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# Mass, Mobilisation and Reserve Forces

Julian Brazier



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# Executive Summary

**T**HE WAR IN Ukraine has demonstrated the importance of mass. Quantity has a quality all of its own, but regular soldiers are expensive. Most of the Ukrainians fighting in the current war are not regular soldiers, and reserve units like the valiant Azov battalion, who held Mariupol for so long, have played a critical role.

Our European allies have grown, or are growing, volunteer reserves to constitute a large component of an affordable peacetime framework that can deliver capacity in the event of war. As an island nation whose armed forces have an expeditionary focus, our best comparators are our Anglophone counterparts in the Five Eyes pact – countries that share an expeditionary focus and a tradition of voluntarism rather than conscription. They too have a much greater emphasis on reserves than does the UK.

Comparisons ranging from the First World War to Operation *Herrick* suggest that citizen soldiers can perform strongly – sometimes truly remarkably – when they have trained and played together and when they deploy with the right, volunteer, leadership. In contrast, repeated use of UK reserves to provide individual augmentees for regular units at the end of operations in Afghanistan disenfranchised the reserve officer cadre, and it has taken years to partially recover. To rebuild UK armed forces for mass, we need to focus on proven principles for the volunteer reserves, while bringing in the latest technologies and ideas from the civilian world. Reserve forces have done this very often in the past.

Yet the Army element of the Integrated Review, *Future Soldier*, proposes a structure which both wrecks the ‘offer’ to officers and strikes at the heart of unit spirit by reducing unit size below viability for realistic training; it includes a 10% cut in reserve establishments and strips the infantry of most of its anti-tank weapons and mortars, destroying their credibility as formed units.

The effect of these detrimental proposals is compounded by several other factors: a recruiting apparatus wholly controlled by regular officers turned off efforts for much of last year to concentrate on regulars; a whole series of mobilisation experiments have ended in muddle because of an absence of reserve expertise in the departments concerned; and the pipeline for special-to-arm training is uneven in quality, with much of it delivering a sluggish, repetitive experience for soldiers who are required to have a higher educational standard than their regular counterparts. Not surprisingly, reserve numbers are falling.

At a more fundamental level, all our major Five Eyes partners have their reserves grouped in regional brigades (as Britain used to do), and in their case such brigades are commanded by reservists. Instead, for a generation, our reserves have been woven into the UK’s byzantine regular brigade structure, with units answering to different commanders in different parts of the country for operations, on the one hand, and for recruiting and administration on the other. The

introduction of regional brigades recommended in this paper would solve the problem of split authorities and remove the geographic- and command-span complexities of the current model.

The forthcoming reshaping under the auspices of the Integrated Review, and the prospect of more resources for defence, offer an opportunity to reconsider the shape and use of the reserves. A target should be to expand the Army Reserve from roughly one-third to approximately 80% the size of the Regular Army, in line with the average of the UK's Anglophone sister countries. This should include substantially increasing the current shrunken establishment of units.

Structural reforms are also needed. Some of these are in governance at the Defence level. Reserve budgets should be separately identified and ringfenced to prevent them becoming the first port of call for cuts, and a new three-star reserve post should be introduced with direct access to ministers.

Improvements to recruiting are needed, with a much greater focus on attracting students and driving down the long delays in the process. Training should be more modularised and more often delivered by units themselves or regionally by (reserve-led) Army Training Units. Those arms schools where progress in distribution and modularisation lags behind should be required to introduce 'competency-based' training whereby individuals can take rigorous tests without taking the course, introducing competition into training. Reserve units should be restored to regional brigades, and those should be commanded by part-time reservists.

Mass is back in the news as we watch a whole nation mobilised and fighting in Ukraine. Technology is more important than ever, and reservists come from the civilian world, where technology use is more advanced – as can be seen in the astonishingly fast development of the Lewes bomb by the (citizen-led) SAS<sup>1</sup> in the Second World War or in the innovations reservists have recently provided during the coronavirus pandemic. Britain needs more fighting power delivered through reserves as an affordable route to mass, and reservists must have a greater role in leading it.

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1. Ben Macintyre, *SAS: Rogue Warriors* (New York, NY: Crown Publishing Group, 2016), pp. 48–49. Neither David Stirling nor Jock Lewes had served as a regular officer. Stirling was a Scots Guards reservist.

# Introduction

**W**ILLIAM HAGUE COMMENTED in *The Times* on 2 May 2022: ‘Higher spending needs to go into the necessities of large-scale and lengthy warfare ... [including] the ability to mobilise a far larger, trained reserve within our own populations. Britain ... needs many more reservists.’

The UK’s 2021 Integrated Review<sup>2</sup> (published before Russia’s illegal war in Ukraine) and NATO’s 2022 Strategic Concept<sup>3</sup> highlight Russia as the most acute threat to European security. These publications, and the Chief of the General Staff in his address at the RUSI Land Warfare Conference,<sup>4</sup> refocus attention on the need to prepare the British Armed Forces for state conflict against a peer adversary in Europe. This marks a significant change in emphasis for forces that have become optimised for operations further afield, beyond the core NATO area. Force design choices need to respond to this shift in thinking.

The battle for Ukraine has shifted the military spotlight back to the critical issue of army *mass*, in several dimensions: numbers of deployable manoeuvre formations; the quantities of infantry (thickened with anti-armour and anti-air components) required to protect long lines of communications for deployed formations; and the number of engineers needed to keep these lines open. There are also the challenging manpower requirements for guarding vulnerable civilian populations and assets far from the fighting. The Ukraine conflict reminds us of the endless manpower required in urban warfare to rotate exhausted troops. In the air, superior numbers of Russian aircraft have had an impact, but neither side has managed to establish air superiority, enabling drones to disrupt the equation.

Ukraine has prepared for this war since 2014, having to balance the cost of developing effective defence forces with the need to grow the country’s economy.<sup>5</sup> This has meant a small but highly capable regular army, with reserve forces providing both ground-holding mass – including in

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2. HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age: The Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy*, CP 403 (London: The Stationery Office, 2021).

3. NATO, ‘NATO 2022: Strategic Concept’, 29 June 2022.

4. Patrick Sanders, ‘Keynote Speech’, RUSI Land Warfare Conference 2022, London, 28 June 2022, <<https://rusi.org/events/martial-power-conferences/rusi-land-warfare-conference-2022>>, accessed 27 September 2022.

5. Denys Kiryukhin, ‘The Ukrainian Military: From Degradation to Renewal’, Foreign Policy Research Institute, 17 August 2018; Anders Åslund, ‘What Is Ukraine’s Economic Outlook for 2021?’, Atlantic Council, 7 January 2021, <<https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/ukrainealert/what-is-ukraines-economic-outlook-for-2021/>>, accessed 18 August 2022.

Mariupol, where a National Guard unit, the Azov Regiment, was the last force standing – and a second echelon for most force types, including infantry and artillery.<sup>6</sup>

In contrast, Russia has emphasised greater professionalisation, de-emphasising its reserves and conscripts, and has focused on modernising its equipment.<sup>7</sup> Russia's combat formations have shrunk into small but complex and unwieldy battalion tactical groups so understaffed that they have been unable to train or fight as they should; its fleet does not dare close with the Ukrainian coast, and its air force often operates in tactically unsound single sorties.<sup>8</sup> Initially, President Vladimir Putin was reluctant to mobilise and deploy many of his 2 million mostly ex-conscript reservists (almost his only source of fresh personnel),<sup>9</sup> including as replacements for officers, who have died in considerable numbers.<sup>10</sup> This left a tired army with no means of rotating fought-out units, although Putin has announced plans to increase the size of the Russian armed forces, including 137,000 additional combat troops.<sup>11</sup> He has, however, now acknowledged the challenges his army faces and agreed to a partial mobilisation. Whether this will be enough to replace his losses and allow exhausted units some relief and the opportunity to reconstitute remains to be seen. The public reaction, as losses continue, will be an important factor in determining his confidence in mobilising further.

The British Armed Forces have been reduced in size since 1990 and are now substantially smaller than those that faced a threatening Soviet Union during the Cold War.<sup>12</sup> The reduction

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6. *Fakty.ua*, 'In 2018, a Brigade of Territorial Defence Will Appear in the Kazhdoy Region', 19 January 2018, <<https://fakty.ua/255727-v-2018-godu-v-kazhdoj-oblasti-poyavitsya-brigada-territorialnoj-oborony>>, accessed 18 August 2022 (in Ukrainian). Accurate figures are difficult to obtain, but it is thought that Ukraine had 200,000 regulars, 250,000 reserves and 50,000 paramilitaries at the start of the war: see *Globalfirepower.com*, '2022 Ukraine Military Strength', 5 February 2022, <[https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country\\_id=ukraine](https://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.php?country_id=ukraine)>, accessed 18 August 2022.
  7. Jose Cruz, 'The Evolution of Russian Military Capabilities Since 1991', *Econmetric*, 3 July 2019, <<https://econmetric.wordpress.com/2019/07/03/the-evolution-of-russian-military-capabilities-since-1991/>>, accessed 18 August 2022.
  8. Jack Watling, 'Just How Tall Are Russian Soldiers?', *RUSI Defence Systems* (Vol. 24, March 2022).
  9. Frederick W Kagan, Kateryna Stepanenko and George Barros, 'Russian Offensive Campaign Assessment, May 28', Institute for the Study of War, 28 May 2022, <<https://www.understandingwar.org/backgrounder/russian-offensive-campaign-assessment-may-28>>, accessed 19 September 2022.
  10. Larisa Brown, 'Russian Army Loses a Generation of Young Officers', *The Times*, 31 May 2022.
  11. *Reuters*, 'Putin Signs Decree to Increase Size of Russian Armed Forces', 25 August 2022.
  12. Compared to 1990 levels, the Royal Navy has been reduced from 38 escort vessels (frigates and destroyers) to 17, the Army from 12 to five manoeuvre brigades, and the RAF from 33 to eight squadrons of combat aircraft; Claire Taylor, 'A Brief Guide to Previous British Defence Reviews', House of Commons Library, UK Parliament, 19 October 2010, <<https://researchbriefings.files.parliament.uk/documents/SN05714/SN05714.pdf>>, accessed 19 September 2022; Dan Sabbagh, 'UK Army, Navy and RAF All to Be Cut Back, Defence Review Confirms', *The Guardian*, 22 March

in the regular forces has been accompanied by a commitment to the Army Reserve, including in the Integrated Review.<sup>13</sup> A major study, the Reserve Forces Review 2030 (RF30),<sup>14</sup> was commissioned as an opportunity to address some of the issues with the Reserve as the geo-strategic environment moved from expeditionary operations – addressed in a previous report entitled *Future Reserves 2020 (FR20)*<sup>15</sup> – to a focus on state-based threats within an era of ‘great power competition’. While providing a helpful framing of what the Reserve could do, and highlighting critical personnel, operational and cultural matters, RF30 was written before the Russian invasion of Ukraine and thus does not provide a full blueprint for resetting the Reserve component in light of the current threat. So far it has not attracted a formal response from the UK government, which we must hope is because the lessons from the illegal invasion of Ukraine are being evaluated and will lead to clearer direction for the Reserve. The lack of a response may, however, be because the Ministry of Defence (MoD) is unable to properly direct and hold the single services to account on capability matters – almost all of the military advisers to ministers are regular officers, and regular staff may, consciously or unconsciously, seek to protect their own interests.

‘Future Soldier’,<sup>16</sup> the British Army’s published blueprint on the future of its forces, outlines an expanded role for the Army Reserve, although the Reserve’s shape is still under consideration and, worryingly, the blueprint includes a 10% reduction in its trained strength. The government has, however, stated that ‘[t]hese figures are subject to change pending any potential future TLB [top-level budget] review’.<sup>17</sup> The RAF has announced an intention to double its (albeit small) reserves to 5,000, but firm plans for delivering on this are not yet available.<sup>18</sup> Strategic Command is looking to expand its use of reservists, not least in cyber. The Royal Navy’s plans for the Royal Naval Reserve and Royal Marines Reserve, which are also small, have not yet emerged.

Following Churchill’s observation that ‘[t]he farther back you can look, the farther forward you are likely to see’, this paper examines lessons from history and recent operations on how large-scale mobilisation has operated, using reserves and other means to achieve mass, and does so

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2021; Ministry of Defence (MoD), ‘Future Soldier Guide’, 25 November 2021, p. 8, <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1037759/ADR010310-FutureSoldierGuide\\_30Nov.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1037759/ADR010310-FutureSoldierGuide_30Nov.pdf)>, accessed 11 September 2022. Note: brigades are now called ‘brigade combat teams’.

13. HM Government, *Global Britain in a Competitive Age*.

14. MoD, ‘Reserve Forces Review 2030: Unlocking the Reserves’ Potential to Strengthen a Resilient and Global Britain’, May 2021.

15. MoD, *Future Reserves 2020: The Independent Commission to Review the United Kingdom’s Reserve Forces*, July 2011, para. 57b.

16. MoD, ‘Future Soldier Guide’.

17. *Hansard*, ‘Army Reserve: Training’, Written Answer, UIN 117745, 3 February 2022, <<https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2022-02-03/117745>>, accessed 18 August 2022.

18. Council of Reserve Forces’ and Cadets’ Associations (CFRCA), ‘The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Statutory Report 2021’, 2021, p. 9, para. 13(c).

in comparison with the UK's closest allies. There are important issues across all the services, but this paper aims to illustrate the limitations of the current approach to the Army Reserve and suggests improvements through comparison with the UK's principal Five Eyes partners – the US, Australia and Canada – and reference to historical examples. Reserves exist primarily to provide mass in war while being affordable in peacetime, but they have two other roles: maintaining links between the regular armed forces and wider society; and access to specialist skills from civilian life, from medical training to emergent technologies. Ukraine reminds us that whole nations fight successful wars at scale, not just professional armed forces.

There are three main factors which make the UK's three principal Five Eyes partners the most relevant comparators. First, all four countries share an expeditionary model; in contrast, the proximity of many of the UK's Northern and Eastern European allies on Russia leads them to focus on the direct threat of invasion. For example, Finland and Norway both have reserve forces much larger than their regular forces, and many Eastern European countries are expanding their reserves (though their position is clearly different). Second, the UK's nearest neighbour and comparator, France (along with Italy), has a large-scale Gendarmerie, cross-trained as soldiers, including light armoured special forces and other specialist elements. These are full-time police officers, but in war and homeland emergencies they supplement the regular armed forces. The UK is unlikely to adopt this approach. Third, most of the UK's continental allies used conscription a generation ago, and some, including Germany (which has nevertheless indicated an intention to substantially expand its volunteer reserves),<sup>19</sup> used conscription much more recently. In contrast, apart from comparatively short periods of National Service in the UK after the Second World War and in the US during the Korean and Vietnam Wars, none of the Five Eyes countries has operated conscription at scale outside the envelope of a world war.<sup>20</sup>

This study is evidence-based. It has drawn heavily on the author's experience as a reservist and as a minister, and on his extensive visits to reserve units in the UK, in the Five Eyes countries and on operations over many years. It is confined to the British Army volunteer reserves; the case for updating arrangements for individual ex-regular reservists is well made elsewhere.<sup>21</sup>

The paper is composed of three chapters. Chapter I offers an evaluation of the current state of the British Army Reserve, citing comparisons with relevant international partners.

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19. Gerhard Wheeler, 'Reservists Are Key to Deterrence in Grey Zone Conflict – Businesses Must Be Part of the Effort', *RUSI Commentary*, 30 January 2020; German Federal Ministry of Defence, 'Reserve Strategy', K-10/5, 18 October 2019, <<https://www.bundeswehr.de/resource/blob/171578/15defe6c78b9c8f56e4ff75f065bf4c1/download-sdr-englisch-data.pdf>>, accessed 19 September 2022; Benjamin Vorhölter, 'Strategie der Reserve: Ein Meilenstein kommt im Oktober', *Die Reserve*, 29 June 2021, <<https://www.reservistenverband.de/magazin-die-reserve/strategie-der-reserve-ein-meilenstein-kommt-im-oktober/>>, accessed 19 September 2022.

20. The US still has legal provision for conscription, but this was not used at scale after the Second World War outside the Korean and Vietnam Wars and de facto ended in 1973.

21. For example, as part of MoD, 'Reserve Forces Review 2030', under the title 'Strategic Reserve', pp. 46–47.

Chapter II provides an analysis of a series of campaigns, examining how structures *in peacetime*, when resources were necessarily limited, enabled – or otherwise – large-scale expansion in war and how successful were the non-regular forces concerned, *especially in the crucial early stages of war*. The focus on early stages reflects the fact that during major wars of significant duration the elements blur, but pre-existing reserve structures help to determine what mass is available, and at what standard. The paper also argues that some characteristics of reserve soldiering, if carried on during such wars, can help to promote esprit de corps. Chapter III proposes a model for the British Army Reserve that responds to the current threat and to historical lessons.



# I. Today's Army Reserve in Comparison to the UK's Major Five Eyes Partners

## Size and Laydown

The composition of the British Army Reserve is as follows:

**Table 1:** British Army Reserve as at 1 January 2022

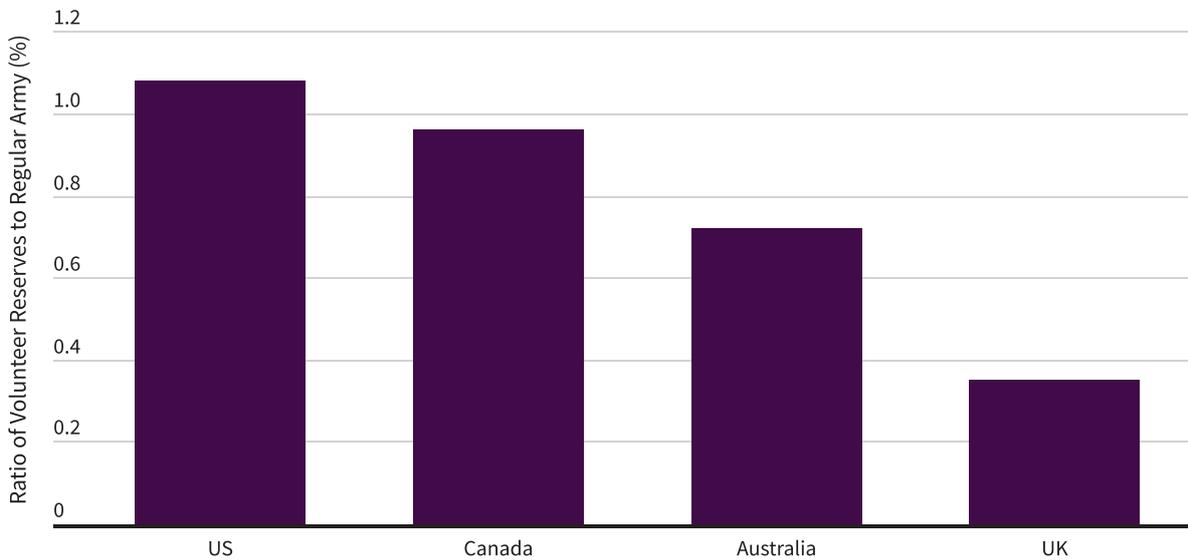
Target	30,100
Trained strength	26,170
Target %	87%

Source: MoD, 'Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics 1 January 2022', updated 2 September 2022, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2022/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-january-2022#future-reserves-2020-fr20-programme-monitoring>>, accessed 19 September 2022.

The trained strength figure in Table 1 includes those who have completed initial basic (Phase 1) training but not their initial trade (Phase 2) training. It also includes many soldiers who have not trained for a year, partly as a consequence of the coronavirus pandemic. It is difficult to get a completely accurate picture of the readiness of the Army Reserve, as measures of individual readiness are not regularly published. When not mobilised, Army Reserve forces (including the costs of equipment, infrastructure, training, etc.) cost roughly one-fifth as much as their regular counterparts, making them an attractive option for providing mass in war, and more affordable in peacetime.<sup>22</sup> Despite this, one of the most obvious differences between the reserve forces of the major Five Eyes countries today is in proportionate size, as illustrated in Figure 1.

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22. MoD, 'Cost Comparison Analysis of Army Regular and Reserve Sub-Units', 25 March 2015, p. 4, Table 3, <[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/417634/20150326-Cost\\_Comparison-v6-6-O.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417634/20150326-Cost_Comparison-v6-6-O.pdf)>, accessed 19 September 2022.

**Figure 1:** Percentage Ratio of Volunteer Reserves to Regular Army

Source: US House Committee on Appropriations, 'Appropriations Committee Releases Fiscal Year 2022 Defense Funding Bill', press release, 29 June 2021, <<https://appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/appropriations-committee-releases-fiscal-year-2022-defense-funding-bill>>, accessed 19 September 2022; Government of Canada, 'The Canadian Army of Today', 15 November 2021, <<https://www.canada.ca/en/army/corporate/the-canadian-army-of-today.html>> accessed 19 September 2022; Australian Department of Defence, 'Defence Annual Report 2020–21', 2021, p. 117, Table 6.13, <<https://www.defence.gov.au/about/information-disclosures/annual-reports>>, accessed 19 September 2022; MoD, 'Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics 1 April 2022', 2 September 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2022/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-april-2022>, accessed 19 September 2022.

A second difference between the UK and its sister countries relates to laydown. Most reserve units in the US, Canada and Australia are in geographically concentrated brigades, whereas in the UK brigades are often scattered around the country, with even individual units sometimes spread across regions.<sup>23</sup> The UK also has a complicated split between operational and regional command, creating a 'warlords and landlords' scenario. All this generates time-consuming complexity when, in reserve matters, time is already stretched.

23. Besides national units (specialists who are recruited from all over the country, for obvious reasons), there are some widely scattered 'ordinary' reserve units such as the 5<sup>th</sup> Fusiliers, an infantry battalion with companies from Wiltshire to Gateshead.

## Areas of Progress

There has been useful progress in five areas since the FR20 report painted its dismal picture:

1. **Officer recruitment:** By 2011, the smallest reserve course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (RMAS) had only seven officers, and none of the courses had more than about 30. Recently, summer courses have typically attracted 100 (the maximum). Nevertheless, the number of young officers remains a serious problem across many units, but quantifying this is difficult as the MoD has stopped counting reserve officers separately in its quarterly statistics<sup>24</sup> – although it continues to do so for regulars.
2. **Representation:** Genuine reservists – that is, people who have extensive experience combining a civilian job with reserve service – are better represented in the upper echelons of the service. When the FR20 survey was commissioned, the only reserve two-star post was the tri-service post of assistant chief of the defence staff (reserves and cadets). Today there is a major general on the Army Board and a second one as deputy commander field army, and the number of reserve brigadiers has doubled, although senior reserve representation in the crucial area of RMAS has been diminished and the total count is still proportionately smaller than that of the other Five Eyes countries.
3. **Terms and conditions:** Terms and conditions of service have improved, with pensions introduced and provision for physiotherapy for those suffering injuries during training. There is room for improvement, notably in relation to wider medical access, but the situation is less dire than in 2011.
4. **Recognition:** The establishment of the Armed Forces Covenant and gold, silver and bronze awards for employers has made many organisations more reserve-friendly, although in some cases the policy has not trickled down to the working level. Sadly, advances in this area do not seem to be matched by MoD understanding of employers' reasonable needs on mobilisation, as we shall see below.
5. **Integration:** The unit pairing mechanism has enabled better relationships and mutual support between regular and reserve components. Pairing is reliant on personalities, reasonable proximity geographically, and on having a high commonality of role.

In many other respects, however, the picture is bleak, and the emerging outline plans do not seem to be based on a comprehensive understanding of the Army Reserve.

## Recruitment

The pandemic hit the Reserve hard, but this was exacerbated by the Army abandoning reserve recruiting and cancelling many induction weekends in 2021 to allow it to focus on regulars. The breakdown in the online recruiting system (the Defence Recruitment System) and the

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24. MoD, 'Quarterly Service Personnel Statistics 1 April 2022', updated 2 September 2022, <<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-2022/quarterly-service-personnel-statistics-1-april-2022#future-reserves-2020-fr20-programme-monitoring>>, accessed 19 September 2022.

inadequacies of the paper alternative are widely known,<sup>25</sup> but they came on top of a situation in which delays of up to a whole year were not uncommon. It takes a highly motivated recruit to continue to wait. This has been compounded by the decision, taken in order to reduce risk, to slow the pace of Phase 1 training for the Reserve, which has led, anecdotal evidence suggests, to a substantial increase in wastage – although official figures are not available. The modest attempt in autumn 2021 to relaunch reserve recruitment was, astonishingly, carried out without any coordination with units themselves or the Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Associations (RFCA), which provides links to local communities.<sup>26</sup>

A new contract is being let for Army recruiting – a sensible move after all the failures of the current system. The previous contract was established with little regard for reservists, yet recruiting of reserves was handed over at the same time, and it took years to adjust it to operate even passably well.<sup>27</sup>

## Unit Structure

To build and maintain a healthy volunteer unit, a vicious circle has to be broken. Soldiers are motivated by challenging training, but to deliver interesting collective training, numbers are needed. The vital ground in this is 'critical mass' – getting enough soldiers together *in a particular training period* for realistic training to become viable.

Traditionally, reserve units were large enough to provide this ability to train en masse, but nowadays reserve units are much smaller. Although regular units have also shrunk, a reserve unit's establishment includes soldiers who have not passed Phase 2 training and so cannot participate in all activities. To take an example, a reserve infantry battalion's establishment has in recent times largely mirrored a regular one, at 440 people, with rifle companies at nominally 100. But even when up to strength (and, post-COVID, few are), reservists' other commitments mean that turnout on any one weekend will never be 100%. Moreover, soldiers who have not completed their Phase 2 training cannot fully participate but are still included in the total. The result can swiftly become a cycle of small turnouts leading to an inability to conduct realistic training, in turn leading to fewer people attending training and ultimately to falling retention levels (and readiness and operational capability). Despite this, a new proposal calls for further cuts in reserve unit establishments to meet the 10% cut in overall Army Reserve numbers. Worse, in the case of the infantry the bulk of the cuts (if confirmed) are in support weapons, including two-thirds of anti-tank weapons and mortars – ironically one of the few areas in

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25. Paul Kunert, 'UK Ministry of Defence Takes Recruitment System Offline, Confirms Data Leak', *The Register*, 24 March 2022.

26. Julian Brazier, 'A Strong Army Reserve Requires Senior Representation', *RUSI Commentary*, 5 January 2022, <<https://rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/strong-army-reserve-requires-senior-representation>>, accessed 19 September 2022.

27. The author took over as minister for reserves shortly afterwards. So bad was the system that a minister in the Cabinet Office had been experimenting with online applications as a reservist to try to discover why the MoD was not performing.

which the reserves are well equipped. The last time the main threat stemmed from Russia, the Territorial Army (TA) provided potent and validated blocking units equipped with anti-tank missiles (more difficult to operate than today's, which can be trained quickly), and mortars that have not physically changed in decades.<sup>28</sup> The US, Canada and Australia all have a full suite of mortars and anti-tank weapons within their reserve orders of battle.

This new proposal – set against the background of the Ukraine war – sends a message to reserve infantry units that they are not taken seriously for warfighting, except to backfill regular units. The focus on backfilling regular units has had a devastating impact on the reserve officer corps, which is discussed later in the section on Afghanistan. The proposal threatens to take the Army Reserve back to the position it was in at the time of the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review that resulted in a need to reset the approach under the FR20.<sup>29</sup>

Consideration has been given to creating further hybrid units in specialist areas comprising both regular and reserve soldiers. This is unwise: earlier experiments with hybrid brigades in the 1990s were unsuccessful. In Australia, regulars made up 20% of the 7<sup>th</sup> Brigade in Brisbane, while in Canada, regulars comprised 10% of the Reserve Brigade in British Columbia.<sup>30</sup> The UK has had more recent hybrid arrangements, including amalgamating regular and reserve Explosive Ordnance Disposal Regiments into two hybrid regiments. Australia and Canada have 'de-hybridised', and the UK has largely done the same. The US National Guard eschews hybrid units except for a few small, specialist pools.

The reasons why hybrid units have failed are various. Regular soldiers with busy military commitments, who are often away from their families, were expected to work evenings and weekends with reservists. For the Reserve, there was a collapse in officer numbers stemming from a lack of understanding of how the volunteer leadership ethos fits around civilian jobs – although good regular commanding officers can make a bad system work for a while.

## Individual Training

Traditionally, most individual training was delivered within units, but this function has recently become much more centralised. This can ensure uniform standards and allows access to equipment that is too expensive to be available across many locations, but taking soldiers away from their units works against critical mass and undermines unit cohesion. This is particularly noticeable in basic training. The organisations which deliver Phase 1 training seem to regard training itself as the sole aim, ignoring the importance of building ties of comradeship. Many follow the practice of mixing soldiers from different units across platoons so that precious

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28. Jim Storr, *Battlegroup! The Lessons of the Unfought Battles of the Cold War* (Warwick: Helion, 2021), pp. 41, 122–24 and 145.

29. MoD, *Future Reserves 2020*, para. 31.

30. The author visited the Canadian experiment in British Columbia, shortly before its demise in 1995, when it was made clear that it was not a success, despite generous funding.

formative experiences are not shared with future comrades. (In the US National Guard, units can specify that their recruits are kept together.)

Friendships and fellow feeling do much to bring a soldier in on a parade night after a hard week at work – and it was the ties of comradeship that built British soldiers' spirit in earlier conflicts. Because regular soldiers live and work in their units, they seldom understand how much harder it is to develop comradeship in a reserve unit. The very few units which do carry out their own basic training, principally the Honourable Artillery Company and 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Parachute Regiment, are strong on retaining those who complete the pipeline.

There is a wider problem with UK training, which is a theme in the RF30 report and has repeatedly been raised by the CRFCA External Scrutiny Team (EST): failing to optimise the time of soldiers with busy day jobs, rather than simply defaulting to sending them on regular courses, matching civilian working hours at distant establishments. After all, reservists are required to have higher educational attainment than regulars precisely to allow accelerated learning, which would suit both their capacity and their available time. The temptation to demand that a reservist must achieve full regular equivalence in order to be regarded as safe or competent has proven difficult to resist for some. Given the limited time that a reservist can devote to the Army, for those in areas for which there is no civilian comparator, such as infantry, this runs the risk of them doing a little of everything and being good at nothing. It is better to narrow the aperture and be good at a subset of activities, and to have a predetermined plan for how to train for the rest on mobilisation. That training must not only fit within the time available, but must also be engaging. It should be demanding and hard if it is to be rewarding and retain the right soldiers, not pedestrian and box-ticking, which it can be today.

Some parts of the Army understand this. The EST notes that some arms schools, notably Chatham and Larkhill, have found ways of modularising training and devolving elements to units on an accredited basis.<sup>31</sup> Distance learning has expanded. Unfortunately, some corps remain behind the curve, with Bovington and Leconfield notorious for making civilians duplicate, at a snail's pace, driving skills that they already – at least in part – possess (two weeks for a reservist with a driving licence to drive a Land Rover). Given the effort that the Army has spent on accrediting its courses to allow regular personnel to achieve civilian qualifications, it is surprising that it does not always see the value in directly recognising civilian qualifications and offering shorter military conversion courses where necessary. This would maximise the potential in the reserves that is currently untapped.<sup>32</sup>

In contrast, the Australians use competency-based training in some areas, cutting through the above issues of decentralisation and civilian skill recognition.<sup>33</sup> The principle is that, where

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31. CRFCA, 'The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Report 2020', 2020, p. 15, para. 32.

32. CRFCA, 'The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Statutory Report 2021', p. 16, para. 38.

33. Mick Ryan, 'The Ryan Review: A Study of Army's Education, Training and Doctrine Needs for the Future', Australian Army, April 2016, p. 76, <<https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/sites/default/>

appropriate, the soldier can take the test without doing the course. This allows an impartial assessment of their skills, whether learned at the military school, in the unit or in civilian life. Competency-based training is not a universal panacea, and it still requires military schools to modularise so that reservists can take the test at the appropriate stage. The Canadian approach is simply to modularise and allow a higher proportion of courses to be delivered in-unit, accredited by training schools. Time at the arms schools is critical in establishing the ethos of the corps concerned, but this does not mean that all parts of the courses should be delivered there.

## Officer Training

RMA has a good system, with four two-week packages that can be delivered either as one eight-week period (ideal for students), or separately. The first two are also available in University Officers' Training Corps (UOTCs). After that, however, the UK's officer training lags behind that of its comparators. The quality and shape of Phase 2 training varies across the arms schools, with Chatham and Larkhill arguably performing best for officers as well, but no other Anglophone country spends so little time on officer Phase 2 training. This partly reflects the higher proportion of students recruited as officers and other ranks in the UK's sister countries. Many US states fund generous fee waivers to encourage students to join the National Guard, but, while published figures are hard to find, visits by the author to Australian and Canadian reserves found large numbers of students across a range of units and ranks, without any such incentives. Students are 'time rich and cash poor', but in the UK, Phase 2 training often occurs during term time, failing to meet their needs.

On promotion to major, regular officers attend the Intermediate Command and Staff Course (Land Reserves) before fulfilling sub-unit command or staff roles, learning about fighting formations, UK resilience, and command and staff skills, with some global context and management of the Army. For reservists, the 26-week Regular course is pared down to a series of weekends and a fortnight's residential module, and reservists often complete it while fulfilling their Reserve appointment.<sup>34</sup> This very short course, combined with a demanding role commanding a sub-unit, often intersects with the attendee having both a young family and a busy civilian career, leading to heavy pressure on the individual and – arguably – a poor template for learning.

On promotion to lieutenant colonel, Army reservists join their Air and Maritime colleagues on the Advanced Command and Staff Course (Reserves) (ACSC(R)). This delivers a taste of the Regular ACSC (which lasts an academic year) in a single fortnight, with a preparatory weekend and some additional learning in between. It supposedly involves developing an intellectual edge and an understanding of military, political and international issues for a reserve cohort that will almost exclusively spend the rest of their careers in single services roles. As a reservist should

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files/2016\_05\_dgt\_theryanreview\_web.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2022. The review examines this from a regular user perspective, but does not discuss reserves.

34. Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, 'Joint Services Command and Staff College', 18 August 2022, <<https://www.da.mod.uk/study-with-us/colleges-and-schools/joint-services-command-and-staff-college>>, accessed 19 September 2022.

in any event be bringing alternative perspectives and critical thinking from their civilian career, this may not be an optimal use of their time. No Staff College reserve directing staff teaching posts exist; instead, reserve staff courses rely on ad hoc arrangements to borrow staff. Besides raising quality issues, this means the Reserve has no opportunity to use the ACSC to develop its rising stars.

In contrast, all three of the UK's comparators offer the 'extended period out' approach for staff college training, although the arrangements vary (as do those for their regular officers). For example, a Canadian regular or reserve officer can do a distance learning alternative to the 10-month residential Joint Command and Staff Programme in two one-year modules, using weekends, remote work and an annual fortnight; this can cover the whole regular course or just the first module, which itself provides a valuable experience.<sup>35</sup> This seems a much better approach, offering concentrated, rigorous learning without compromising unit service.

## Mobilisation

RF30 quotes an Army Reserve commanding officer as saying, 'I have found mobilisation to be poorly understood by almost 'everybody... Readiness is largely a paperwork exercise'.<sup>36</sup> The report goes on to make extensive recommendations to improve mobilisation arrangements, noting that Exercise *Agile Stance* is designed to address mobilisation problems. The EST observed in its last two reports that mobilisation arrangements did not work well for pandemic support (Operation *Rescript*), attributing this to 'limited expertise or corporate memory in the MOD (Security Policy and Operations (SPO)) – the MOD's operations cell – Standing Joint Command (SJC) HQ and Land Operations Centre (LOC)'.<sup>37</sup> It is not yet clear whether *Agile Stance* will address this deficiency.

While many reservists came forward to volunteer under Operation *Rescript*, soldiers were often stood up and stood down again, creating issues for reserves with their families and civilian employers. Liaison with employers, whose attitudes were mostly generous, was weak, despite the Defence Relationship Management staff (operating under the wing of the RFCAs) working hard to bolster goodwill with awards.<sup>38</sup>

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35. Canadian Forces College, 'Joint Command and Staff Programme – Distance Learning', <<https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/378-eng.html>>, accessed 18 August 2022.

36. MoD, 'Reserve Forces Review 2030', p. 84.

37. CRFCA, 'The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Report 2020', pp. 12–14, paras. 22–29 (quote at p. 13, para. 24(b)), CRFCA, 'The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Statutory Report 2021', pp. 14–15, paras. 31–33.

38. CRFCA, 'The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Report 2020', p. 14, para. 27.

## Equipment

Units can only be credible if they have the right equipment. Take armour as an example. The armoured brigades in the US National Guard have the same scale as their regular counterparts. In Canada and Australia, reserves have only armoured recce, but both have the number of light armoured vehicles they need to train effectively: Textron Tactical Armoured Patrol Vehicles in Canada, Bushmasters in Australia. The UK has a single regiment to provide reserve Challenger tank crews, which is reliant on its regular counterparts for borrowing armour. Proximity allows this to work reasonably well, but the UK's three reserve armoured reconnaissance regiments are each equipped only with eight well-used Jackal vehicles each, averaging less than two vehicles per squadron. The squadrons are a long way apart and, lacking a budget for low-loaders, vehicles can only be concentrated for squadron training by further wearing them out on long journeys – and misemploying busy staff.

This is compounded by an issue which applies across the Army Reserve. A decade ago, Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers detachments were withdrawn and concentrated. The CRFCA EST has repeatedly reported on the damaging effect that this has had on vehicle maintenance and availability.<sup>39</sup> The Army has not restored the arrangement, despite the impact on Army Reserve capability (and the absence of obvious cost implications).

Personal equipment is also important to both quality of training and morale. In the 1980s, a TA soldier in combat dress was indistinguishable from a regular. Today, the former is more likely to have older pattern webbing, body armour and weapon modification standards, giving the impression that reserves are not valued. Similarly, a reservist working on an overseas exercise will not usually be eligible for the same allowances for deployment as a regular, nor even the same protections in case of injury.<sup>40</sup> While perhaps small in absolute terms, the impact is significant and profound for volunteers who join in the hope of 'belonging' to the military.

## Buildings

For reserve units to thrive, they need to operate from good-quality buildings that are practical, secure and provide an atmosphere conducive to training and social events. Some units have such facilities, but some sites are in a terrible state.<sup>41</sup> This has recently been compounded by the failure of the Army to replace caretakers as they retire. Furthermore, whereas in the past the RFCAs had great independence in managing the sites, they do not enjoy the same delegated powers as the Army has for – usually far more expensive – regular sites. Given that the RFCAs can often draw on a wide range of pro-bono expertise in areas from estate management to accountancy, marketing and law, the disenfranchising of the RFCAs is depriving Defence of the value they can bring.

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39. See, for example, *Ibid.*, p. 12, para. 21(b).

40. MoD, 'Reserve Forces Review 2030', p. 83.

41. CRFCA, 'The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Statutory Report 2021', p. 17, para. 41.

Despite some progress since the FR20 report, serious challenges remain if the value of the Army Reserve is to be harnessed to greatest effect, and if the Reserve is to be able to respond to the heightened threats that the UK currently faces. These challenges include how the reserves are configured, recruited, regulated, rewarded and supported. History offers some lessons for how these issues might be addressed.

## II. Mobilisation and Reserves in History and Recent Operations

**T**HE HISTORY OF the UK and its major Five Eyes allies offers some important lessons into how the Army Reserve can be used effectively.

### First World War: Reserve Cohesion

In 1908, Richard (later Lord) Haldane introduced the plan laying the foundations for Britain's subsequent war effort. It envisaged six regular divisions, backed by 14 territorial ones.<sup>42</sup> When war broke out, the then newly appointed secretary of state for war, Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, announced that he 'could take no account of any but regular soldiers'<sup>43</sup> and started raising general service divisions known as 'Kitchener divisions'. Parliament effectively overruled him, and the Territorial Force was called out, with six territorial divisions following the six regular ones to France and Belgium. More territorial formations were sent to various overseas locations (including Egypt and India) early in the war, in order to release regular forces, and several territorial divisions fought at Gallipoli.<sup>44</sup>

Territorials were raised locally, and the 'Pledge' – that those raised and trained together would be kept together – was applied for most of the war, despite a series of attempts to undermine it by the War Office.<sup>45</sup> In practice, heavily influenced by Parliament and the county associations, many of the Kitchener divisions developed in a similar fashion. A key 'characteristic of the New Armies [was] their social cohesion, which gave them their own distinctive *esprit de corps*. This was partly the result of the [regional] manner in which they were raised, from which many units derived a powerful sense of local identity ... [T]he men ate, slept and worked in the sections and platoons in which they were to fight in France and elsewhere'.<sup>46</sup>

Sir John French, commander of the British Expeditionary Force, asserted that 'without the assistance which the Territorials afforded between October 1914 and June 1915, it would have

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42. Faced with heavy Parliamentary opposition, Haldane changed the role of the Territorial Force from expeditionary support to home defence just days before tabling his legislation, but left the structure – 14 full divisions – unchanged. See John Campbell, *Haldane: The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain* (London: Hurst, 2020).

43. Peter Simkins, *Kitchener's Army: The Raising of New Armies, 1914–1916* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 41.

44. Ian F Beckett, *Territorials: A Century of Service* (Plymouth: DRA Publishing, 2008), pp. 78–79; Peter Dennis, *The Territorial Army, 1906–1940* (Martlesham: Boydell & Brewer, 1987), p. 53.

45. Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, p. 36.

46. Simkins, *Kitchener's Army*, p. 317. Emphasis in original.

been impossible to hold the line in France and Belgium'.<sup>47</sup> As Kitchener divisions came up to speed, the three elements of the Army – Regular, Territorial and General Service – operated in parallel. Dominic Graham comments: 'That [the British Army] fought as well as it did in 1915 and 1916, when its regular cadre had been virtually destroyed in the opening months of the war, is remarkable. That it ended the war in 1918 as the most effective force on the Western Front is astonishing.'<sup>48</sup>

The dominions – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa – had tiny regular forces at the outbreak of the war, but substantial citizen forces. These were deployed under a range of different models, but each was locally raised, and they stressed unit cohesion.<sup>49</sup> In the final breakout for the Hundred Days Offensive, at the Battle of Amiens, of the three infantry corps in the Army selected to lead the attack, one was Canadian and another Australian.<sup>50</sup> The Canadian corps was commanded by Sir Arthur Currie, an estate agent, and the Australian corps by Sir John Monash, a civil engineer.

## Second World War: Understanding the Reserves

After the First World War it was agreed that the Territorial Army (as it was now known) should take the full role of providing follow-on formations in any future conflict. Despite this, the Territorials were reduced in number and so poorly resourced that, for many, training virtually ceased. In early 1939 the decision was taken to double the size of the TA, but this was implemented in a haphazard fashion. Instead of allowing existing units to prepare for war and then reallocating their training staff to build up the next tier, in many cases units were simply broken in half and backfilled with – often unwilling – conscripts, presumably in the belief that this would be quicker.<sup>51</sup> The Pledge on unit integrity was abandoned, and overall effectiveness suffered.

Despite this, eight of the 13 British Expeditionary Force divisions deployed to France were reserve divisions – and three of them were selected for the final stand on the Dunkirk perimeter as the rest of the Army evacuated. One, the 46<sup>th</sup> Division, only deployed with light weapons for pioneer duties, yet that perimeter held. The early defence of Calais was conducted by a single Rifle territorial battalion until its two regular sister battalions arrived.<sup>52</sup>

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47. John French, *1914* (London: Constable, 1919), p. 204.

48. Dominick Graham, *Against Odds: Reflections on the Experiences of the British Army, 1914–45* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 1999), p. 12.

49. See national essays (for example, Australia) in F W Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies: Manpower and Organization in Two World Wars* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 151.

50. Gary Sheffield, *The Chief: Douglas Haig and the British Army* (London: Aurum Press, 2011), p. 303.

51. Dennis, *The Territorial Army*, p. 255.

52. The Queen Victoria Rifles held the city alone on the night of 22–23 May, deterring the 1<sup>st</sup> Panzer Division from taking it. See Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, *Dunkirk: Fight to the Last Man* (London: Viking, 2006), pp. 216–18.

Nevertheless, for the first half of the war the UK's armies were driven back in every campaign around the world, sometimes, as in North Africa and Malaya, by smaller enemy forces. The Narvik campaign provides an illustration of how the 'pick-and-mix' muddle in manning – in contrast to the careful honing of unit cohesion and spirit in the First World War – undermined performance. Some units had barely even paraded together before getting on the ships, let alone honed the links of comradeship over years.<sup>53</sup>

As in the First World War, each dominion's model for its citizen forces was different, but they retained the same broad approach, with an emphasis on units with strong cohesion based on local links.<sup>54</sup> And the strong performance of the dominion reserve units is illustrated by the fact that the division which stopped Rommel's Africa Korps as he swept the 8<sup>th</sup> Army eastward in 1941 was the Australian 9<sup>th</sup> Division, commanded by schoolteacher Major General Leslie Morshead.<sup>55</sup>

The two most successful theatre commanders, Montgomery and Slim, despite sharply contrasting characters, both recognised the differences in style and approach needed for leadership of citizen soldiers. Slim, whose astonishing achievements in Burma are widely recognised, was a pre-First World War territorial who did his officer training at Birmingham UOTC. Montgomery commented:

When Britain goes to war the ranks of her armed forces are filled with men from civil life who are not soldiers, sailors, or airmen by profession: and who never wanted to be ... [The citizen soldier] can think, he can appreciate, and he is definitely prepared to criticise. He wants to know what is going on, and what you want him to do – and why.<sup>56</sup>

Characteristically, Montgomery claimed this as his own (and modern) insight. In fact, George Washington's inspector of his eclectic civilian army commented in a letter to a fellow professional two centuries earlier: 'You say to your soldier "Do this[",] and he doeth it ... ; but I am obliged to say [to the American citizen soldier]: "This is the reason why you ought to do that[",] and then he does it.'<sup>57</sup>

Two of Montgomery's divisions showed early excellence. The Australian 9<sup>th</sup> Division near Tobruk was an inexperienced citizen formation that was commanded by Morshead. It had arrived only two weeks earlier, without heavy weapons, and had equipped itself from a captured Italian

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53. John Kiszely, *Anatomy of a Campaign: The British Fiasco in Norway, 1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 201.

54. Australia had the most complicated arrangements, with its separate Australian Imperial Force, but complete units were allowed to transfer from the militia. See Perry, *The Commonwealth Armies*, p. 168.

55. Barton Maughan, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945. Series 1 (Army), Volume III: Tobruk and El Alamein* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1966), Chapter 4.

56. Arthur Salusbury MacNalty and William Franklin Mellor (eds), *Medical Services in War: The Principal Medical Lessons of the Second World War Based on the Official Medical Histories of the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and India* (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1968), p. 189.

57. Erick Trickey, 'The Prussian Nobleman Who Helped Save the American Revolution', *Smithsonian Magazine*, 26 April 2017.

armoury. Despite these unpromising circumstances, the Australians held the Africa Korps at Tobruk.<sup>58</sup> The 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division was grouped with the 9<sup>th</sup> and the New Zealand Division, spearheading the breakout at El Alamein. Its (regular) commander General Douglas Wimberley had gone to extraordinary lengths to emphasise divisional identity – he ‘made every single one of them believe that he was a Highlander, whatever his birth certificate said to the contrary’.<sup>59</sup> However, unit performance declined sharply when he handed over to a successor less interested in unit identity. The transfer occurred against a background of lingering resentment from the Salerno mutiny, which occurred when dozens of the unit’s soldiers were posted to other divisions after recovering from wounds.<sup>60</sup> The importance of unit cohesion is clear. In the Second World War the dominions seemed to be better at understanding citizen soldiers – almost all their senior commanders in both world wars were from their militias.

The RAF’s reserves make an interesting comparison to those of the Army, with the former showing consistent excellence even from the beginning of the war. Unlike many in the interwar Army, the RAF’s Lord Trenchard was a passionate believer in the importance of civilian volunteer units. He established the Auxiliary Air Force (AAF) in 1925, ‘as a *corps d’elite ... Esprit de corps* was to be the dominating force in the squadrons and each, therefore was to have a well-equipped HQ, mess and life of its own’.<sup>61</sup> AAF squadrons shot down the first German bombers of the war, provided 14 squadrons in the Battle of Britain and accounted for the first V1 kill. An AAF squadron was also selected to be the first to fly jets.<sup>62</sup>

Unlike Britain, the US had a long tradition of the militia providing a large element of the fighting capability in all its wars, including the American Revolution, the Mexican War, the Civil War and the Spanish War. The US started the Second World War with a National Guard 18 divisions strong, which provided a large part of the US Army’s initial deployed strength (its regular army was much smaller).<sup>63</sup> However, the National Guard suffered from some of the same problems as its UK counterpart, feeling less favoured for resourcing in interwar years and being backfilled with conscripts on mobilisation. Nevertheless, these were forces whose original members had trained together and shared geographic roots. Some of the US Army’s greatest achievements were by National Guard units, including many of the valiant defenders of the Bataan peninsula

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58. Sergeant Ray Ellis, formerly a frequent speaker at Sandhurst, provides a gripping account, contrasting the 9<sup>th</sup> Division with fast retreating units. See Ray Ellis, *Once a Hussar: A Memoir of Battle, Capture and Escape in the Second World War* (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2014), Chapter 7.

59. Anthony King, ‘Why Did the 51<sup>st</sup> Highland Division Fail?’, *British Journal for Military History* (Vol. 4, No. 1, 2017), p. 56.

60. *Ibid.*, pp. 44–70.

61. Leslie Hunt, *Twenty-One Squadrons: The History of the Royal Auxiliary Air Force, 1925–1957* (London: Garnstone Press, 1972), p. 9. Emphasis in original.

62. *Ibid.*, pp. 12, 249.

63. US Department of Defense, ‘Fact Sheet: The National Guard in World War II’, <<https://www.nationalguard.mil/portals/31/Documents/About/Publications/Documents/Fact%20Sheet%20-%20National%20Guard%20In%20World%20War%20II.pdf>>, accessed 19 September 2022.

at the beginning of the Pacific War<sup>64</sup> and, later, one of the two regimental combat teams that secured Omaha Beach.

One element of the US Army with a strong sense of unit integrity were the airborne forces, which were overwhelmingly composed of wartime citizen volunteers. The 'Band of Brothers' concept was rigorously enforced, with soldiers always serving alongside those they had trained with. As with the British TA, the National Guard was not allowed to train recruits separately once the war had started, and the casualty re-posting policy (which theoretically did apply to all US soldiers) was more rigorously applied in the airborne forces, where recovered casualties were always restored to their own units.<sup>65</sup> Elite, all-volunteer units can be expected to perform highly, but the astonishing events during the Battle of the Bulge provide another stark comparison of the two approaches. US paratroopers, without heavy weapons or winter clothing, advanced through lines of fleeing US soldiers, picking up the kit that the latter had abandoned, and went on to halt Hitler's last major western offensive.

A further interesting case study is the extraordinary performance of the US Marine Corps in the Second World War. It is widely noted that the Marine Corps expanded more than 30-fold during the war, from 15,000 active duty members to nearly half a million, while remaining an exceptionally high-quality force. These figures, however, disguise the efforts of successive commandants from 1925 onward to build capability and mass in their reserves, despite pitifully low funding.<sup>66</sup> The Reserve was greatly expanded by the 1938 Naval Reserve Act (still two years ahead of funding and mobilisation measures across the US Armed Forces); 70% of all US Marines serving in the Second World War came through the Reserve.<sup>67</sup>

## Vietnam: A Breach Between the Armed Forces and Society

The Vietnam War was the first and only time in US history that the country's armed forces fought at scale with no substantial militia element.<sup>68</sup> As the war developed, the National Guard Association lobbied the president to keep the Guard out of it, on the basis that there was insufficient popular support to justify sending citizen soldiers. Instead of seeing this as a serious problem, the Pentagon acquiesced, brushing aside the civilian, political and social fabric into which the militia was woven and mobilised by conscription into the active Army. The forces deployed had an entirely regular spine, with every senior and middle-ranking army officer a regular, as there was no alternative pathway. Serving under these officers was a mass

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64. William Roulett, 'Remembering the Bataan Death March', National Guard Educational Foundation, <<https://www.ngef.org/80-years-of-remembrance-the-bataan-death-march-honoring-capt-edward-lingo/>>, accessed 19 September 2022.

65. Stephen E Ambrose, *Band of Brothers* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1992), p. 109.

66. Funds were so tight that until the 1938 Naval Reserve Act, all training apart from annual camp was unpaid. See Marine Corps Forces Reserve, 'History of the USMCR', <<https://www.marforres.marines.mil/usmcr100/history/>>, accessed 18 August 2022.

67. *Ibid.*

68. The National Guard did not fight in Korea but deployed to release regulars garrisoning Japan.

of conscript manpower, thrust in with no respect for geography, who were trained centrally and typically deployed as individuals – a toxic combination even before considering the deeply felt political and popular opposition to the war. Once it became apparent that the National Guard would not be called upon, it became a haven to avoid conscription, compounding the collapse in domestic support for the war.

From this experience came the Abrams Doctrine – the foundation for rebuilding the relationship between the US Armed Forces and the people, with the National Guard and Reserves at its heart. ‘They are not taking us to war again without calling up reserves’ became a key lesson.<sup>69</sup> The object was not merely efficiency but forging and maintaining a bond with the American people.<sup>70</sup> We see the obverse of this in Russia, where Putin’s need to maintain his popular base made him reluctant for so long to call out reserves for his so-called ‘special operation’ in Ukraine.

A wider point applies here. British officers often comment enviously on the better relationship between the US Armed Forces and the civilian public than exists in the UK. Yet, after Vietnam, that relationship had become so toxic that many universities had closed down their Reserve Officers’ Training Corps and banned uniforms on their campuses. The current relationship was painfully rebuilt, and the National Guard – with its presence in every major population centre and its very public state-based role in disaster relief – was at the heart of it.

## Iraq 2003–11: Mobilisation Problems in the UK

From the beginning of the 2003 Iraq War, the US used reserves extensively, with regulars providing the bulk of the manoeuvre forces and the National Guard holding ground. The National and Air Guard alone provided over a quarter of a million deployed soldiers and airmen, while simultaneously deploying to Afghanistan and handling domestic crises including Hurricane Katrina.<sup>71</sup> This was a remarkable example of all three main purposes of reserves: the availability of affordable mass; the tying in of public opinion through citizen-led deployments (unlike in Vietnam); and the usefulness of many of the specialist skills brought by the National Guard from civilian life – farmers, local government officials and police officers were able to assist in rebuilding the shattered local economy and social fabric.

Whereas the US reserves were roughly two-fifths of the country’s armed forces, the UK’s were only around one-fifth, yet a huge mobilisation effort was mounted in the latter country too. Former Chief of the Defence Staff, Lord Inge, commented: ‘In conclusion, I pay a huge tribute to the Territorial Army for what it has done and achieved ... [T]he equivalent of 19 or 20 infantry

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69. Lewis Sorley, *Thunderbolt: General Creighton Abrams and the Army of His Times* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 1992), p. 364.

70. Eliot Cohen, *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (New York, NY: Anchor Books, 2003), p. 185.

71. National Guard Educational Foundation, ‘Ten Years Ago Today...’, 20 March 2013, <<https://www.ngef.org/ten-years-ago-today/>>, accessed 17 September 2022.

battalions deployed on operations is a huge achievement and speaks volumes for their ability, commitment and dedication.<sup>72</sup>

This included formed bodies ranging from a yeomanry unit in a CBRN (chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear) defence role to 131 Commando Squadron Royal Engineers, who made the front page of *The Times*, getting tanks across the Al-Faw peninsula under fire on D-Day of Operation *Telic 1*.<sup>73</sup> From the infantry, large numbers of formed companies deployed for force protection duties. The whole of the Royal Naval Reserve Air Branch was mobilised for several months; it was used mostly to release regulars for the frontline, but members of the Air Branch went on to serve there and in Afghanistan. Large numbers of individuals were mobilised across all three services.

But if the reserves had served the UK well, they had been treated shabbily in return. The previous large post-National Service mobilisation – Kosovo – had also been successful in terms of people volunteering, but had also led to widespread criticisms of the MoD’s handling of mobilisation, including notice periods of only a few days, soldiers being mailshotted without their units being informed, soldiers being called out and immediately stood down, and pay sometimes being months in arrears. One major improvement that had taken place between the two campaigns was the introduction of a mobilisation centre at Chilwell (now Basingbourn), which copes with everything from work-up training for theatre to medical and dental screening. This purpose-designed facility was well run, but the unreasonably short notice periods for many called out for Iraq caused friction even between those most ready to serve and the best employers – a relationship that a reserve has to manage and which is not required of their regular counterpart. Over 200 call-out notices for Iraq were issued at under one week’s notice. Pay problems also continued.<sup>74</sup>

## Afghanistan 2001–21: The Importance of Formed Bodies

Despite all the sacrifices and mobilisation mishaps in Iraq, the UK’s reserves responded well to the call to serve in Afghanistan as the two operations overlapped, heavily stretching the country’s regular forces. A range of formed sub-units was deployed. Brigadier (now Lieutenant General Sir) John Lorimer commented on a company of the Londons that was sent to him for force protection, but which – seeing their quality – he decided to feed into the fighting: ‘Somme Company was an outstanding body of men: well trained, highly motivated and exceptionally well led.’<sup>75</sup>

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72. *Hansard*, House of Lords, Debate, 19 January 2006, Column 842.

73. HM Government, ‘Recognising the Opportunity: Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Reserve Forces Group: Part 1: The Territorial Army’, 11 September 2022, pp. 5–6, <[https://glrfca.org/uploads/media\\_documents/recognising\\_the\\_opportunity\\_part\\_1\\_1458556867.pdf](https://glrfca.org/uploads/media_documents/recognising_the_opportunity_part_1_1458556867.pdf)>, accessed 19 September 2022.

74. Defence Select Committee, ‘Third Report Session 2003-04’, 3 March 2004, <<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmdfence/57/5702.htm>>, accessed 27 September 2022.

75. MoD, *Future Reserves 2020*, p. 16.

Sub-units also deployed from Special Forces, the Yeomanry, the Intelligence Corps and the RAF Regiment, with one unit, 21 Special Air Service (Artists) (Reserve), winning three Military Crosses in a single deployment and a subsequent Conspicuous Gallantry Cross.<sup>76</sup> Yet in 2008 it was decided that subsequent deployments should be by individual augmentees only. This approach, siphoning off junior ranks and leaving officers and non-commissioned officers behind (or offering them administrative jobs), broke the TA's officer corps. As noted in the FR20 report:

The shortfalls in Junior Officer ... manning are particularly acute, hampered by under-resourced recruiting and lack of clarity over the TA's purpose. Satisfaction has been affected by failures to deliver the Reservist Proposition for officers. In particular, the current emphasis on mobilising junior soldier individual augmentees has reduced both command and deployment opportunities.<sup>77</sup>

This contrasted with the successful use of reserves by the Americans. As in Iraq, they formed a major component of the Army, Marine and Air Force presence. The National Guard deployed in brigades but was usually tasked in smaller groups. For example, an infantry regiment which the author visited had most of its platoons defending Provincial Reconstruction Teams along the border with Pakistan, while its HQ and remaining soldiers were responsible for security in US barracks. Overall, the US National Guard and (also part-time volunteer) US Army Reserve made up 45% of all deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>78</sup>

The Australians and Canadians had smaller forces in theatre than the UK, but Australia deployed a formed commando squadron three times and the Canadian force included formed infantry platoons. Canada also had a different approach to augmentation. Reservist junior officers sometimes commanded augmented regular platoons and reserve sergeants commanded gun detachments. This appeared to reinforce the command structure, unlike the impact of a policy of using the reserves in augmentation roles for regular units under regular command.

UK and allied history is replete with examples of the successful – and unsuccessful – use of reserves in wars and campaigns as a route to mass which is affordable in peacetime. Some of the key lessons we can deduce are: the value of unit cohesion and use in formed bodies both to sustain fighting spirit and to attract quality officers; the importance of commanders understanding the different approach needed to lead citizen soldiers, often best handled by reservist commanders themselves; and the importance of those who organise mobilisation understanding reserves. More widely, we should recognise the value that reserves bring through their civilian skills and their critical role in connecting society more strongly with those who do its defending.

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76. *Hansard*, 'Afghanistan', Debates, question by Philip Hollobone MP and reply by James Heapey MP, 20 April 2021, Column 856.

77. MoD, *Future Reserves 2020*, p. 16, para. 31.

78. *Military.com*, 'National Guard: Service in the War on Terror', <<https://www.military.com/national-guard-birthday/national-guard-service-in-the-war-on-terror.html/amp>>, accessed 18 August 2022.

# III. Rebuilding the Army Reserve for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**T**HE THREAT LANDSCAPE in the UK has shifted from a broadly defined global one to a much greater focus on Russia, although the (Army) ‘expeditionary concept’ was, for almost all of Britain’s history before 1990, focused on Europe. Even as an imperial power, planning for and mounting large-scale armies was aimed at the continent, except in the brief interval from the Seven Years War to the American Revolution. The UK needs mass again, as it did in the Cold War, and in land forces at least the extreme cost of regular personnel points to holding contingent mass in the reserve forces as the only affordable solution.

Wars make their own demands. Peer-to-peer warfare brings the need to arrive fast and hard with a proportion of the force and then expand and sustain operations better than the adversary. Financial pragmatism and a desire to give the British people a good standard of living means that the UK will probably always have a small regular force, and its island status points to naval (and air) priority. That regular force must be capable of delivering the first strike largely on its own, thus buying time to bring up the supporting elements.

To build mass and sustain combat, reserves are best placed to either deploy rapidly into defined roles – such as anti-tank defence, as practised in the Cold War – or, with a slight delay for training, into wider use to provide follow-on formations as regular ones are degraded or exhausted. The pledge of more money for Defence in the wake of Liz Truss’s arrival as prime minister should, in the Army’s case, be focused on upgrading equipment across land forces and expanding the reserves. A few thousand extra regulars will not alone provide the mass for the follow-on formations that may be needed.

Since the budget for reserves was absorbed into that of their regular counterparts a generation ago, as part of abandoning the Haldane model, regular officers have been able to raid reserve budgets, often seeing reserves simply as competitors for resources rather than as their own framework for expansion. The decision to cut reserve numbers at the same time as a cut in regular numbers seems to confirm this. The latest EST report has suggested ringfenced funding for mobilising reserves.<sup>79</sup> The case for going further is that the two most successful structures for long-term governance for reserves – the Haldane model and the arrangements for the US National Guard – both stress *differentiation* as the key to a successful reserve component, from

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79. CRFCA, ‘The United Kingdom Reserve Forces External Scrutiny Team: Annual Statutory Report 2021’, p. 13, para. 26.

separate funding arrangements to separate sites. This is in sharp contrast to those who argue today that we should even assimilate the governing legislation. Yet the National Guard is arguably the best-integrated reserve in the Anglophone world, working – in formed bodies – alongside regular counterparts worldwide. It is therefore proposed that the UK restore a separate budget to the Army Reserve, with the director of Army reserves as budget holder. This budget should include provision for equipment and infrastructure.

The comparisons given in Chapter I and the historical and more recent assessments in Chapter II have illustrated that the organisation of reserves in peacetime is critical to their performance in the early stages of war. When committed to operations, the aims for reserve forces must reflect those of their regular counterparts, but the worst way to integrate two very different components towards those shared goals is to pretend that both components are the same. The UK needs to provide structures, training and processes that lead to civilians serving in formations with the spirit that comes from hard-won unit cohesion – and with a leadership ethos which respects the fact that reservists' main focus is on their civilian jobs.

Again and again, though, we have seen that where the structures and processes are driven by regular staffs they are unable to accommodate the differences between regulars and reserves; a historic example is the contrast between the rapid deployment of highly effective fighting divisions in the First World War – recruited, managed and even funded through County Associations – and the muddle and confusion of the process in 1939 – organised almost exclusively by regular staffs. The latter surely contributed to the subsequent defeats almost everywhere on land in the first half of the Second World War. The higher performance of some of the dominion divisions in the Second World War (recruited, shaped and commanded by reserve officers, as highlighted above) underlines this point. A more recent example is the persistent failings of even small-scale mobilisation processes in the UK, from Kosovo to the coronavirus pandemic, reported by the House of Commons Defence Committee, RF30 and the CRFCA EST. These contrast with the slick, efficient American arrangements for Iraq and Afghanistan. Another example is the poor quality and slowness of many British reserve training courses, compared with the imaginative approaches framing reserve courses in Australia and Canada.

The UK has also abandoned the regional basis for reserve forces which used to be at the heart of the old TA, while all our cousins remain firmly committed to it. The UK likes to think that it invented the regimental system based around regional loyalties, but it is now the only major Five Eyes country that has been forced to confuse and dislocate regional ties in its reserves; fragmented brigades whose units are run by separate 'warlords' and 'landlords' – the units answer to the former for operational matters and the latter for administrative ones.

Leadership needs to be delivered by reservists with a range of quality civilian careers developing a shared culture which connects and exchanges ideas from the civilian world, both regionally and nationally. The envelope for reserve peacetime activity must work for people with challenging civilian jobs and should not merely be a string of auxiliary tasks keeping the underemployed busy. This means that unless governance is addressed, the outlook for reserves is likely to remain precarious – a tri-service point, but worth addressing here. As well as the need for

separate identifiable budgets ringfenced for reserves referred to above, the reserves should have a three-star officer in the MoD to act as their champion. This individual would have access to ministers and would be appointed by ministers in the way that the current heads of the regular services are, but they would not control either the reserve forces or their budgets – this function would be vested in the single service reserve directors. The holder would provide reserve expertise beyond the People Function (currently provided by the assistant chief of the defence staff (reserves and cadets)) and ensure that the Reserve’s voice is heard in operational, capability planning and resourcing debates. They should also sit on the boards which appoint the single service heads of reserves to ensure that those appointments are held by candidates who genuinely represent the volunteer reserves.

As is the case in the US, separating the budgets would need to be underpinned by legislation. A crucial element would be ensuring that the key post-holders in the MoD hierarchy and the reserves are genuine reservists, with a part-time record and civilian career.<sup>80</sup>

The above considerations point towards the following broad recommendations.

## Purpose and Use

- The current Army Reserve was developed (sensibly) to support smaller-scale expeditionary operations outside the NATO area, such as in Iraq and Afghanistan. With the return to state competition with Russia and potential conflict in Europe, there is a need to restore the centrality of reserve units and formations to provide follow-on forces and mass.
- Given their local knowledge, reserves have a critical role to play in home defence (for example, against enemy special forces) and resilience work, but availability for these roles comes as a bonus with good-quality units. Making resilience the main focus does not attract talent, whereas warfighting roles in formed bodies, and the realistic training which accompanies them, does.

## Numbers and Shape

- The UK should increase the size of its Army Reserve towards the Anglophone average of approximately 80% of the size of the regular Army, ideally reversing the planned cut to current regular Army numbers.
- The regular Army should focus on providing higher-readiness units and formations, with reserves providing much of the next wave. A few reserve units should also have high-readiness responsibilities, as the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Parachute Regiment does now, although there should be a greater emphasis on the ability to deploy as formed units.

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80. This is the case in Australia and Canada, but in these countries long-established practice has made legislation unnecessary. In contrast, until a few years ago all senior officers in the UK were regulars or ex-regulars with no part-time volunteer experience, and the Navy has reverted to that arrangement.

- The doctrine of promoting unit cohesion should permeate all aspects of the reserves, including operational deployments. Units should be larger so that they can be deployed as units in general war. Consequently, their establishments should be increased, including adequate administrative support. Support weapons, and platoons with their own officers and permanent staff (so they can train independently) are at the heart of the credibility of reserve infantry units. Forming extra sub-units inside existing combat, combat support and command support reserve units is highly cost-effective too, as it saves on expensive overheads and infrastructure.
- The announcement of the reforming of a reserve brigade (the 19<sup>th</sup> Brigade) under a reservist should be welcome news, but the decision to include units from every corner of the country runs against all successful practice in the UK's Anglophone sister countries and makes life almost impossible for any commander with a proper civilian job. A span of command of nearly a dozen units is also probably unworkable. Instead, the UK should imitate other Anglophone countries (and its own past) by restoring territorially based brigades: initially three, with one in each of southern England, northern England and Scotland, each with one of the yeomanry recce units (properly equipped) and some infantry battalions, and with combat support and combat service support. This would be a step towards rekindling the regional and regimental spirit that has particular value for the reserves in recruiting, building comradeship and delivering local support in times of mobilisation.

## Recruitment

- Recruitment needs to be streamlined, both to increase the number of applicants and to reduce delays in the system. Reserves must be separately and properly catered for in the new Armed Forces recruiting programme contract currently being negotiated. Recruitment should aim to attract many more students (as other ranks, not just officers), who should be directly recruited on social media, not just via the UOTCs.<sup>81</sup> A significant reduction in delays needs to be achieved through a number of iterative improvements, including changing data laws so that the MoD can directly access the NHS medical documents of applicants (cutting out delays and risk), reducing the number of applicants whose places on courses are cancelled, holding officers controlling the courses directly accountable, and incentivising the new contractor so that speed is a key indicator.
- It is important that officer recruiting and manning is prioritised. The extraordinary (tri-service) decision to downgrade reserve officers in the quarterly manning statistics so they are no longer shown separately from other ranks should be reversed, bringing them back in line with their regular counterparts and allowing proper scrutiny.

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81. There is no danger of unhealthy competition given that more than half the UK's population goes through universities; for example, London UOTC has 400–500 members. The affiliated universities, including Kent and Canterbury Christ Church, number roughly 150,000 students, of whom perhaps two-thirds are UK citizens.

## Equipment

- Reserve units should be equipped and trained for war, but with identified readiness deltas below regulars, and greater specialisation of role.
- Equipment, which is in desperate need of upgrading across much of the Army Reserve, should be prioritised. While this applies to parts of the regular Army too, the very small sums needed to at least bring personal scales of equipment up to scratch in the Army Reserve and key deficiencies, such as more light armour for yeomanry units, would have a significant impact, and is essential to underpin the ability to deploy reserves as units.
- The staffs responsible for devising capability should contain reservists so that opportunities and limitations for reserves are part of the process for equipment development. The UK could specify the need for equipment to be 'trainable' in a reserve context during the acquisition process and then see the benefits of innovation driven by commercial competition.
- Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers detachments should be restored to reserve units, as repeatedly recommended by the CRFCA EST. This broadly cost-neutral measure would bring greater benefits by improving training, reducing administration, raising morale and improving retention.

## Representation

- Besides the overarching point on governance made above, reserve officers should also be appointed to the branches identified by the CRFCA EST as failing in the mobilisation process, in both the MoD and the single services, in order to help ensure that the call-out process is appropriate to reserves.
- The deputy military secretary (reserves) should be given greater powers to control the annual Reserve Service Day 'ask' for all reserve posts on behalf of the director of reserves (Army), who is the Army Reserve 'sponsor'. Currently organisations undermine their own best interests by asking for a time commitment which rules out the best candidates – and when the selected individuals underperform, anti-reserve prejudices are reinforced. Zoom makes a wider set of options possible.

## Training and Retention

- The reserve needs more championship within officer training. At RMAS, the post of deputy commandant (reserves) should be restored to one-star rank and given command of the UOTCs, through which the majority of reserve officers pass. Recruiting a much higher proportion of students – so that applicants are younger and have more time – should facilitate an expansion of Phase 2 training to make officers more credible to their regular peers, *providing it is offered during university vacations*.
- Staff training should be reformed in line with best practice from the UK's sister countries to afford reservists the same opportunity that, with modern blended learning, could easily see them do a 'reserve academic year', trebling their study and training time without competing with a simultaneous reserve job or putting undue strain on civilian

life. The added benefit of creating a stronger bond between the members of this leadership cohort should not be underestimated, nor should the ability to better talent-spot the rising stars. To support this, the Defence Academy needs greater senior reserve representation and designated reserve directing staff.

- Army training courses should be adjusted in line with Anglophone best practice too – they need to be modular courses, with a greater proportion delivered in soldiers' own units, but with arms school certification. There should be greater emphasis on recognising civilian skills already present to eliminate wasted time. Competency-based training should be introduced in a range of areas, starting with driving, allowing soldiers to take tests without doing the corresponding course. In line with the principle of unit cohesion, but to ensure standardisation and reduce travelling time, a more regional approach to training is needed, with each region having its own Army Training Unit (ATU), commanded by a reservist. The provision of more courses to train reserve instructors for both ATUs and units themselves is a priority. The Army Training Units should ideally be separate from regular facilities, but, where regular facilities are used, support contracts need to enable weekend training.
- The counterpart of the above point on recognition of civilian skills by the military is that progress in getting civil recognition of military skills is good for a soldier's relationship with their civilian employer. Reform of the mobilisation process will also help. More must be done in all parts of government, especially those buying goods and services, to incentivise companies employing reservists.
- The progress that Defence Relationship Management has made in developing the Armed Forces Covenant and in building a resource of thousands of gold, silver and bronze award winners must be built on, both to improve retention in peacetime and to assist in gaining employer support on mobilisation.
- Collective training assurance should be introduced by measuring and recording the readiness of reserve units, using technology, including simulation, as is proposed in RF30.<sup>82</sup> This can only be credible if we have larger – not smaller – units, especially in the infantry, as assessments cannot be credible without critical mass.
- The issue of loss of appetite for taking appropriate risk needs addressing across Defence, but specific provision needs to be made for ensuring that staffs who make decisions on health and safety have reserve representation. The project of detecting and rooting out the disproportionate damage done to reserve training by overzealous rules and application should be given to a named responsible officer.

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82. MoD, 'Reserve Forces Review 2030', p. 85, para. 5.64.

# Conclusion

**T**HE WAR IN Ukraine has highlighted the importance of mass and reminded us of how reserves can provide an affordable framework in peacetime to deliver capacity in war. As an island nation whose armed forces have an expeditionary focus, the UK's best comparators are its major Anglophone counterparts in the Five Eyes pact – countries which share that expeditionary focus and a tradition of voluntarism rather than conscription.

Comparisons from the First World War to Afghanistan suggest that citizen soldiers can perform strongly – sometimes truly remarkably – when they have trained and played together and deploy with the right, volunteer, leadership. In contrast, repeated use of UK reserves to provide individual augmentees at the end of Operation *Herrick* disenfranchised the reserve officer cadre, and it has taken years to partially recover. To rebuild its Armed Forces for mass, the UK needs to focus on proven principles for the volunteer reserves while bringing in the latest technologies and ideas from the civilian world. Reserve forces have done this very often in the past, and Ukrainian reservists are doing it today.

Instead of cutting the Army Reserve by 10% and eroding the credibility of its infantry battalions by removing most of their support weapons, its size should be increased. A target should be to expand the Reserve from roughly one-third to approximately 80% of the size of the regular Army, in line with the average of the UK's Anglophone sister countries. This should include substantially increasing the current shrunken establishment of units.

Structural reforms are also needed – some of these are in governance at the defence level. The UK needs improvements to recruiting, with a much greater focus on attracting students and driving down the long delays in the process. Training should be more modularised and more often delivered by units themselves, or regionally by (regional) Army Training Units. A greater emphasis should be placed on grouping people with members of their own units on basic training, in order to work with the grain of comradeship. Those arms schools where progress in distribution and modularisation lags behind should be required to introduce competency-based training whereby individuals can take rigorous tests without taking the course, starting with driving.

This paper has focused on the Army Reserve, but similar work is needed on the other two services. How is it, for example, that at a time of extreme shortage of fast jet fighter pilots – and sharp competition across a range of aviation skills – there is so little scope for getting a second bang for the buck from ex-regulars serving part time, when the US has whole fast jet squadrons in its Air Guard? Why has the Navy been allowed to refuse to recognise civilian watchkeeping qualifications, ruining opportunities for seagoing Royal Naval Reserve officers? Why does the

Royal Marines Reserve, despite heavy overheads, attract almost no young officers, preventing it from providing a route to mass, as its US counterpart did in the Second World War and more recently?

Mass is back in the news, as we see a nation mobilised in Ukraine. Technology is more important than ever, and reservists come from the civilian world, which is usually ahead of the armed forces – operational examples range from the astonishingly fast development of the Lewes bomb by the (citizen-led) SAS in the Second World War to the innovations that reservists have recently provided during the coronavirus pandemic.

Reserve budgets should be separately identified and ringfenced to prevent them becoming the first port of call for cuts, and a new three-star reserve post should be introduced, with direct access to ministers. Above all, the UK needs more fighting power delivered through the Reserve, as an affordable route to mass, and reservists must have a greater role in leading it.

# About the Author

**Sir Julian Brazier** is chairman of a security company and honorary colonel of a specialist reserve unit in StratCom, and serves on the boards of the South East Reserve Forces' and Cadets' Association and a Manchester-based software company. When working in the City, and as a management consultant, he spent 13 years as an officer in the then Territorial Army, five of them with the SAS Reserve. As a Member of Parliament, he served on the Defence Select Committee during two Parliaments. Selected by David Cameron to be vice chairman of the Future Reserves 2020 Commission, he went on to be Minister for Reserves. He has extensively visited the reserve forces of the Five Eyes countries, both at home and, in the case of the National Guard, on operations in Afghanistan. He was a scholar in mathematics and philosophy at Brasenose College, Oxford.