Air Marshal Sir Philip Osborn on the future of intelligence and information warfare – RUSI 18th May 2018

This unsurprisingly very well attended speech at RUSI – www.rusi.org – was delivered by sir Philip in his capacity as Head of Defence Intelligence. Parts of it, mainly those relating to cyber warfare – were cited in the Times earlier on 18th May(Deborah Haynes, who attended, as did Jonathan Beale of BBC). Further details on, and from, the speech are available on the RUSI website.

Not surprisingly, given the nature of the address, the speech was on the record but Q&A could not be attributed to an identified person. Sir Philip made clear there were obvious limitations on what he could said in either part.

The theme was (deliberately) repeated – several times. " Interoperability is not enough, interoperability is not just connectivity" there must be actual intensive and continuous truly joint working against the now unambiguously real new – old threats.

Because strategic competition is back, with potential security threats coming from near peer competitors. It was quite clear that Sir Philip was signalling a speed up in the change of course, which from the early 1990s had led to a view that high end interstate conflict was a thing of the past. This belief had been extended following 9/11 and the diversion of military and civilian security capabilities, including human capital, to counter terrorism. That has now changed and needs to change. This was clear from events such as Crimea in 2014 –" a European nation invading another", a "superpower proxy war in Syria" - note that recognises Russia as a superpower in some instances- and a " highly likely state sponsored chemical weapons attack on the UK, as well as a "state sponsored attempted coup in a country about to enter NATO". No ifs or buts here, especially regarding the last two incidents. At this week's Budva Forum in Montenegro, where there were a lot of NATO

uniforms presence inc. two UK regional Defence attaches – this was, of course, mentioned but was largely the nonetheless acknowledged elephant in the room, as witnessed by repeated reference to third party actors.

This was accompanied by growing developments in Russia (again, by implication China) of A2AD with air and maritime defensive weapons ranges of hundreds and now potentially thousands of KM – in all prospective UK expeditionary warfare areas. Note this in combination with Victor Madeira's 23rd May circular of a map of Russian A2AD capabilities in the Baltic and Black Seas, and on is western borders with NATO and Ukraine.

It is also accompanied by a relentless multi layered, multi speed great power competition for resources, including in the context of new technologies such ass electrification of cars. And by selective assassinations and disinformation, deception and counter deception, and , and cyber-attacks which are difficult to attribute, at least quickly.

The cyber aspects rightly got a lot of media attention. Less coverage was given to the equally and empathically covered personal views of Sir Phillip regarding information warfare. Publicly available information is part of the domain, and must be combatted in the same arena, and not just reactively. Counter with the truth, in a fully interoperable and coordinated way.

There needs to be a redefinition with like-minded nations on how to do this, and to do it. NATO is critically important. True interoperability requires new ways of working. There need to be exponential growths in information operations, countering with the truth, and in cooperation with offensive cyber ops. Quantum computing is likely to be as transforming as airpower 100 years ago.

" We in DIA UK" need:

- **continuously available intelligence**
- **more analysis which is predictive and anticipatory**
- **better forecasting of significant events**
- **analysts fully integrated into the intelligence and information warfare process (this implies not necessarily always so before)**
- **fusion of capabilities into fully integrated command and control systems (a call for F35s, not Typhoons?)**
- **Fusion warfare capabilities and way of thinking needed across government, and on interstate levels/**

Comment

Despite, or perhaps because of the views being "personal" – well, a former RAF Head of DIA is now CDS and about to go to NATO – it is clear that this speech is manna from heaven for the Integrity Initiative.

Russia wasn't mentioned in the address, as opposed to Q&A. It didn't need to be, and it was clear that China was also the subject of the talk, and not just these two countries. Note that the value of open sources was stressed. It is clear that there are concerns about lack of interoperability, which is contrasted with interconnectivity. This obviously means a role for humint and human analysis. There was no mention of the EU or the EC, but rather NATO. That clearly highlights the likelihood that our multinational, as opposed to national / bilateral , approaches should seek to engage with EU and EC bodies via, or in cooperation with NATO. This view is reinforced by the severe criticisms made about EU / EC rigidity at the 2BS Forum this week, where many EU and NATO defence attaches were present, as well as a former NATO civilian staff member, . diplomacy will be required here, but the IoS can be confident it can identify counterparts who can assist in establishing constructive relations.

It is suggested that early moves should be made via F&CO to establish formal and informal and regular relations with both civilian and uniformed MOD, on a priority higher than those with UK, USA and EU MS and pan EU law enforcement and regulatory bodies. Ideally through one or a very small number of MOD / Armed Forces conduits, and ditto in law enforcement / regulatory. Hopefully a Cabinet Office link up would also help. I think the Institute will have plenty of suggested names. Law enforcement agencies in western Europe need to understand the nexus with military matters.

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