36 ISMOR: Themes and Trends

A Personal Perspective

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36 ISMOR Themes and Trends

- <u>My offering</u>

- Themes – there are detectable themes, with more than one perspective (e.g. analyst, military, decision maker, historian etc.)

- Trends – no great certainty on trends, but I will offer some observations given I now have 6 years data; comparing ISMOR 31 through to ISMOR 36 (years 2014 to 2019)

- Some additional observations will be offered

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- For the previous four years, by way of an introduction, I have chosen a word that reflects the conference

- Previous selections were "wicked", "acronyms", "Lanchester" and "glue":

This year's selection is ?

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I cannot decide between :

Rabbit Holes (diversions in studies, often following meaningless trails)

OR

Comfort Blanket (study telling customer what he wants to hear and knows already!)

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A DISCLAIMER - Managing Expectations of my "analysis"

I will <u>not</u> be offering a comprehensive resume of each presentation, each session or even each day's efforts

Will not provide a <u>full</u> quantitative analysis of the content of the presentations

My perspective may not fit exactly with your impressions or conclusions (if at all) but, hopefully, it will strike a chord (or two)

As previously, I have assigned 2 to 3 "thematic descriptors" to each presentation or poster and added them up – these are the numbers you will see against the descriptors on the next slide

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What I term my "Conventional view", with the number of primary thematic descriptors encountered shown in parentheses –

- Modelling/Analysis* methods (16) (o*f which Wargaming (6) -*
- Decision support (12) –
- Value for Money (8) –
- Data evaluation and analysis (7) -
- Maritime (6) –

Air Power & Systems (4) -

- Land Operations (3) -
- Military Decision making (3) –
- Logistics (3) –
- Historic Analysis (3) –
- Force Mix (3)

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What I term my "Conventional view", with the number of primary thematic descriptors encountered shown in parentheses –

- Modelling/Analysis* methods (16) (o*f which Wargaming (6)* – use of multiple models for complex problems is noticeable
- Decision support (12) – wide range of support studied
- Value for Money (8) – slight increase as a driver
- Data evaluation and analysis (7) – both detailed and general data
- Maritime (6) – linked more to platform options than operations
- Air Power & Systems (4) – more as part of battlespace
- Land Operations (3) – similar comment to Air
- Military Decision making (3) – support to command still features
- Logistics (3) – fallen back from past
- Historic Analysis (3) – not made the "cut" before
- Force Mix (3) – not made the "cut" before

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Title/Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Analysis/Models*	16	26	15	16	21	16
Decision Support	10	10	17	9	12	12
Support to Ops	9	5	4	3	3	1
Capability Requirements	6	5	6	2	2	0
Military Decisions	6	5	4	3	5	3
Value for Money	5	4	0	6	7	8
Analysis for Management	5	0	4	1	0	0
Data Evaluation	2	2	9	2	5	7
Risk management				5	2	0
Of which Wargaming			*2*	*4*	*9*	6

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Title/Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Weapons	2	2	5	4	0	2
Air Power	3	2	4	3	6	4
Maritime	0	5	1	4	3	6
Land	2	2	3	6	11	3
Joint(ery)	0	3	1	0	2	1
Logistics & Supply Chain	0	3	3	1	2	3
Procurement	0	3	7	7	4	0
Cyber	3	1	3	2	0	0
Lessons Learned	0	3	0	0	0	0
Historic Analysis & Force Mix						*3 each*

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Theme based view (2019) –

- Support to Defence & Military "decision making" continues to feature highly
- Interest in faster and/or innovative techniques for complex conflicts remains significant – Big Debate
- Rise of war gaming *continues!*, Noted for last two years and obviously a feature this year
- Multiple methods for complex problems
- "Soft issues" and "soft OA" do feature (i.e. behaviours, reasoning, mental models, social impact) but has not as highly as two years ago
- Improving the ease of use & the transparency of analysis (for both analyst and customer) – as last 2 years
- Examination of recent ops (Iraq & Afghanistan) has faded into background

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Are themes going to be <u>trends</u>? Using the perspective of 6 years it is possible to offer some observations although the "picture" on trends remains somewhat mixed:

- Budgets remain tight (less so in USA?) although NATO nations have agreed to modest increases ("Trump influence" or not?). So, VfM remains driver for OA

- Recognition that conflicts are not getting simpler and a need for OA to examine complexity (definite trend, as noted before). Notable is an interest in bringing a range of approaches to bear. But this may offer challenges in communicating output and possibly VV&A.

- End of major operations in Middle East (by NATO coalition) has reduced level of <u>direct</u> support to military operations but <u>not</u> wider decision support

- Tackling the current "problems" continues to elicit both use of "older techniques" (re-use) and investment in "new and innovative"

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Answer is "Yes". Necessary but are they sufficient?

I repeat my perception is that many conflicts around the world have non-kinetic as well as kinetic aspects. Ops Research studies largely focus on kinetic engagements. So I repeat a couple of previous thoughts:

- Maybe need to examine conflict avoidance and/or resolution, perhaps? *I detect some limited support for this view*

- Extend OR studies to examine the immediate post-kinetic phase of conflict? *From UK perspective, linked to Chilcot Inquiry report*

And a further thought:

Excellent workshop on Wednesday entitled:

"Is it possible to achieve Value for Money" in Defence"

Given strength and spread of effort on vfm across many countries, does this provide a focus for another Big Debate?

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So, in summary:

- Continuing down – (direct) OR support to military operations,
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- On the rise – wargaming, multiple techniques for complex problems

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- A hologram!
- But you may, or may not, be relieved this has not happened yet?

THANK YOU

ANY COMMENTS?
OBSERVATIONS?