

MARGINALIZED GAINS: THE BRITISH REGULAR ARMY  
AND THE BRITISH ARMY RESERVE SINCE 2003

VINCENT CONNELLY

HFM-363-RWS

# The British Army Reserves

Civilian Life



Part time  
Recruit  
Training  
27 days

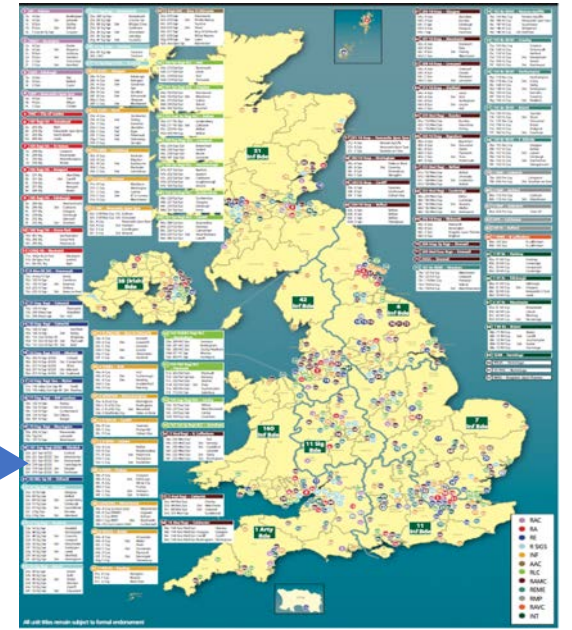
Part time routine  
commitment

1 evening a week  
1-2 weekend a month  
2 weeks a year – training  
Minimum 27 days a year

Exceptional or  
"voluntary"  
circumstance

**Mobilisation**  
(up to 12 months including pre-  
training and post tour leave)  
Usually "voluntary"

Part time Army Reserve (AR)



30,000 Army Reserves in 70+ units  
Primarily recruited regionally

Full time "Regular" Army



72,500 by 2025

Exit

Part time routine  
commitment

Nil

Exceptional or  
"voluntary"  
circumstance

**Mobilisation**  
(up to 12 months including pre-  
training and post tour leave)  
Usually "voluntary"

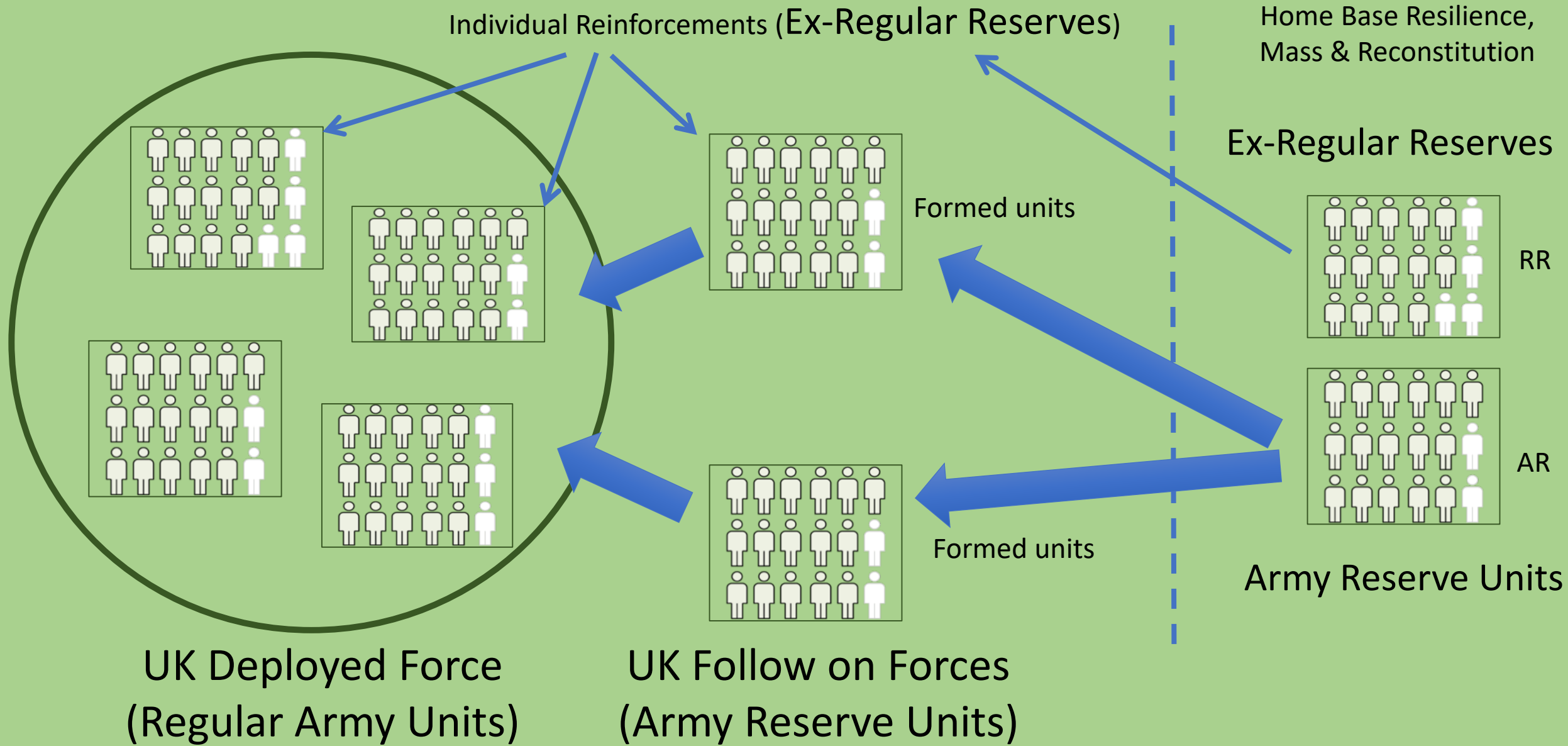
Ex-Regular Reserve (RR)

2 x Pool of individuals

Ex-Regular Reserve  
Approx 23,000

Recall Reserve  
Approx 43,000

# British Army large scale conflict – 20<sup>th</sup> Century





# Into the 21<sup>st</sup> Century...

- 1992 Demise of Ex-Regular Reserve
- 1997 Loss of focused “20<sup>th</sup> Century” collective capability roles for AR units

- **Op Telic 1 2003 - Iraq**

- 5,200 compulsory mobilisations

- Both AR and RR

1.25:1 mobilisation ratio for Army Reserve

5:1 mobilisation ratio for Ex-Regular Reserve

Most used to backfill regular units as individuals – regular/reserve tensions

Dandeker et al, (2010)

A few complete AR units mobilised



Royal Yeomanry 2003 Op Telic 1

Provided CBRN recce for 1 (UK) Armd Div

- **Iraq & Afghanistan 2004 - 2014**

- **Shift to Voluntary AR mobilisations only**
- Individual Reinforcement mainly & some composite sub-units (medical primarily)
- Regular staff “memory of AR deployments very poor (Connelly, 2013)

## EDUCATION, TRAINING AND DOCTRINE

### SEND THE RESERVE TO WAR WITH SIX WEEKS TRAINING

THE BRITISH EXPERIENCE

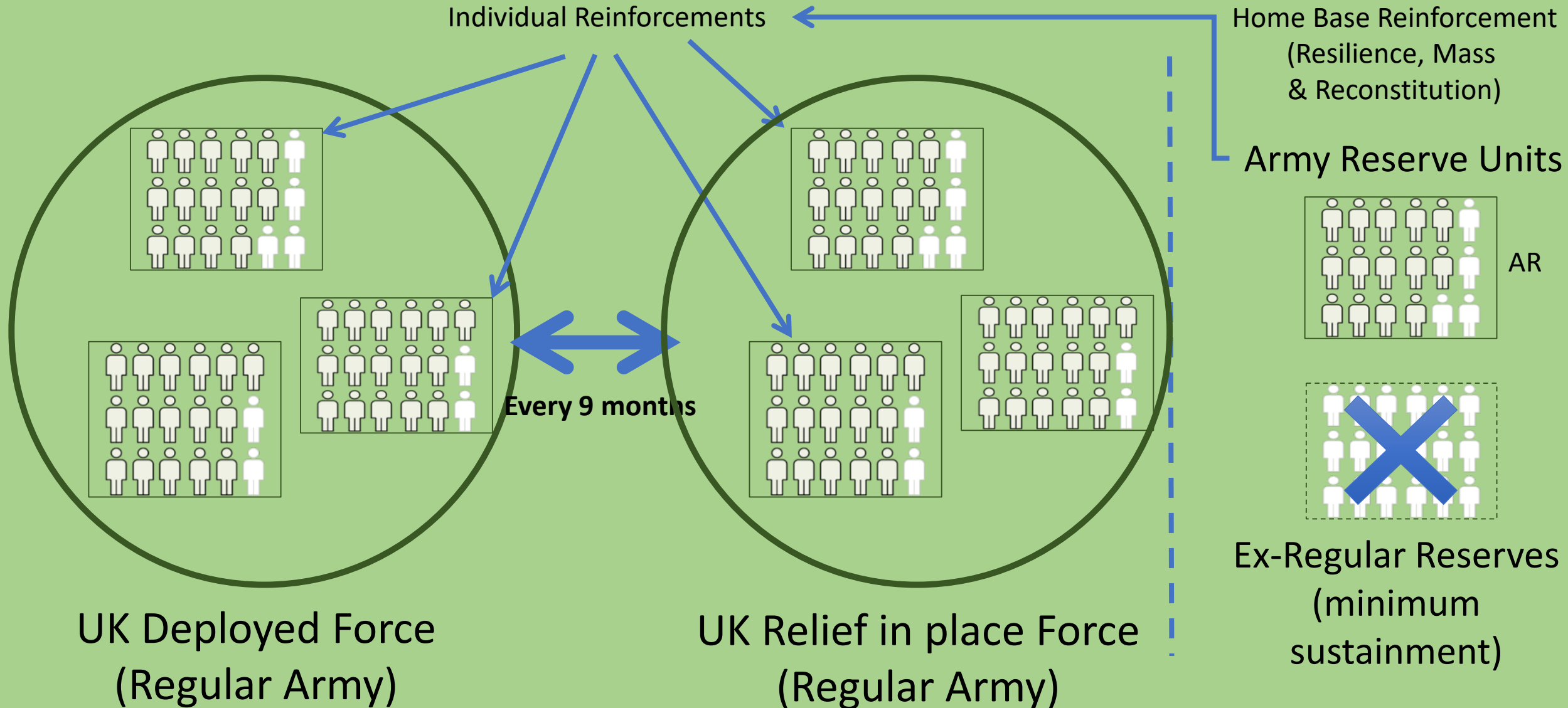
CAPTAIN DAVE FISHER AND MAJOR MURRAY STEWART

#### ABSTRACT

The authors argue that, based on British Army experience, Australian Army Reserve units and personnel can more easily be deployed than current policy recognises. By comparing competencies between the Australian Active Army Reserve and the British Territorial Army, and considering pre-deployment training requirements, the authors highlight that Australia could easily deploy reservists overseas under existing legal frameworks. All that is needed, they argue, based on first-hand experience, is to change of the ADF's way of thinking.

Why not compulsorily deploy Active Army Reserve (ARes) sub-units to high intensity operational theatres after six weeks training? Why do we insist on rare voluntary mobilisations by *ad hoc* units with large lead times to the most benign locations? Why do we presume that the only deployable standard for the ARes is them having the same competencies as an equivalent rank Regular soldier? Time and effort is currently being spent trying to work out the

# British Army Expeditionary Operations (post 2003)



# The shrinking British Regular Army

## “The Post-Fordist Military” King (2006)

The replacement of mass labour with a highly skilled core. Shrinking military concentration & proportional growth of “elites”. “Special-force-ification” Multi-skilled expectations. “Vocational profession”

Leading towards a workplace culture & regular army identity that is...

more homogenous, tightly defined, strongly held, based on a set of dominant “professional” values

Based on “full time” beliefs within a collective working environment

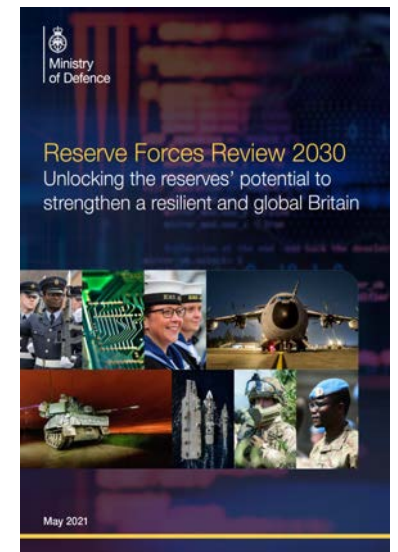
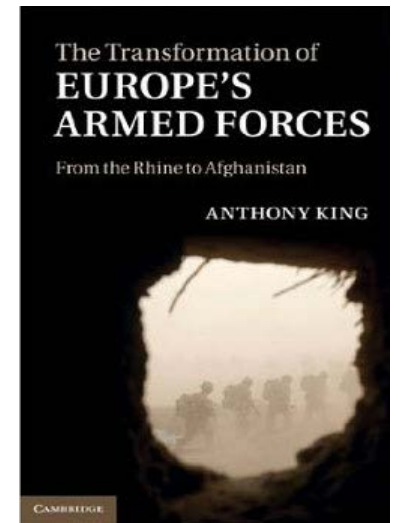
However, small size = need to accept more diversity and difference in the overall military labour force (regular, reserve, civil servant, contractor) and the delivery of Total Defence Force integration.

GLOBAL

The Incredible, Shrinking Modern Military

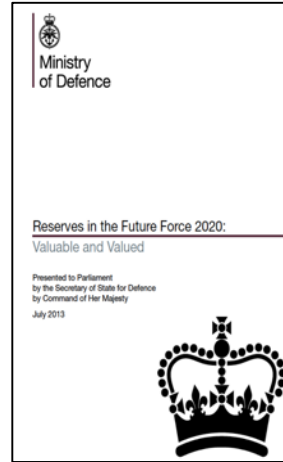
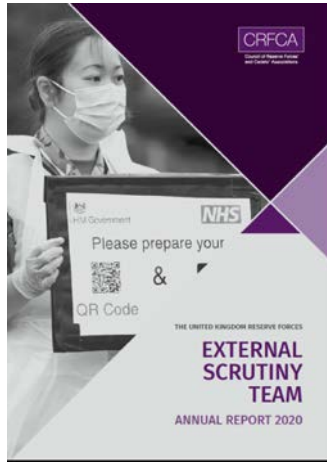
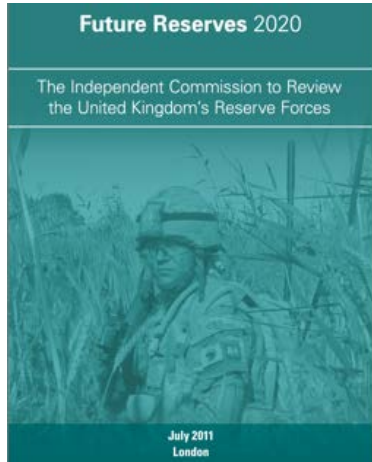
MAGNUS NORDENMAN NOVEMBER 12, 2012

*For developed countries, militaries are smaller, more sophisticated and more expensive than ever.*





# Long running intra-service rivalry



**2009- 2013**

If we are to achieve a truly integrated Whole Force, a change in culture is also needed within Defence, particularly in the Army.

**The challenge for regulars is to recognise and value the contribution of their reservist colleagues.**

Reservists on the other hand need to feel valued by their regular counterparts and have a clear sense of their role. The scale of this challenge should not be underestimated. (2013 White Paper, para. 1.13)

Future Reserves 2020, the British Army and the politics of military innovation during the Cameron era

PATRICK BURY AND SERGIO CATIGNANI\*

**2014- 2020**

*“A regular officer involved with Army2020 planning confirmed that elements in the army did indeed want the plan to collapse, believing that if it failed the political will for cutting the regulars would evaporate.”*



**2021- 2023**

# Explaining full time and part time tensions

## Walker (1990)

“Through their own professional commitment to service and resultant disposition to accept their lives work as crucial to the nation’s security most Regular Soldiers believe...that the nation will always need regular professional standing forces to meet external threats

*and that part time soldiers are not capable of meeting national security needs at any level of manning, training or equipment.*

Importantly these beliefs are driven *more* by socialisation and identity *than* by systematic observation and reflection on the reserve forces.”

## Lawrence and Corwin (2003)

Organizations characterized by ritual density, uniformity of attention, structural homogeneity, emotional intensity and with highly frequent order giving more prone to marginalize part timers.

These organisations have a workplace culture that has strong and enduring workgroup boundaries, with pressures for conformity and where the level of stratification will be high.

*Only individuals fully conforming to the full time rituals of the organisation will be fully accepted.*

*Trust in part time workers will, as a consequence, be very low...*

Part time Reservists will be judged harshly against the Regular Army group norms of time, productivity, commitment, and conformity to the Army as a vocational profession (Connelly, 2020).



# Time, commitment & professional identity

Social construction of **time, productivity and commitment** important to full time professional identity.

Professional is more than “just” 9-5 “*expected to be involved in their work at all times, such that ‘ever-availability’ acts as a symbolic expression of professional commitment*”. Reservists are not professional.

**Commitment = long hours and ever availability;** “*We serve more than once a week*”

Demonstrated by **sacrifice of time and lack of choice**. The Army comes first. Reservists “Cherry pick” best aspects of military work. Time served legitimises rank and authority. The higher the *part-time* rank the less legitimacy. Only very junior reservists are wanted.

The Regular Army is a **strongly bounded organisation**. Reservists are seen as civilians in uniform. “The British Army” = “The Regular Army” “Yeah, they were alright, well that’s after a year with us...”

**Assimilation not integration as Lack of trust** in Reservists leads Regulars to “break up” Reservist groups (Kirke, 2008, Connelly, 2013, 2020). Evidence from 2003 confirms this (Connelly, 2018, 2020).

# Marginalised implications

Institutional Myths, defining “threat” in terms of risk, centralised control, influencing debate, maintaining professional power (Currie et al, 2012; Connelly, 2022).

## “Catch 22” situation:

No collective roles = no collective training measurement

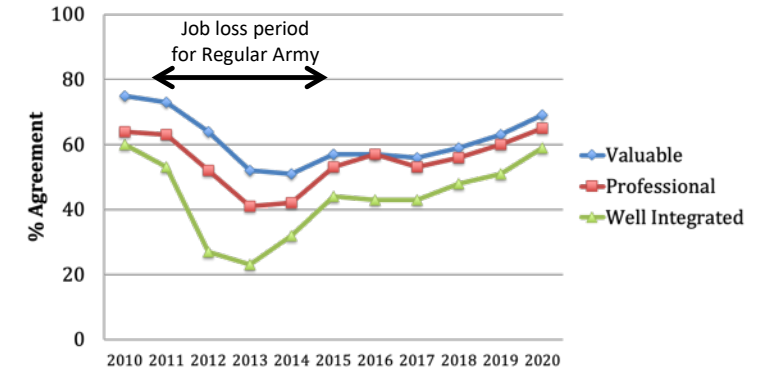
Voluntary mobilisations = lower availability so feeds myth of non trustworthy

Individual reinforcement = control but also utility - so popular among both regular and reserves.

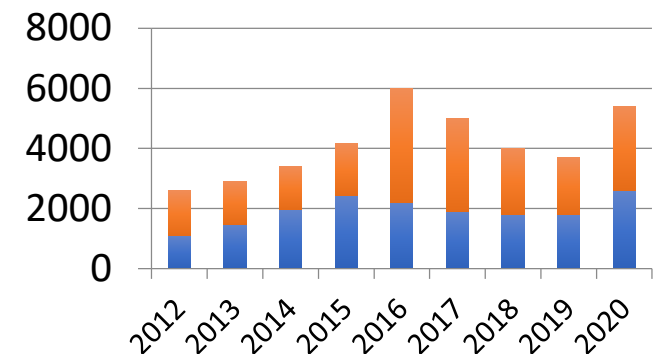
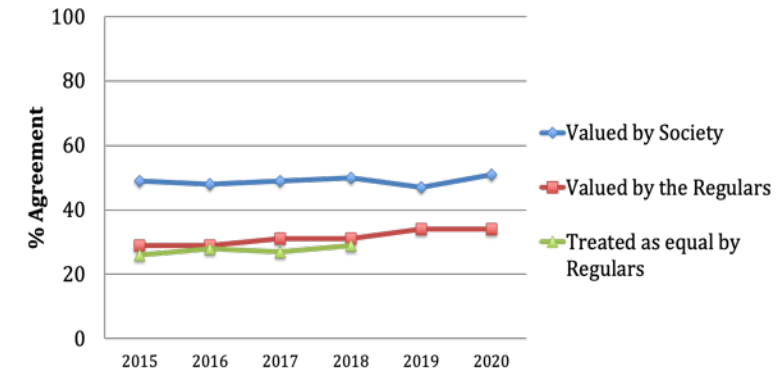
Marketisation & casualisation of reservist labour (Woodward et al, 2018)

Recent 2021 “Integrated Review” sees AR units continuing to provide Individual reservists and *at a stretch* some sub-unit (company level) collective capability only

AFCAS data on perceptions of Army Reserves by Regular Army Respondents.



RECAS data on Army Reserves perceptions



Army Reserve “Gains to Trained Strength”

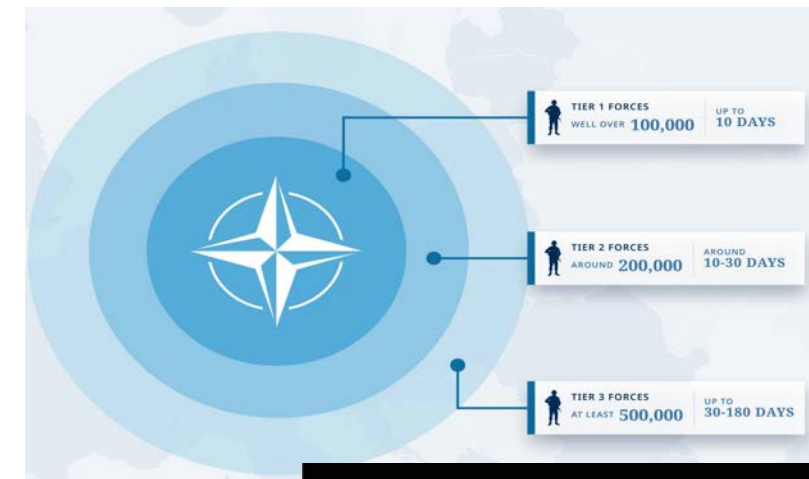
# Marginalised gains?

- Since 2003 AR now used more than ever as an “Operational Reserve” of 1<sup>st</sup> choice since 2003 but primarily individual based “voluntary” mobilisations and “backfill” of regular jobs
  - ensuring “control” and “assimilation” by regular army culture
  - allows individual AR choice and control with “marketization” of mobilization
  - AR can be used for full spectrum of day to day army activities and current deployments
  - Increased spectrum of service for AR including mobilisations, Full time Reserve Service, Additional Duty Service, extra Reserve Service Days, Pension contributions etc
- As “backfill” the AR requirement is vulnerable to regular army recruiting and retention success
- Since AR contribution remains “voluntary” then it cannot be “assured” and so institutional preference is for more “guaranteed” regular staff and less “risk” with fewer reservists
- The primary cost of the AR is training activity and paid training days. As “backfill” AR training activity can be downgraded reducing expensive collective training
- Lack of collective training need means AR officers and Senior NCO’s lack opportunity to practice their AR unit roles with no clear role beyond providing soldiers to regular units



# Into the future

- British Army lacks a coherent “strategic reserve” that can provide large scale mass and additional “collective capability” in the event of a major conflict or threat to the UK
- Regular Army culture is currently a barrier to developing a coherent “strategic reserve” for mass based on part time Army Reserve collective capability
- Similar cultural barriers to re-energizing Ex-Regular Reservists (Connelly, 2021) – seen as “old has-beens of no real utility beyond static gate guards”
- Leading to attempts to justify more regulars and less reserves - unlike many other NATO Armed Forces
- Despite reserves being more cost effective as the threat of mass warfare and deterrence posturing using mass arises in Europe
- And continuing pressure on Army budgets to reduce costs
- However, some “winds of change” in the air...



Press release

## UK to make more forces available to NATO to counter future threats

Contribution of fighter aircraft, land forces, and maritime vessels to New Force Model will protect people across the Alliance against future threats.