

Written evidence submitted by Sir Philip Jones

I would be happy to expand further on the subject of the risk of allies not being able to provide capabilities we have relied on at critical moments. I think this is a vital point, which is often (unhelpfully) side-tracked into a 'could you fight the Falklands War today?' debate. The latter is too detailed, too scenario-specific; but the point is a good one.

I don't think there are many potential threat scenarios today or in the near future where we could or should expect to fight alone. NATO mil ops have often been hampered by national caveats (while simultaneously strengthened by well found and tested procedures and connectivity) because the suite of allied nations involved is a constant. The more recent profusion of 'coalitions of the willing' have tended to be more militarily meaningful, and less mired in caveat, because they have all signed up to the goals of the operation to begin with as being consistent with their various national interests.

So, for example, we have gone through decades of, often, high intensity mar ops in the Gulf without fear of unexpected withdrawal of allied capability at critical moments. Indeed, so sophisticate did this analysis become, after much experience of allied expectation, that I know the USN 3* commander of Combined Maritime Forces in Bahrain has often run a matrix of which navies would stay firm, contribute full spectrum ops and stay 'in harm's way' at each level of escalation in that theatre.

At the more tactical level, the mar commander needs to know who in his TG will stay under OPCON for different types of scenario. For example, I'm sure Comd UK CSG has a different matrix for how international his TG will stay depending on whether they get involved in a mar CT op compared to a threat to a UK OT. The key here is to know that you have the necessary sovereign capability under command at all times to achieve your mission, should political/diplomatic considerations temporarily peel off some of your allies.

The presence of allies is always beneficial, both for flexibility and integration. This means, for example, that the USN and RNLN escorts in the CSG, plus the temporary presence of an ITN DDG while in the Med, has allowed the CSG to pulse RN CSG escorts into the Black Sea and NATO SMMG. However, it is 'interchangeability' (as 1SL and CNO call it) that drives it up to a different level; and that is what we are achieving with the USMC F35B squadron and USN DDG in the CSG.

There is a need to be honest about where you do and don't have enough sovereign capability, even given interchangeability, to be able to do a truly national-only op. The RN in the round, and CSG in particular, has that in all areas save AEW/ASaCS (where CROWSNEST is still only at IOC), Fleet Solid Support (with only one available ship ahead of the FSSS procurement) and F35 numbers, where these are still building up. All have been readily acknowledged.

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