

# **Total Defence**

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## **Abstract**

The changes brought about by the collapse of Soviet Communism and what happened thereafter make it appropriate to reappraise UK defence requirements.

This article contains no 'solutions' as to how people ought to define the 'defence' of a nation, nor to how any such defence might be achieved. The aim is to initiate a debate on what studies are worth putting in hand, avoiding stereotyped views of defence as a purely military activity. In a world that is changing fast and facing threats of a new kind, the never-ending quest for peace and stability might benefit from a fresh approach.

Keywords: *Defence, Integrity, Identity, Systems, Process, Nation.*

## **1 Identity and Integrity**

The two concepts of central importance to a nation are its identity and its integrity. These are necessarily interconnected, but can, in general terms, be separately defined.

### **1.1 Identity**

For any purposeful system to operate successfully, it must know what it is and what it aims to be and do. This is its *identity*. Perhaps, as a concept, it is easiest to define for a disciplined body such as a military unit operating under orders on a specific mission; or, for a social group, such as a sports club, the sole purpose of which is to offer pleasurable and non-vital activity for self-selected individuals.

For a simple purposeful system, such as an individual, definition might be expected to be easier: this is not so because it demands a self-discipline and self-awareness which is not easy to achieve. For a community group, such as a religious body or one working for secular social ends, the broad definition may become easier, but detailed consideration of internal and external conflicts which may require resolution will be complex - an individual has more autonomy in this respect.

When a nation is considered, the internal and external conflicts become a major obstacle to a definition of identity. With the UK in mind, we might include, in a list of what generates conflict,

- the ideologies of the major political parties;
- the views of the separate parts of the UK;
- the views of different social or religious groupings;

- the notions of what being European (or non-European) implies;
- the influences of history.

However imperfect and however achieved, the definition of identity must be some fairly elaborate and generally acceptable consensus. Because it is normally implicit, governments keep finding themselves in difficulties when making decisions for a nation which has never had the opportunity to debate the underlying issues properly. The implicit concept of identity which a government holds may make its life easier in quiet times, but, in an increasingly turbulent environment, all important actions tend to be questioned. "U-turns" become commonplace, leading to loss of confidence, or real decision-making is muted by over-caution.

Attempts must be made, by any government, to be explicit in its picture of national identity in all aspects to which its legislation and action may be directed. There can never be absolute agreement, but explicitness may also be of value in identifying majority support for certain courses of action which can then be removed from confrontational political games (e.g. the peace 'process' in Northern Ireland).

## 1.2 Integrity

One obvious reason for wanting a clear definition of identity is to be able to understand what is to be preserved. The *integrity* is the ability to maintain identity and depends heavily on the availability of resources.

If certain resources can *never* be provided identity must be appropriately' defined *ab initio*. As world or national circumstances change, so will resource availability. An Ackoffian ideal (one which cannot ever be achieved, but can be approached, without limit) is useful as a guide, but realism demands achievability; both in detail, and, sometimes, in principle, identity must therefore be viewed as a dynamic concept. Opportunities that enable a more ambitious identity to be adopted will occur, and the 'ideal' is an important fixed component of a variable identity. This is the pragmatic view: an individual might have an 'ambition' seen as unlikely to be achieved, and so not disturbing to his or her identity, but awareness of a dream helps in taking advantage of opportunity.

Integrity, then, should not only ensure the intact survival of identity, but also enable its enhancement whenever possible.

## 2 Total Defence

The conventional notion of the integrity of a nation lies in its ability to remain free from domination by a foreign power. Attack on its identity is responded to by military force. Increasingly however, threats to identity are not solely physical threats and even the physical threats are not of a 'declaration of war' type. Economic 'threats' are today more serious than they were due to financial manipulation or commercial espionage on a global basis: they can be major, organised, offensive action.

'Defence' seems a proper word to describe maintenance of identity as discussed above: integrity is the business of such defence. Concentration of defence on military resources will lead to a lowering of integrity and itself pose a threat to identity.

This is not a pacifist argument and we do not enter into discussion of the morality of warfare as an extension of the political arm. Some may require such a discussion to establish a suitable definition of identity. We are primarily concerned with a rational allocation of resources to minimise the threat to identity. This requires a holistic study of national needs, the identification of key weaknesses and the threats that can take advantage of such weaknesses.

The limited discussion that follows cannot include all factors relevant to identity and integrity. What is offered is a lead into the complexity of the problem of total defence and, in a later section, ideas for investigating it through systems approaches to analysis.

## **2.1 Education**

Education should give children a clear understanding of the identity of their country and their role as citizens. This cannot be done unless the identity can be made explicit. It is tragic that a sense of 'solidarity' emerges only when there is major military activity, despite the fact that to resort to force is, in essence, a failure of more constructive means, including international negotiation and diplomacy, for maintaining integrity.

There have been proposals [1] for schools to foster a sense of national identity (sic) through stressing 'the achievements of the great figures of British, history'. Unfortunately, this can be counter-productive since our once leading world's role is no more: it is also inadequate since it says nothing about what we are now and what we strive for. In particular, basic morality should stem, in large measure, from a proper sense of identity, irrespective of ethnicity and religious, or non-religious, persuasion.

History undoubtedly offers lessons of success and failure in achieving the integrity of whatever current identity prevailed. But identity must be rooted in a desired future and practical guidelines for managing the journey towards it. Before the second world war there were clear-cut symbols around which unity could be built - God, King and Empire. Post World II these were rapidly diminishing in status, but no clear symbols have replaced them.

## **2.2 Health**

A healthy nation is a *sine qua non* as far as integrity is concerned. Mental health is undoubtedly affected by a lack of purpose and by the sense of not-belonging. Physical health is essential if human resources are to build and maintain a nation as its identity demands. These are complex issues.

A more specific requirement is the defence against major diseases. The conditions for stability and progress in Africa and India, for example, are seriously affected by HIV/AIDS. The link between health problems and education is apparent.

## **2.3 Internal threats**

Internal factors which pose potential threats to a nation are many, and have been touched on in section 1 above. They include, in the UK,

- lack of fundamental agreement on identity, e.g. overly-confrontational politics;

- strong, single-issue campaigns, involving non-democratic methods, e.g. some Animal Rights activities;
- pressures for devolution of government, e.g. home-rule for Scotland;
- crime and social disorder, e.g. drugs, hooliganism, inner-city gangs;
- religious (and racial) intolerance and terrorism, noting that the former easily generates the latter;
- lack or unbalanced deployment of resources to meet social needs, e.g. to counter poverty and homelessness.

Our defence against physical threats lies in many hands - the armed forces (in N Ireland), the police, the intelligence services, special action units, customs and immigration authorities (see section 3). Threats which call for political rather than physical action, e.g. homelessness, unemployment, civil rights, are hard to cope with in the absence of a clear identity, since the values and priorities of the many government departments involved again do not necessarily coincide.

## **2.4 External threats**

Threats from outside include

- physical attack across national boundaries;
- infiltration of agents, supporting or creating internal threats;
- threats to politico-geographical areas of concern - not necessarily dependencies;
- threats to trade and economic stability.

For the UK, the first of these is, at least at present, an unlikely contingency. The second is only in part an issue for defence as currently understood.

The most complicated aspect of policy is that of international cooperation in humanitarian intervention in civil war (e.g. such as in the 90ties in Somalia, Rwanda, Yugoslavia) or participation in UN military intervention to counter aggression by one state against another (e.g. Iraq/Kuwait). What is our concern and why? Are our motives for, very different responses to different cases clear? And, what are the mechanisms by which foreign policy and military policy are made one?

There are good reasons why a nation should devote resources to resolve conflict and prevent combat. But the obligations of a nation to provide forces to operate under United Nations authority raise difficult questions. There may be political advantages in being a major partner: there are clearly economic disadvantages. There will always be an advantage to the military establishment in arguing for greater rather than lesser involvement: this is part of the power game, which has long been a feature of single service arguments based on narrow parochial rather than broader Defence interests. A clear national identity could reduce the harmful impact of the confrontational style of decision-making, very much in evidence in all parts of our governmental and judicial systems.

## **2.5 Information and communication**

The power to communicate and have access to information is generally accepted as an unquestionable benefit. Yet 'what and how much' is beginning to be a worry. Free speech is, of course, an "ideal", currently limited additionally by "political correctness", a sensitivity to a multi-cultural and egalitarian ethos. On the other hand Internet appears to provide a forum for views which, uttered publicly, would fall foul of the law: it is also a communication channel for organised crime [2]. The computer revolution has offered empowerment and greater freedom for many, but, like the industrial revolution, and equally unstoppable, it poses problems. Its speed of development is greater than the speed with which individuals and institutions can adapt. It profoundly affects stability in the financial markets. It provides unintended access to private information, both through lack of planning and as a consequence of hacking. It also generates unemployment for many, counterbalanced by some new jobs for those attuned to the information technology world. Recent scares about 'intelligent' machines taking over are exaggerations, but there is some dehumanising effect.

What is communicated and to whom, and how that is done, always needs careful consideration. Data which cannot be understood and put to some useful purpose is not information; some control over the flood of data is also necessary as a defence of human values. Nevertheless it is unfortunate that the UK does not have a freedom of information Act. The lack of this causes the UK identity, whatever it is, to be hidden from its citizens. Such an Act seems to be essential if identity is to be a useful concept.

### **3 Concern with Compartmentalised Defence Organisation**

As with the blind eye that has been turned towards the inevitable effects of IT, so procrastination in reconsidering the role of defence has been a feature of the last 35 years.

As Head of Research of the UK Defence Operational Analysis Establishment in the seventies of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I was engaged in conflict research. Although much of what was done was based on open material, the sensitivity of the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to criticism from inside forced some papers into high classification categories: some, indeed, would have been withdrawn had I not insisted on the rights I had as an independent researcher, albeit within the Ministry.

One study dealt with both the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (F & CO) and MOD perceptions of a situation in which an unnecessary (in the event) military operation was carried out. There was [3] clear evidence of 'bounded vision', partly due to the insularity of separate organisations. Some of the issues that emerged might, if they had been taken seriously, have changed the course of the later Falklands conflict.

In 1977, I encouraged the initiative of a member of my research group in an inquiry into quantitative methods for studying the resolution of conflict [4]. Although the methods of 'soft' OR were then in their infancy, the ideas for useful programmes of study given in a document that describes the aims of the study are not inconsistent with the broader study that is discussed in section 4. Informally, this venture seemed promising and co-operation was good. Formally, however it was quashed by an edict from high level.

My last effort, before I retired from MOD was to get my Director's support for an OR meeting with our opposite numbers in the Treasury and the F & CO. At the last minute, the F & CO representative was 'unable to attend'. Although there was some Treasury interest shown in tripartite studies of conflict, nothing came of this endeavour.

In my opinion a study group covering military, diplomatic and financial expertise could be a useful core for a study of total defence, but, as already indicated, others would have important roles to play. Cowper-Coles [5], for example had taken a new look at the situation subsequent to the collapse of the Soviet Union. He said:

"Britain (sic) is revising defence provision *without an agreed rationale for doing so.* "

He suggested reintroducing something like the Cabinet Policy Review Staff (CPRS) of the early 1970s and quotes Douglas Hurd", who said that the CPRS was

"a powerful task-force drawn from several disciplines ... They assumed the highest standards of intellectual consistency".

Others started to go further. Relph [6], discussing Britain's (sic) future in the modern world, stresses the area where we must stand alone, as opposed to working within NATO, the United Nations or the European Union (this last for financial, commercial and industrial purposes). This area is the defence of our cultural identity and its projection. He mentions, specifically, education, information, entertainment and the arts.

Professor Williams, Director of the University of Pittsburgh's Ridgeway Centre for International Security Studies, centres on transnational criminal organisations (TCOs). In dealing with the threat he mentions direct action against the TCOs themselves or pressure on governments that support (or at least house) them [7]. He suggested that the diverse objectives and interests of the many bureaucratic departments of state involved did not lead to efficient counter-operations.

The Director-General of MI5 wanted a joint organisation, the Security Service and the police, to fight organised crime. Informally, this venture seemed promising and co-operation was good. Formally, however it was quashed by an edict from high level [8].

This small sample does not provide enough coverage of what views and proposals may already have been debated. They are intended only as illustrations that there are many partial approaches concerned with identity and integrity that could be followed; I believe that some (possibly still unstated) will be followed.

It seems worthwhile to make a provisional suggestion as to what might be involved in a study towards a concept of *total defence* and as to what processes and techniques could be brought to bear in that study. It could provide, at the minimum, a framework in which the strengths and weaknesses of any move towards some wider ideal could be assessed as either enhancing or inhibiting further progress.

## **4 Some Problems in a Study of Total Defence**

The inquiry falls into three parts. The first is the defining of the identity of the UK, noting that this seems worthwhile *per se*, particularly for educational purposes. The second is to define the threats to such an identity and the importance of defence against these.

Together, these should lead to the, third and most difficult task of obtaining a coordinated structure and policy that would provide a balanced approach to maintaining the integrity of the UK. This would be an interactive process since the achievement and survival of too 'ideal' an identity might not be

immediately feasible. Nevertheless, it would be well to have ambitious aims and only relinquish them, temporarily or totally, when policies to achieve such aims seem unattainable. Such issues were considered in conflict studies [9] looking in particular at the stage at which crisis might ensue, when no policy appeared to be even a minimum acceptable aim.

#### 4.1 The identity of the UK

The concept of identity has to be widely acceptable. It must cover what the nation stands for, in terms both of what its citizens are entitled to and of what responsibilities are to be undertaken beyond its geographical boundary. Unanimity on anything of substance will clearly be difficult unless ends and means are clearly differentiated, although somewhat empty and ill-defined phrases such as 'freedom of speech', 'rights to health care', and 'support for democratic regimes' are inadequate without some operationalised detail.

Even the form of the 'united' kingdom that is to prevail will be a political bone of contention. In section 3. there is attention to the use of 'Britain' which, strictly, omits Northern Ireland. It could have been worse: those of other nationalities might have used 'England'!

Again, most people use 'Europe' to mean continental Europe: in what sense are we, in the UK, European? Language is not unimportant: a Prime Minister can properly refer to 'my Cabinet' but not to 'my Ministers', which smacks of presidential ambition. The role of the Queen whose ministers they all are, and of her family is of great importance to the identity.

The starting point must be individuals' assessments of identity. Those individuals must include leaders of political parties, but other be sought. Broadly what is wanted is how people see' the role and purpose of the UK 'system':

- what its structure should offer to its component parts;
- what environments. partial and total, it should seek  
*internally* by government control and  
*externally* by *negotiation* and action,

in both cases whether acting independently or in co-operation with other nations or with international organisations.

There are many Operation Research (OR) processes which can aid such an inquiry separately or in combination. They include

- SODA/cognitive mapping note [10, 11]
- Strategic Choice note [12]
- System-based interviewing note [13, 14, 15]
- Checkland's Systems Thinking ' [16]
- problem-formulation methodology note [17,18, 19]

Each of these will provide compatible but different slices of a concept in some n-dimensional space, whether this concept be a problem-situation or a system and its environment. The dimensional size, n, is very large, and different individuals and processes will concentrate on different dimensions.

Rosenhead and Mingos [10] also provides a valuable overview of many methods, including game-theoretic processes that can handle inevitable conflicts of opinion. The available processes (others are in use in Spain, Italy and the Netherlands) can be useful in identifying ways in which elements of identity can be grouped and related; in distinguishing between means and ends; and in analysing what seem to be jointly-held strands of opinion despite their being parts of somewhat diverse views.

To the extent that there are major unresolved differences, these will be internal threats that must be minimised: potential harm can come from stated identities which are perceived as militating against one section of a nation. In general, the issues that arise must, at some stage, be subject to public debate. Reverting to education, an identity for the UK, based in part on a special, historical, role for the Church of England in schools, would (and does) make children of other religions or none less than happy with their place in the nation. Ironically, if religious assemblies were replaced in US fashion by a national UK flag ceremony, the Welsh would be disadvantaged: their emblem is not represented in the Union Flag. Conquered in 1283 by England, the Welsh are British, but not in their own right as is the case for the Scots.

National identity is a concept that is more powerful when the nation is threatened from outside or when some major disaster strikes. At such times, an undefined but instinctively-held belief in the national purpose becomes a strong motivation for unity of purpose. What is needed is a reversal of the process: national feelings should help to set conditions that reduce the likelihood of situations inimical to the nation's integrity arising. Prevention is better than cure, not only in health, but in all sectors of potential national decline.

## **4.2 The integrity of the UK**

Given a reasonably rich picture of identity, threats to its -preservation can be considered. Many views are still required but integration is easier. Few would deny that the breakdown of our current subsystems - the economy, education, health, military defence, counter-insurgency, police, customs and immigration control, and so on - would be, and perhaps are, serious matters. Some priority must be established, and both the importance and likelihood of threats considered. The essential framework of organisations that might be needed, although currently no threats may be apparent, must, of course, be in place (Civil Defence is a present example of this in the UK).

The same OR approaches as those mentioned in section 4.1 are equally valid to identify and analyse the problems of integrity. However, there is now an additional need to rank the seriousness of threats taking into account importance and likelihood, both of which must be expressed in many dimensions and, largely, in qualitative terms. One method that might be of value is a multidimension scaling approach that Rivett [20, 21] has proposed. This uses only broadly expressed indifferences between pairs of threats. It avoids problems of non-transitivity that arise, as the person choosing is being pulled different ways at different times due to the large number of loosely defined independent variables that have to be considered, even in simpler choice-situations, eg buying a car.

As with the problem-defining methods, there are many other ranking processes available. Most, in my opinion, adopt much too precise a quantification, using both subjective probabilities and scores. However, the important thing at this stage of exploration is that there is much to choose from and many experienced practitioners.

Cost variables are not included in the ranking process. But eventually the ranked list of threats has to be examined to determine what needs to be done organisationally and in budgeting terms to provide a sensible defence: this is the third stage mentioned at the start of section 4. Clearly something of all this is inherent in the annual departmental and Cabinet process of updating policy and budgeting. What is suggested above would replace at least some of the confrontational processes by analysis based on overall definitions of identity and integrity, which have also been explored by analysis. It is worth noting that many of the ideas of Bennett and Pullinger [22] on improving the procedures and influence of the House of Commons would greatly aid the inquiry process discussed here.

### 4.3 The interviewing process

Whatever interviewing process is used to elicit views of identity and integrity, it will be important to adopt a common process in order to obtain comparable views from different individuals. Whatever is used, once a picture of identity is prepared, there is a good basis for inquiry about integrity. It is less clear how to set about an inquiry into integrity without imposing a personal view, since no explicit starting definition exists.

Using SBI (System-Based Interviewing), based as it is on Checkland's methodology, the starting point should be a Root Definition, a definition of the main system of concern, the nation. In general, a root definition will state what the aimed-for new system is to do. Gril Ragsdell of Loughborough University has commented that, in my work with a school [15] I defined for example 'the school as it was', to see how certain internal changes could be organised without change to the essential conceptual identity, including purpose, of the school. I find that a similar approach was used in earlier applications of SBI, even though no root definition was stated explicitly. In the case of a nation nothing is intended *initially* that would change understanding of certain fundamental notions of identity, although the individual interviewed would be free to alter these as the process continued.

With relatively well-defined, and not too complex, systems, SBI has inbuilt extensions through follow-up questions during interview and post-analysis discussion: analysis results in system diagrams (cognitive mapping could also be used). With the more complex problem of defining the identity of a nation, an iterative process may well require a sequence of interview questionnaires, which must be open-ended. The first must therefore be based on a very general definition, one that is value-free in the sense that it must not contain the idiosyncratic views of the analyst. However, the results of a first questionnaire could well be used to design the second questionnaire, and so on.

For separate interviewees, the questions posed would therefore differ after the first stage. It would be important to try and develop a logical framework (the general form of the extensions sought and the general areas inquired into) so as to follow similar paths of inquiry without affecting the freedom of response. Clearly in a programme of many interviews and many interviewees, the analyst would, without introducing leading questions or forcing the person interviewed to give attention to anything not seen as relevant to his or her own developing picture, be somewhat less than neutral.

My experience of using SBI on the same overall system for the same overall purpose, eg with managers at many different levels in a complex organisation (British Rail), makes me believe that the

process would work. It would also provide a basis for later co-operative meetings between individuals to identify similarities and differences and work towards some common concept of identity.

## 5 Where to go from here

It will be necessary, if the concept of Total Defence appeals, or even if just the notion of national identity is seen worthy of study, to start at a high level, preferably in Government but alternatively or concurrently with leaders of other political parties. Any output at such levels would need discussion, through similar interview techniques, with leaders in many areas of national interest and concern. Use of the media would be essential at some stage.

### *Acknowledgements*

The ideas contained in this paper have been influenced by reading and discussion over many years. We are conscious that attribution to others is incomplete. We thank anyone, who has influenced this discussion. Some inspiration came from Dr Vigder, Head of Naval OR in Canada, who claimed that Canada's problem was that "she had no natural enemies". Canadian experience over many years may have lessons for many nations, now that former natural enemies, in both Europe and the Middle East, have become potential partners.

A second influence is the greater readiness of the United Nations to sponsor more forcible reaction to aggression, however tentative and unsatisfactory recent interventions may have been. Iraq-Kuwait, the internal wars in former Yugoslavia, and earlier moves in Somalia, provide no text-book scenarios for the future, but they do imply major changes in international co-operation.

Thirdly, the author was involved in a study carried out by General Technology Systems [23] for clients who wished to see more clearly what "defence" might encompass in their national strategy. The broad concept developed was Total Defence.

The last and perhaps the determining influence came by using concepts developed by Moynihan [13] in a study of high level command and control, examining the purpose and intact survival of a naval taskforce in a complex political-military situation. These ideas, based on Miller's examination of living systems [23], were worked out by Moynihan and Bowen as, System-Based Interviewing [14]. It was based on Checkland's Formal Systems Model [16]. The purpose of SBI is to determine the nature of a problem-situation as perceived by the principal actors [15].

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