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basics in  
90 minutes

# *Quicklook at* **Defence**



## About Quicklook at Defence

**D**EFFENCE is important: our lives can depend on it. How is it dealt with in a time of rapid change, new challenges and shrinking budgets?

Quicklook at Defence gives the answers and sets out the historic and strategic background to Defence in the 21st Century. It is a vital concern to most governments. Britain, in particular, has had a very long history of military involvements, which continue up to the present.



What is the Military for in the modern world? Who is in charge and how does it operate? How does it fit in with the rest of government, allies, international law and institutions?

How can new challenges, such as terrorism and cyber warfare be met? What about space? How can military operations be mounted in the media age?

We examine the separate but increasingly linked worlds of the Army, Navy and Air Force and how modern equipment is used in their operation. There is a meeting of old and new thinking: tradition is important but the Services operate at the cutting edge of technology. What is available now? What is planned?

People in the Military can get shot at: how is this unusual feature of the job dealt with?

You have a chance to run a Battalion for a month. Experience Army life at the sharp end.

The book makes thought provoking comments about the future. The world could be very different. How might the Military respond to its demands?

Quicklook at

# *Defence*

Stuart Middleton



Quicklook  
books

Published by Quicklook Books Limited

Weighbridge House, Grittleton SN14 6AP

First edition in e-book format 2011

This revised edition first published in hard copy 2012

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Cover photo from istockphoto.com. Photograph by Brazil2

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Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon, CR0 4YY

Quicklook is a registered European trade mark (number 008147258)

ISBN 978-908926-15-9

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# *The need for defence*



*“War is the continuation of policy (politics) by other means”*

Karl von Clausewitz, Early 19th Century Prussian Military Strategist

## **Defence and Security**

### Defence and the UK

This book looks at the subject of Defence from a UK perspective. Britain’s position as one of five permanent members of the UN Security Council and other historic influences have meant that its armed forces have been very active in the post-war era. At present they remain so heavily engaged that there are concerns that they may be overstretched. Meanwhile new threats have emerged. Defence equipment becomes ever more costly and the money to pay for it increasingly scarce.

These problems are not unique to the UK and the issues covered in this book are of wide application.

### What is “Defence”?

In 1943 Abraham Maslow, the professor who first coined the term humanistic psychology, proposed a “Hierarchy of Needs” for human life which identifies safety (security) as a very high priority, second only to needs such as food and water. Security can be enhanced by having a robust defensive (i.e. military) capability. In a world where countries and other groups have repeatedly taken things by force, those without it are vulnerable.

As a result, almost all countries have armed forces. In the case of some they may be the only reasonably functioning elements of government. If so, then the nation in question will almost certainly have an authoritarian regime and a failing economy and is unlikely to be a very pleasant place to

live. Societies normally work better if the armed forces (“The Military”) are controlled by a well functioning civil government. This is partly because military organisation is hierarchical and undemocratic and partly because military operations and the maintenance of an effective civilian society call for different approaches and skills.

One rare and successful example of a state with no military is Costa Rica, which abolished its army after a nasty civil war in 1954. The resultant savings have secured a number of benefits, including a very good rate of literacy by Central American standards. It is not clear that many other countries could do the same. Costa Rica’s security in large measure derives from its relationship with the world’s dominant military power and fellow American state – the USA. In contrast, Switzerland chooses to maintain compulsory military service and a modern defence force, in spite of a successful and long tradition of neutrality.

The Compact Oxford Dictionary defines defence as:

- “1. the action of defending from or resisting attack; and
2. military measures or resources for protecting a country.”

The terms “defence” and “security” in a national context normally imply that the threat is external, although countering internal threats (“internal security”) is also part of the responsibilities of defence. The prime responsibility for internal security or the maintenance of “law and order” normally lies with the police. Other civil organisations, including the intelligence services and the border/immigration service play key roles. In democratic states, the military provides a reserve capability to be called upon to support these civil agencies in times of emergency.

Providing defence is certainly not cheap. Military “inflation” is usually much higher than general inflation as the cost of sophisticated new equipment soars. There is always a temptation to take risks and economise on defence in order to satisfy what are seen to be more pressing and important demands, such as education, health, employment and welfare. This can win votes in generally stable, peaceful and democratic societies.

Defence is important insurance against threats that may never arise. If they do, as has happened several times in the last century, the consequences

can be far-reaching and disastrous.

## **The use of force**

### **The UN Security Council**

Almost all nation states are members of the United Nations (“UN”) and as a result required, by International Law, to abide by its Charter. This places considerable restrictions on when force can “legally” be used. Most forms of significant military action are supposed to take place under the direction of the UN Security Council. This body has five permanent members: the USA, Russia, China, the UK and France. In addition the Security Council has nine non permanent members, voted on to it by the general membership of the UN.

The five permanent members have been the same since the creation of the UN after World War II. Each of them has a power of veto: i.e. unless they approve of a course of action it will not be authorised. This, plus the need to accommodate the views of the other Security Council members, can make the UN slow to approve the use of force, or fail to respond altogether. Since the Second World War political rivalry between East and West has often led to deadlock. When some actions are approved they often take the form of an escalating series of “last chances” to the offending state, sometimes reinforced by economic, rather than military, sanctions.

Even when military action is authorised, it may not be taken or, if it is, may not be effective. The UN has no soldiers of its own. It is dependent on member states providing the funds, personnel and equipment needed. They are not always forthcoming.

### **International Law and the use of force**

The application of “International Law” can be the subject of much debate. For example there is much difference of opinion about the legality, or otherwise, of the 2003 invasion of Iraq in the Second Gulf War. There is no effective International Court to resolve such controversies.

### **The decision to use force**

To be effective, military action often needs to be prompt and decisive in order to deal with a problem before it becomes very much worse. One

example of this was in the Kosovo Conflict in 1998/9, when NATO took action to drive forces of the former Republic of Yugoslavia out of Kosovo and prevent the continuation of “ethnic cleansing (the forcible removal, or even killing, of members of religious or ethnic groups). This had first started in Croatia and Bosnia in the early 1990s. The NATO action, which included a bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, before the introduction of a NATO led peace-keeping force into Kosovo, was not endorsed by the UN Security Council because of opposition by permanent members with links to Yugoslavia, principally Russia.

The decision to use force is always a serious matter. Lives are almost inevitably put at risk. The outcome will be, to some extent, unpredictable, even where initial success seems assured. There is also the risk of “mission creep”. Once forces are committed it may be difficult to withdraw them without an unpalatable admission of defeat. Keeping them in place will require reinforcements. The temptation to undertake more and more can become strong, as efforts are made to protect threatened populations or deal with some form of disaster.

### “Nation building”

Recent major military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan dramatically underline the scale and unpredictability of the commitments which can follow from a decision to use force. Having occupied territory (in these examples, entire countries) the occupying powers have a responsibility to those who live there. The act of taking occupation may have largely removed whatever organisation and stability that existed beforehand, however flawed. In the case of Iraq, the hitherto dominant Iraqi army became ineffective overnight, leaving an uneasy vacuum behind.

Under the enquiring gaze of the world’s media, occupying powers have to try to establish sufficiently good conditions to enable them to withdraw their forces, without losing the benefits that their actions were intended to achieve. Where these were to secure the removal of an unacceptable leadership, or to prop up a weak government, this is far from easy. The required “nation building” exercise is expensive and time consuming. A significant military presence is likely to be needed while the work is done. The tasks that the Military then becomes involved in can be very different from those

readily identifiable as “Defence”. They can involve elements of diplomacy, education, health, food distribution, infrastructure engineering and many other things required for the functioning of a society.

# *Defence and security policy*



*“The purpose of all war is peace.”*

Saint Augustine (354-430)

## **Foreign Policy**

One of the key aims of government is to protect national interests internationally. The British Government’s primary agency for achieving this is the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) whose role is “to promote British interests overseas and support our citizens and businesses around the globe”. This takes priority over narrower defence and security needs but is very strongly linked to them. Britain exerts influence, through the activities of its FCO, primarily by diplomacy and membership of numerous international organisations such as the UN, EU and the G20 (a group of countries with large economies).

Global developments, such as the increasing economic power of Asia and climate change concerns have had a significant effect on British foreign policy. Problem areas include the growing reach of international terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Pressures on scarce natural resources, food and fuel in particular, the continuing imbalance between the rich and poor nations and population movements also shape foreign policy and defence and security needs.

The recently published 2010 UK National Security Strategy contains two objectives. The first is geared to the protection of the UK and the second to shape a stable world, thereby reducing risk. It is therefore clear that the UK continues to aspire to active military roles abroad and not simply home based defence. The British Government is adopting “an adaptable posture” which focuses on the highest risks, whilst still maintaining a considerably reduced, but still credible, ability to deal with lower risk events. This think-

## *About the author*

**B**RIGADIER STUART MIDDLETON served in the Army for 37 years. A graduate of the Army Staff College and a Chartered Engineer, he had very wide experience in his long career. This included service with the British Army of the Rhine, a spell working with the US Army in Washington and assignments concerned with the integration of the work of the Navy, Army and Royal Air Force. He is the grandson of both a Naval and an Army officer.

Commissioned into the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, Stuart initially studied aero-mechanical engineering. Later in his career he was closely involved with equipment and procurement programmes, which involved a wide range of advanced technology. This included the selection, introduction and use of different equipment and its modification in the light of its performance in service.

On leaving the Army Stuart spent six years as Director of Transport for the Metropolitan Police, where he was in charge of the supply, maintenance and disposal of its vehicles and boats.

Throughout his career Stuart has written on a large number of Defence and security topics, usually for confidential internal purposes. He has welcomed the chance to open up this important subject to a wider audience, drawing on publicly available material. In his spare time he is an unsuccessful watercolour artist.

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## Quicklook at **Defence**

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*Quicklook at Defence* examines these problems against the background of Britain's long history of military involvements. Defence policy involves governments, foreign policy and international law. The challenges keep coming – they now include terrorism and cyber warfare – with operations now taking place with 24 hour media coverage.

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## About the author

### Stuart Middleton

served in the army for 37 years, retiring at the rank of Brigadier General. He gained vast experience in a career which included service with the British Army of the Rhine, a spell with the US Army in Washington and assignments dealing with the integration of the work of the Army, Navy and Air Force.



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