatre or local forces were used for 37 of the incidents’.


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‘. . . We consider an intervention operation in the present context to be the rapid introduction of land forces to an area where we do not maintain a garrison of significant size, either to forestall a hostile act or to restore an adverse situation. The spectrum of intervention operations ranges from full-scale assault by sea and air, with allies (in limited war), to the landing of a detachment of Royal Marines from a frigate at the request of local authorities’.

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Doctrine for Contingency Operations: JSP The Manual of Joint Warfare

JSP 1 Concept, Planning and Control of Limited War Operations (1st Edition 1964)
JSP 1 Concept, Planning and Control of Operations (3rd Edition 1970)

JSP 2 Joint Tactical Communications
JSP 3 Air Transport Operations
JSP 4 Amphibious Operations
JSP 5 Offensive Support Operations
JSP 5 Tactical Air Defence Operations

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Army Example: The Land Battle Part 3 Tactics, Non-Nuclear Operations

- Integration of Joint and Single Service Doctrine
- Chapter VII Operation of Strategic or Theatre Reserves

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Characteristics of these operations are as follows:-

a) The nuclear threat can, for the present be discounted.

b) The tactical capabilities of the force concerned may be restricted by the fact that operations will probably be carried out in areas remote from mounting bases, entailing logistic problems in deploying a balanced force.

c) They are dependent on support from, one or both, the Royal Navy and Royal Air Force.

Chapter VII Operation of Strategic or Theatre Reserves, *The Land Battle Part 3 Tactics, Non-Nuclear Operations*, 1964, p. 73.
488. It will never be possible to rely on a long warning period and, one political authority is given, quick reaction by diverse and widely dispersed elements will be essential. The initiative must be quickly recovered from the enemy before the operation can widen politically or militarily. The situation calls for a high degree of flexibility and mobility and of joint-Service co-operation. Successful joint-Service co-operation depends on good intelligence, good communications and constant rehearsal and practice.

Chapter VII Operation of Strategic or Theatre Reserves, *The Land Battle Part 3 Tactics, Non-Nuclear Operations*, 1964, p. 73.
‘Soldiers must be physically adaptable to rapidly changing conditions of terrain and climate. They must be mentally adaptable to diverse operational techniques’.

‘In a comparatively small regular army two factors should be remembered when organizing training for units. The first is that it is possible for Internal Security operations to develop into Limited War and for Limited War to change very quickly into Global war. The Second is that the Army is too small to allow specific units or formations to be trained for only one type of war’. 


Size of British Army in 1968: 190,000
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Cold War: British Operations 2

Contingency Ops


Op CORPORATE Falklands

Internal Security Ops

JSP Manual of Joint Warfare

Single Service Doctrine Focus
Addressing Soviet Threat

Northern Ireland

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Focus of Single Services: 1969-1989

RN: Antisubmarine Warfare
Eastern Atlantic

RAF: Air Defence UK

Army: BAOR Germany

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‘Armies must . . . plan and train for future conflict on the basis of some indication of the likely nature of war . . . in peacetime, therefore, Services must have a sound idea of what may occur and how it might be countered’.

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British Ops and Doctrine: What does this experience tell us?

**Phase II 1969-1989**

1. **End of East of Suez Role** – abandonment of remaining bases
2. **Intervention Capability not ‘Recapitalized’**
3. **Withering of Joint Doctrine for Intervention**
4. **Doctrinal focus on Soviet threat Europe**
5. **Residual ‘Contingency’ Capability**
6. **Single significant ‘contingency operation’ - - Falklands**

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Post Cold War: British Operations

Internal Security Ops
- Northern Ireland

Contingency Ops
- Op GRANBY
- Gulf War I
- Bosnia
- Op PALLISER
- Kosovo
- Op HERRICK
- Sierra Leone
- Op TELIC
- Gulf War II
- Op HERRICK
- Afghanistan

Campaign focused doctrine development
- PKO/PSO
- COIN/Stability Ops

Renaissance Joint Doctrine
- Single Service Doctrine
Phase III 1990-present

1. Renaissance Joint Doctrine
2. Doctrinal focus on current campaign
3. Rebuilding of ‘contingency operations’ capability
4. ‘Contingency operations’ mounted from UK; limited OS basing
5. Tension between ‘contingency’ diversity and enduring ops
Assumption that R2C refers to a return to period Post Cold War and pre-2003

Historically the British Armed Forces only possessed a developed doctrine and capability for ‘contingency operations’ in the 1960s

Post Cold War era has yet to herald a R2C

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What is a contingency operation?
Contingency: ‘A future event which is possible but cannot be predicted with certainty’.

Contingent: ‘Dependent on’.

*Pocket Oxford English Dictionary*, (10th edition), p. 188.
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Related Concepts: What is their connection to contingency operations?

- Expeditionary Operations
- Power Projection
- Force Projection
- Deliberate Intervention
- Focussed Intervention
- Military Intervention
- Projection (Project)
‘Expeditionary. An expeditionary mindset (go anywhere, at any time, for any task) should underpin individual and collective ethos. This purposeful attitude should be reinforced by: a preparedness to fight; personal resilience; a philosophy of clear, centralised intent and properly-resourced decentralised execution; professional mobility supported by suitable terms and conditions of service; and the ability to project force strategically and quickly, and then to sustain it. Expeditionary is not necessarily the same as rapid response. An expeditionary approach should have an element of continuous engagement in order to anticipate, understand or prevent conflict, as well as to respond to it’.

*ADP-Operations*, p. 3-15.
‘Deliberate Intervention. Deliberate Intervention (DI) should be authorised by the UN Security Council or be otherwise legitimate under international law. The widest possible support from the international community will be sought. In such an intervention UK forces, almost certainly acting within a coalition, probably at the request of a regional party, will conduct operations to remove an aggressor from territory and protect it from further aggression. DI is likely to require a broad range of capabilities, in relatively large quantities, but should not lead to an enduring operation . . .’

*ADP-Operations, p. 8-3.*
‘Focussed Intervention. Focussed (or limited) Intervention (FI) has limited objectives. These operations can be offensive, such as a strategic raid, perhaps to secure an objective briefly or to neutralise a specific threat. They are normally intended to be of short duration and specific in their objectives and scope, although this focus may be a precursor to a larger and more deliberate intervention’.

ADP-Operations, p. 8-4.
‘Understand Asymmetry'. Operations in the land environment are by definition asymmetric because adversaries always differ, even if sometimes only marginally. These differences may be reflected in their physical attributes – their organisation, equipment, tactics, numbers – or in more abstract ways, for example in their intent, culture and values. This natural asymmetry can be accentuated deliberately as adversaries seek an advantage, enhancing their own strengths and targeting their opponents’ weaknesses. To understand asymmetry requires a subtlety that is obscured by a simplistic compartmentalisation of conflict. **The key question is not: is the conflict asymmetric, but how and in what way is it asymmetric?**

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION