

PIMs* Conference Report



Our thanks to all who participated either by delivering papers or by helping with organisation. Most particularly our thanks goes to the staff who helped to make the day



Background

PIMs originated from a desire amongst a small group of PhD candidates to improve the opportunities and communications available to those undertaking doctoral research within the department. We decided to create our own opportunities within the department, rather than waiting for external opportunities to present themselves. To help us achieve this we set up regular meetings and established an electronic resource to combat issues of isolation.

Aims & Objectives

The primary aim raised in these initial meetings was to hold a student-run conference.

The objective for this conference was to provide an opportunity for current PhD candidates to gain confidence in their abilities and to demonstrate to each other the wide range of skills and experience within the student body. This sharing of knowledge, networks and support can only enhance every student's academic development.

A secondary objective from this was to test whether such a conference could be organised and run effectively without the aid of academic staff.



Feedback

The feedback from all attendees (which included staff as well as students and some external guests invited by speakers) was positive.

The facilities provided a professional setting for our panel and key speaker sessions.

Our speakers were delighted with the arrangements, which included the use of technology for presentations and provision of a chair for each session to manage the Q&A section. This Q&A section was a lively and interesting exchange between the audience and the panellists.

These points were emphasised in the closing to the conference, also emphasising the point that such an event could be smoothly run on a low budget without compromising on quality.

The feedback from the students who had been in the audience was enthusiastic and there were immediate requests to present a paper at the next event.

THE PAPERS



Adam Leong Kok Wey: 'Special Operations: Problems in Definition'

This paper highlights and discusses key issues in defining Special Operations. The current popular definition of Special Operations as tasks conducted predominantly by Special (Operations) Forces, and its operations are usually classified as 'strategic.' This author chose to infer differently in his research and posits that Special Operations is a way of warfare that can be used by anyone; not just by Special (Operations) Forces. The narrowness of most contemporary academic writings that defines Special Operations as conducted by Special (Operations) Forces (for example folks who wear sand, green, and other coloured berets) had limited the academic rigor of this field into popular dramatizations of accounts of popular Special Operations performed by units such as the Special Air Service (SAS), US Army's Green Berets and Delta Force, and US Navy SEALs. There exists a plethora of historical examples where Special Operations had been employed not just by specially trained units but even, in an extreme example, by a dead body. This paper rather than painting a portrait that glamorizes Special (Operations) Forces as small units of specially selected and trained personnel operating in 'strategic' functions, portrays Special Operations as a means of warfare that is shaped by the 'state-of-mind' in conjuring ways of surprising and engaging the enemy that strive to minimize risks and costs in achieving one's ends.



Gerry Doyle: Swords and Ploughshares – Early Rocket Pioneers and the Military

The perils of unstated assumptions are hopefully obvious, but they are also ubiquitous. Few would argue with identification of Tsiolkovskiy in Russia, Oberth in Germany, and Goddard in the USA as the fathers of modern rocketry, but despite historical precedent, military applications did not drive their work. Other factors united them, however.

Tsiolkovskiy and Goddard both had their schooling limited by illness. Both were devotees of contemporary science fiction, particularly that of Jules Verne. Both also imagined rapid advances in manned spaceflight and interplanetary exploration, with a view to colonising distant bodies to ensure survival of the human race. Oberth adopted a more 'realist' view, advocating rockets as long-range weapons during WW1. His later work, however, was more directed towards publicising spaceflight, than developing it practically. There were, of course, differences between their outlooks too; Goddard was obsessive about protecting his work through patent, Tsiolkovskiy lived in peasant obscurity in pre-revolutionary Russia for most of his working life, achieving wider recognition only in old age.

This paper highlights the similarities and differences between their outlooks, both as a tale worth telling for its own sake, and as an illustration of motivations that probably seem unlikely to the modern reader.

Danny Steed: Strategy and Intelligence: The Nature and Function of the Relationship

Strategy and intelligence are held to share a "special relationship," each lauds the importance of the other to the successful prosecution of strategy in practice. Despite this, however, the academic study of strategy and intelligence respectively has so far failed to codify the relationship that exists in theoretical terms. Danny Steed's presentation proposes a framework to fill this void, consisting of three precepts underlying the nature of the relationship, and four operating functions that intelligence should fill across the Strategy Bridge.

Stephanie Churchill: Universal Aspirations vs. Particular Realities: The Implementation of R2P

The implementation of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is examined in light of Thomas Franck's criteria for 'rule legitimacy'. In order to evaluate its robustness and development, the codification of R2P – specifically paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document - is evaluated in terms of its clarity, coherence and determinacy. If R2P demonstrates these attributes, it should appear to exert a strong pull on states to comply with its demands, facilitating the explanation of how far it has evolved. It is concluded that there is a major determinacy gap resulting from the diminished clarity of R2P in the World Summit Outcome Document.

Syros Kasoulas : The Rimland Bridge: the Geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean

A new term is introduced in the paper about the geopolitics of the Eastern Mediterranean: that is the Rimland Bridge which is defined as the transit and buffer zone connecting the European and Asian parts of the Rimland. The term refers to the historically volatile region covered by Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, and seeks to add up to the classical geopolitical theory. Although the strategic significance of particular regions varies with time, the Eastern Mediterranean is an outstanding case of continuity in strategic history being, more often than not, an objective of policy and theatre of military action, a major node of communication, and a bone of contention not only between great powers but also the local political communities. Classical geopolitics provides the necessary theoretical tools to capture the broad picture, but by holding a macroscopic point of view it overlooks the peculiarities of the region. By introducing the Rimland Bridge term, the author seeks to draw particular attention to the complexity and the continuing importance of this part of the Rimland in international politics and geopolitical theory.

Dr. Simon Anglim: The Oman Imamate Insurgency of the 1950S – A Historian and his Sources

The presentation dealt with the insurgency which took place in northern Oman from 1955 to 1959, involving tribal forces gathered around the Imam of Oman rising up in rebellion against the Sultan, Said bin Taimur. Dr Anglim explained how his visit to the region where the insurgency took place in September 2010 had enhanced his research on this episode and his understanding of how insurgency and counterinsurgency work in the real world as opposed to theory.



Many Thanks to Dr Anglim for this interesting and informative paper and his ongoing support of PIMs and this post graduate conference.



[Malte Riemann: 'War outsourced: The postmodern mercenary warrior in an age of risk'](#)

The paper analysed and deconstructed common perceptions held with regard to the term “mercenary”. Especially since Machiavelli’s famous recommendations to “*The Prince*”, mercenaries have mainly received bad press. Negative perceptions intensified in the aftermath of the French Revolution with the rise of nationalism and the widespread implementation of conscription throughout Europe. The paper looked at five criteria, which are, either completely or at least partly, attributed to mercenaries. They are foreigners, are paid for their services, serve entirely for private gain and therefore lack a “higher cause”, they enlist voluntarily, and work temporarily on an ad hoc bases. Through an analysis of these criteria, the paper showed that the lines between the *mercenary* and the *soldier* are not as clear-cut as often perceived. This partly explains why states face difficulties in developing a workable legal definition of *mercenarism*.



[Valerie Swain: 'The Continued Disappearance of Grand Strategic Planning'](#)

This paper discussed the generic problems facing research students, particularly the difficulties in achieving a balance between an overview of your subject and focusing on your question. In the second part of the presentation the current existence of the Grand Strategic Level of Planning in the UK was questioned. An investigation of the Committee of Imperial Defence during the period 1921 – 1940 is a case for research and the author seeks to draw parallels to assist current debates on who does UK National Strategy.

[Future plans](#)

- To produce a conference report
- To develop the links between the university departments making up the DTC
- To assemble a proceedings collection of papers
- To hold a similar event in November 2011
- To investigate the opportunities for publication for PhD students - including a departmental PhD e-journal.

[Get Involved!](#)

If you want to be involved in next years conference doing any of the organisation or delivering a paper, please get in touch with:

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