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THE UK ARMED FORCES AND THE VALUE OF THE UNIVERSITY ARMED SERVICE UNITS

RACHEL WOODWARD, K NEIL JENKINGS AND ALISON J WILLIAMS

The value of the university armed service units to the UK armed forces is not often subject to scrutiny. Drawing on a research study of the units and their importance to a number of different constituencies, Rachel Woodward, K Neil Jenkins and Alison J Williams assess both the tangible and intangible benefits to the military’s relationship with civil society.

The university armed service units (USUs) – the University Officer Training Corps (OTC), the University Air Squadrons (UASs) and the University Royal Naval Units (URNUs) – have a history within the UK’s higher education sector spanning nearly 100 years. The USUs are funded by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), organised by the three parent services (the British Army, the Royal Air Force and the Royal Navy) and managed on a day-to-day basis by personnel from those three services. Arguments about the value of the units to their different constituencies – student participants, graduates of USUs, the armed forces, universities, employers – and what exactly that value might constitute are as old as the organisations themselves.1 Yet both academic and defence-policy literatures to date lack any systematic attempt to subject anecdotal understandings of the value of USUs to more exacting scrutiny, and to do so within a conceptual framework that asserts an understanding of value as much more than a return on financial investment in cost-benefit terms.2

This article examines one specific set of ideas about the value of the USUs – the value of the units to the British armed forces. After briefly introducing the units, it considers two common claims about the value of USUs to the armed forces and examines whether there is any evidence to support these claims. First, it looks at the claim that USUs are valuable because they aid recruitment to the armed forces. Second, it looks at the claim that the USUs’ value resides in their capacity to inculcate and disseminate positive views of the British armed forces and of defence more generally, what the authors term ‘defence-mindedness’. It concludes that the USUs’ recruitment function may be valuable, but that there are a number of tangible and intangible benefits to the armed forces from the existence of graduates with USU experience who have not been recruited to the armed forces. Looking at these benefits in turn clarifies how defence-mindedness might work and confirms that the value of the units cannot be reduced to their recruitment function. This analysis raises political questions for the armed forces as they seek to maintain the USUs in a context of both budgetary austerity and the demands of the Future Reserves 2020 (FR20) programme.

The USUs: Composition, Organisation and Rationale

The USUs are a distinctively British military phenomenon. There are passing similarities with the Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps and Reserve Officer Training Corps in the US, in that they provide a military experience for students undertaking programmes of study in civilian universities,3 yet specific features of their structure, organisation and composition are unique to the UK higher education and military organisational landscapes. They recruit solely from students enrolled at UK universities but are not formally enmeshed within degree programmes, and participation is entirely voluntary with no obligation to join the armed forces. Their missions emphasise their purpose in developing awareness of the roles and ethos of their respective parent service, and in developing the leadership potential of their recruits. Whilst all three units – the OTC, UAS and URNU – have until recently emphasised that there is no obligation to join the armed forces on graduation, recruitment is now taking on a more central role.4

A total of 6,590 students were USU members as of 1 April 2015.5 Members must be registered on an undergraduate or postgraduate degree programme at a UK university, and must be either British or Commonwealth citizens. The OTC is the largest organisation, comprising nineteen distinct units, some of which have detachments in other geographical locations within a region. Two of these units (Yorkshire and North West England) are designated Officer Training Regiments (OTRs). On 1 April 2015, the OTC had...
4,680 participants. These participants follow a training syllabus established by the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, which provides all British Army officer initial training. This syllabus comprises key military skills including drill, map reading and field craft, weapons handling, camouflage techniques and first-aid training, leadership training, and the organisation and planning of battlefield tactics. The UASs comprise fourteen units and on 1 April 2015 had 1,020 members. The UASs provide basic military training and RAF-specific training in aircrew and ground-based roles. The URNUs have fourteen units and on 1 April 2015 had 880 members. The URNUs train on dedicated P-2000 fast inshore patrol vessels. Training includes navigation and seamanship skills, plus other military-specific training. Students from all three units also undertake adventurous training and sporting activities, and enjoy social events provided by their respective units. They also partake in additional activities such as representing the armed forces at public ceremonial and promotional events, and participating in charitable work.

Two points about the USUs are significant for the discussion that follows. The first relates to their size. The units are small in proportion to the overall UK student body, which for academic year 2013–14 comprised just under 2.3 million students at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The units are, however, relatively large in proportion to the total UK armed forces, which on 1 April 2015 was 195,690. Indeed, the URNUs’ P2000 vessels are a significant component of the Royal Navy fleet, comprising fourteen of a total of sixty-six ships (excluding submarines) in 2014. Thus, participants comprise a tiny proportion (0.3 per cent) of the UK student population so may be virtually invisible within higher education institutions, yet represent a significant proportion (3.4 per cent) in relation to the armed forces so will have primary visibility and significance there. The lack of visibility of the USUs within universities is significant because it contributes to the low knowledge base about the units across the higher education sector. The second point relates to funding. The USUs are funded through the defence budget, although finding an accurate and reliable figure for total capital and running costs has proven impossible. Defence-budget support includes basing and equipment costs (for facilities and kit which may or may not be shared with other non-USU units), training costs, and costs associated with the employment of commanding officers and training staff. Costs also include payments to students for participation (by attendance, rather than salaried), which is received for attendance at weekly drill nights, training weekends during term time, an annual summer training fortnight and other related activities depending on the type of USU. The units are thus under the control of and are accountable to the MoD and the armed forces, and not to their catchment universities (although there is liaison with universities via the Military Education Committees). The question that follows, then, is whether the value that these units give to UK defence matches the investment of financial and personnel resources. This article opens up the idea of ‘value’ beyond an accounting model of value for money according to cost-benefit.
valuations. As has been noted, accurate financial data are not available to do this. Furthermore, the reduction of the idea of value to a financial cost-benefit analysis does not entirely capture two significant aspects of the USUs which may have utility to the armed forces – their recruitment and their defence-mindedness functions.

**Recruitment**

One should note the disavowal to varying degrees, by the MoD and the three armed forces, of an explicit recruitment purpose in the missions of the USUs.\(^4\) Historically, and until relatively recently, this has been a simple and unproblematic issue – indeed, for URNUs historically, there was an explicit distancing from this idea.\(^5\) However, for all three units there has always been an expectation that some participants may develop an interest in participating in the armed forces after they graduate, on the basis of a positive USU experience. A higher proportion have typically shown an interest in the reserve forces rather than the regular forces.\(^6\)

With defence-policy changes introduced by the UK coalition government from 2010, there are indications of greater emphasis on the utility of the USUs for recruitment. The 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) paved the way for personnel changes in the British armed forces. These were set out in the FR20 programme, the White Paper for which was published in 2013. This programme included provisions for expanding the role of the reserves and their numbers, particularly for the army; facilitating greater integration between regulars and reserves units; various measures aimed at reservists and their families to facilitate their recruitment and retention; incentives for the recruitment of ex-regulars to the reserves; and measures to ensure employer support.\(^7\) The implications of FR20 have played out differently across the three services with regards to the USUs. Of most significance for the army is the establishment of the OTRs which seek deliberately to train and commission reserve officers from their student members as well as sharing the wider advocacy mission on defence-mindedness. Following extensive discussion within the army (and some resistance to the idea) the first two OTRs were established: the Yorkshire Regiment and the North West England Regiments.\(^8\) More recently, OTCs have been identified as the focal point for all reserve-officer training as the FR20 programme gains momentum. Discussion of the value of the USUs to the armed forces therefore necessarily has to include consideration of recruitment as a return on resource investment, and because of policy shifts, that recruitment is orientated increasingly to the reserves, particularly for the army.

The recruitment function of the units as a pathway to a career for graduates in the armed forces has always existed. At present, OTC graduates comprise about 40 per cent of those proceeding to training as regular officers with the British Army and around 65 per cent of those training as reserve officers. For the RAF, anecdotal evidence suggests that around 70 per cent of those selected for pilot officer training have USU experience.\(^9\)

Data on student intentions with regards to a career in the armed forces (see Table 1) give some insight into the value of the USUs in terms of recruitment. In total, 78 per cent of OTC members, 75 per cent of UAS members and 64 per cent of URNU members expressed an intention to have some kind of continued military participation following graduation. As such, the USU experience is significant both in providing an opportunity for individuals in consolidating a prior intention to join the armed forces before joining a SU and may be significant in raising the possibility of joining the armed forces for those who had never previously considered it.\(^10\) Only a small proportion (4 per cent for the OTC, 5 per cent for the UAS and 7 per cent for the URNU) stated that they had previously intended to join the regulars or reserves, but were no longer intending to join any armed forces.

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**Table 1:** Student USU Member Intentions Regarding Participation in the Armed Forces Post-Graduation (%).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Post-Graduation</th>
<th>OTC</th>
<th>UAS</th>
<th>URNU</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Prior to being in a USU I intended to join the Regular armed forces after graduation, and still am.</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to being in a USU I intended to join the Reserves after graduation, and still am.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had not intended to join the armed forces but now intend to join the Regulars.</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had not intended to join the armed forces but now intend to join the Reserves.</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had intended to join the Regulars but now intend to join the Reserves.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had intended to join the Reserves but now intend to join the Regulars.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One can infer from this that the attrition effect of USU participation, in terms of intentions to join, is very low; that is, few express a change of intention as a consequence of participation. However, these data signify intention rather than action; the proportion who actually go on to join the armed forces (regular or reserve) is far lower, reflecting a range of issues shaping graduate career decisions and opportunities as successive cohorts of graduates enter the labour market.\footnote{Downloaded by [University of Newcastle] at 22:00 11 March 2016}

Intention does not necessarily translate into action.

The relationship between USUs and armed-forces recruitment is shifting

It would appear at first sight that the current focus on the recruitment function of the USUs as being a source of the units’ value to the armed forces, particularly for the army, is well founded. The consolidation of this function would seem to be an obvious step by those charged with oversight of the units. Ongoing concerns about declining rates of recruitment to the armed forces (particularly for the army, and particularly amongst women and ethnic minorities), coupled with the demands of the FR20 reforms to expand the proportion of military personnel who are reservists, make the USUs a prime target for attempts to boost recruitment levels, particularly to officer training. In conjunction with this, the wider context of governmental financial austerity, which is restricting public expenditure and demanding clear accountability for the value of any investment in public goods and services, means that investment from the defence budget in USUs has to be seen to result in clear and quantifiable benefits to the armed forces. Thinking solely in terms of value for money and recruitment – encouraged by government financial stringencies and coupled with a limited understanding of what the USUs actually do – brings with it risks to the wider functions and thus overall value of the USUs. Specifically, there are concerns about those functions which impact indirectly on the armed forces and the wider defence sector but which have been viewed nonetheless as part of the value of the units. These are often wrapped up in an idea of defence-mindedness.

Defence-Mindedness

Considerable anecdotal evidence exists supporting the view that the USUs inculcate within the broader civilian public an understanding of the armed forces. A dominant model understands this as happening through the process by which university graduates, as an educated elite, tend to pursue careers which will ultimately lead to significance, power and leadership in the civilian world – the so-called ‘captains of industry’\footnote{Put simply, according to this line of argument it is in the long-term interests of the armed forces to have within the civilian world, particularly at elite levels, a body of people with a sympathetic understanding of the armed forces which has been informed by experience with, and to an extent within, those armed forces. Since the USU experience tends to be viewed by student participants in general as positive, the argument is that former participants, the majority of whom do not seek military careers, take that positive impression into the civilian world, where they may exert influence. In due course, positive benefits – value – are reaped by the armed forces themselves. The authors label this idea ‘defence-mindedness’.}

...This model is an account of what, exactly, that influence might constitute, beyond an avowal of its existence.

This model of defence-mindedness raises two specific questions. The first is about its contemporary applicability. The ‘captain of industry’ model harks back to a post-war social formation in which university-level education was the preserve of a small social elite, the majority of whom would rise through structured career pathways in their chosen profession. University entrance and graduate career pathways are now considerably more complex. About 36 per cent of 18–19 year olds leaving secondary education in the UK now proceed to university,\footnote{Furthermore, over successive cycles of economic growth, the graduate labour market has become extremely diverse, moving away from a model which assumes the pursuit of a clearly marked professional pathway.} and the diversity of the UK higher education sector in terms of degree programmes and the socioeconomic characteristics of entrants is notable.\footnote{The model of defence-mindedness amongst influential captains of industry also raises a second question about whether that awareness of defence and understanding of the armed forces instilled through a USU experience is, in fact, positive. This model assumes that participants in USUs generally come out with a positive attitude of the armed forces. However, graduates may not come out with unremittingly positive attitudes: they may promote ideas that are neutral, critical or even negative, which would ultimately be counterproductive to defence missions and the armed forces.}

The mechanisms through which this transfer of understanding might occur are not specified in this model, beyond the notion that, as an educated elite, graduates include some people who may ultimately rise to positions of power and influence in their civilian working lives. Also unspecified in this anecdotal model is an account of what, exactly, that influence might constitute, beyond an avowal of its existence.

Data on student USU participants’ perceptions of the armed forces provide the starting point for an exploration of value through defence-mindedness. In the survey of student members of USUs conducted by the authors, students were asked to identify whether their
experiences since joining a USU had affected their views of the British armed forces. Only seven (of 1,798) reported that their views were unchanged and remained negative, and only 1 per cent of the sample reported that their views had changed and were now negative. These two figures are an unsurprising reflection of the entirely voluntary nature of USU participation and the fact that students who did not like the experience would not, by definition, be participating in USUs and thus completing the survey.

A total of 77 per cent reported that their views were unchanged and remained positive, and 15 per cent said that their views had changed and were now positive. Those selecting ‘other’ were asked to specify and responses indicated mixed or nuanced opinions, including differential views on the regular versus reserve army, ambivalence about the armed forces because of perceptions of low morale in the parent services, critiques of foreign policy and thus the roles undertaken by the armed forces, exposure to flaws in the organisation and management of the armed forces and dissatisfaction with this, and some comments about the behaviour of some other students and personnel within individual units. The majority of those surveyed expressed a positive view of the armed forces, which can be seen as a first step towards positive defence-mindedness. The question that then follows is whether this positive view is taken forward into graduates’ civilian working lives.

Through fifty-four semi-structured research interviews with graduates in civilian employment who had taken part in a USU whilst at university but who had not subsequently pursued a career in the regular armed forces, the research generated data about defence-mindedness amongst graduates in two ways: by asking direct questions about attitudes towards the armed forces; and by asking more general questions about the graduates’ working lives and the ways in which the USU experience had (or did not have) utility there.

In response to direct questions about their general opinion of the armed forces, none of the graduates said they had a negative view of them. All the graduate interviewees considered their views to be positive, with two-thirds giving reasons for their positivity. The most common explanation for a positive view was the understanding graduates felt they had about what the armed forces, as an organisation, do and what military personnel actually do, and this was frequently couched in terms which suggested respect for military personnel.

The identification of a positive attitude towards the armed forces by graduates was not without qualification. Some graduates, notwithstanding their generally positive attitude, criticised the culture and organisation of the armed forces, as well as the working practices, including perceptions of mismanagement. Interviewees conveyed a strong sense that theirs was an informed view, developed with reference to experience. That said, they also articulated the idea that the USUs offered a very specific experience of military life, which did not necessarily and directly equate with the experiences of regular personnel, particularly deployed personnel. Yet they maintained that USU participation allowed them an experientially based empathetic understanding. Respondents were also asked whether they thought their positive views were representative of former USU members; across the sample this was confirmed.

Few graduates identified themselves as vocal armed-forces supporters

Graduate interviewees were then asked whether they thought they had influenced others’ views of the armed forces. This was a key question in terms of the model outlined above about the utility for the armed forces of the USUs in facilitating the transmission of defence-mindedness. Responses here were illuminating, because they suggested a degree of caution on the part of respondents, with very few identifying themselves as vocal advocates of the British armed forces – and identifying as influential because of this. Rather, respondents suggested that they were quite cautious in the ways in which they might draw on their USU experience and the positive view of the armed forces that this may help to develop, which then might influence others. Respondents suggested that they did not set out to change minds or influence opinion directly, but rather that the experience gave them a qualified view of the armed forces to be shared in contexts where the matter might be discussed and in contexts where respondents felt it appropriate to give a view. Graduates recognised the advocacy function that they might perform, but expressed caution about the extent to which they felt they could claim expertise about defence and military issues. This was couched in terms which suggested that graduates, as individuals, considered that they had little power to influence and shape opinion in general terms.

A more direct and specific role in terms of influence was identified where graduates talked of their interactions with either family members, or with younger people in either organised (youth group) or informal settings, particularly where conversations were shared about the possibilities of either joining a USU or entering a career in the armed forces. If USU graduates are influential in terms of their positive views of the armed forces, it is only in individual and personal ways. There was very little evidence for graduates exerting visible and direct influence more generally across the range of social interactions.

Graduate interviewees were also asked questions which indirectly explored the link between USU participation and defence-mindedness. The first of these concerned whether, and if so how, the USU experience might be influential in the respondents’ practices in the civilian labour market as recruiters. Of particular interest was whether, as recruiters, USU graduates deployed their own experiences to make sense of job applicants’ own USU experiences, and whether applicants’ military experiences more broadly were viewed favourably.

About one-third of graduate respondents had some experience as recruiters in the civilian labour market,
and this included a small number with experience of recruiting for third-sector organisations. Respondents identified that, as recruiters, they tended to show an interest in someone with a background which they could recognise. USU or military experience in a job applicant was not the sole activity to which recruiters were alert, but it was significant and could be read as indicative of the characteristics and working practices of applicants – including a capacity for hard work and for diligence in the execution of tasks. Also noted were assumptions that a military background might translate into a particular manner in the workplace and thus indicate the potential fit of an individual within an organisation. The military background of an applicant could also be read for indications about skills such as team-working, abilities with organisation and logistics, and capacity for self-management.

Interviewees also expressed caution, however, in terms of the adaptability of former military personnel to civilian life in some instances. Although there was no evidence that those with a USU or military background received an unfair advantage in the workplace from recruiters who are USU graduates, there were contexts where the military background of a job applicant could be looked on favourably. This shows how defence-mindedness works in subtle ways, extending for example into the labour market. It is not simply about expressing a positive opinion about the armed forces, but also includes a more sophisticated level of understanding of military institutions and their roles in shaping the capabilities and aptitudes of their personnel, and the recognition of those with these capabilities and attitudes.

A second line of questions which indirectly explored the link between USU participation and defence-mindedness asked respondents about the value that they themselves brought to the USUs or the armed forces. There was a strong sense among many interviewees of investment and return over time in the relationship between the armed forces and individuals through the USUs. Although at an individual level these returns might be incidental and modest, cumulatively they pointed to a return on the investment.

Such benefits are tangible and intangible. Tangible benefits could be defined as the direct, material or practical effects of the application – primarily in civilian employment – of knowledge generated through USU involvement which was seen as helpful in some way to the armed forces and sometimes directly to USUs – interviews with graduates highlighted a great many instances of these. Examples include an air-traffic controller working in civil aviation, able to facilitate his local USU’s flying training by management of airfield landing slots and airfield use costs, and an individual with accountancy qualifications able to assist his local OTC unit with various business processes. Tangible benefits were also identified by individuals in terms of their contributions to the armed forces whilst they were USU students providing, for example, a body of people to play the enemy for military training exercises, to provide critical mass at public remembrance events, and – significantly for the Royal Navy – manning the P2000 patrol vessels able to visit ports inaccessible to larger warships and thus quite literally flying the flag for the Royal Navy. The tangible benefits about which individuals spoke were often quite modest, perhaps even prosaic.

**USUs have tangible and intangible benefits**

With the exception of one individual, none of the respondents really fitted the ‘captain of industry’ model to which anecdotes about the value of USUs consistently seemed to refer. Instead, the study identified a range of more incidental mechanisms through which the value of the USUs flowed to the armed forces in tangible, practical ways. What is notable here is how unpredictable this process is; the armed forces are taking a risk by investing resources in the training of individuals whilst they are students, with no guarantee that there will be a tangible return on this investment.

Intangible benefits were also identifiable. These could be defined as indirect and perceptual. The most significant was the advocacy function that individuals might perform. Examples given to illustrate this included support in terms of time and money that they provided to armed-forces charities, the tacit encouragement that individuals might provide to younger family members, friends or other young people about opportunities for an armed-forces career and what this might provide, and involvement in public remembrance or public educational events. The idea of being an ambassador for the armed forces was often cited; some individuals made the point that because their civilian post-graduation lives may not accord with perceived stereotypes of what a military person was, this seemed to add weight to positive arguments about the role and function of the armed forces.

Graduates identified a further set of intangible benefits in terms of their utility as students working with the armed forces whilst they were members of a USU. These were spoken about in terms of the socialising function that these former students thought they had for the armed forces. A number of graduates commented that they brought something, as students, which was distinctive to military contexts including that, as a group of students, they ‘kept it real’ for the military staff running the units. This is important to note because it is a reminder that the relationship between the USUs and wider civilian society, as with the armed forces more generally, is a two-way street.

**Conclusion**

There is a risk that as a greater proportion of USU participants are recruited into the regular and reserve armed forces, the proportion of those with USU experience who do not join the armed forces, and who are therefore arguably more attuned to the civilian mindset, will decline. This is in a context where the proportion of the civilian population with informed familiarity with the armed forces is declining. Clearly, the challenges of FR20 and the wider context of financial stringencies facing the defence budget are in turn raising some difficult issues for those responsible for the USUs. As beneficiaries of public investment, the USUs need to be seen
by the government to be delivering a quantifiable return on that investment, and this can be identified through the widening of the recruitment and officer-training functions of the units. However, there is substantial risk that the non-quantifiable, non-financial benefits of the USUs for the armed forces in terms of the defence-mindedness which the units inculcate amongst those who do not pursue an armed forces career will be lost. When asked directly about this in interview, commanding officers identified non-recruitment of USU participants to the armed forces as a key mechanism for the diffusion of defence-mindedness. Both groups were clear that the armed forces derived value in terms of tangible and intangible benefits from the fact that a significant proportion of participants either did not seek, or were not selected, to join the armed forces as regulars or reservists, but instead took with them their knowledge and understanding of defence issues into the civilian workplace and their social lives. Given ongoing anxieties about the contemporary state of civil–military relations in the UK, limiting the function of the USUs to recruitment would seem to be a regressive step.

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The authors have recently completed a major ESRC-funded study of the university armed service units, the full findings of which were published as The Value of the University Armed Service Units (Ubiquity Press, 2015). The authors are co-editors (with Matthew Rech) of the forthcoming Routledge Companion to Military Research Methods (Routledge, 2016).

Notes


2 The data presented here are taken from a wider study which explored the value of the USUs from the perspectives of student participants, university armed service unit (USU) graduates working in the civilian labour market, unit commanding officers and universities. All student USU participants were surveyed using an electronic questionnaire in spring 2013, generating 1,798 usable responses for simple quantitative analysis. All respondents were self-selecting. Graduates, commanding officers and university representatives were interviewed using semi-structured interview schedules, generating qualitative data. Graduate participants (fifty-four in total) were self-selecting; the semi-structured research interview was useful in overcoming issues of participation bias when engaging with a self-selecting sample. Commanding officers were sampled by interviewing one from each of the three services in five different geographical locations in the UK (fifteen in total). University representatives were sampled within one UK region hosting different types of universities from across the UK higher education sector (four in total). See Rachel Woodward, K Neil Jenkins and Alison J Williams, The Value of the University Armed Service Units (London: Ubiquity Press, 2015).

3 See David Axe, Army 101: Inside the ROTC in a Time of War (Columbus, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2007); Remi M Hajar, ‘The Public Military High School: A Powerful Educational Responsibility’, Armed Forces and Society (Vol. 32, No. 1, 2005), pp. 44–66. Reserve Officer Training Corps participants may have their tuition fees paid in whole or in part, and in return have an obligation to serve in the US military. Participants may also receive military instruction as part of their university (or equivalent) education.


5 Ibid.

6 Ibid., p. 12.

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Much of the organisation of the latter is undertaken by students themselves.


13 See Woodward, Jenkins and Williams, The Value of the University Armed Service Units.


15 See Woodward, Jenkings and Williams, The Value of the University Armed Service Units.

16 In interviewing graduates of USUs who did not join the regulars, it was clear that for many people reserves participation offered a continuation of a model of military involvement undertaken and enjoyed whilst at university.


18 British Army, internal OTC review (the Roskelly Review), unpublished document, 2010.

19 Information provided by senior officers.

20 Qualitative data collected through the survey of student USU participation confirmed that of those considering joining the armed forces on graduation, a proportion had only started to entertain the idea following their involvement with a USU.

21 Woodward, Jenkings and Williams, The Value of the University Armed Service Units, chap. 4.

22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., chap. 3.

24 Research interviews and discussions with COMEC and Military Education Committee representatives, senior officers and USU commanding officers, 2013–14, UK.


27 It has been suggested that cadets take forward a fairly informed understanding, reflecting the limitations of the USU experience for a full understanding of defence issues relative to longer-term and more established participation.

Maximising Value from the F-35: Harnessing Transformational Fifth-Generation Capabilities for the UK Military

Justin Bronk
Whitehall Report 1-16

With the UK having committed to purchase two squadrons of F-35Bs in the 2015 SDSR, the most effective use of the aircraft is likely to be as a survivable intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance enabler in defended airspace to enhance the lethality, flexibility and survivability of legacy platforms such as the Typhoon and the Type 45. Whilst the F-35 will have the inherent capability to perform such a role, the rest of the UK’s armed forces need to be set up to take advantage of this.

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