Emergent Defence Organising

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Ministry of Defence

Context

- Continued debate on the complexity of the national security context, competition, crisis and conflict.

- Is it new or different? Trend analysis - change or staying the same?
  - Technology change, digitisation, AI, and pace of interconnectivity between systems.
  - Changes in human and organisational behaviours, the scale and nature of interactions, globally dispersed, diverse and polarised communities.
    - Human-human: connected in different ways with emergent relationships.
    - Humans-systems: enterprises of natural and technological systems.

- No primary trend driving complexity - intersections of multiple interacting factors with unpredictable interactions, effects and outcomes.

Context

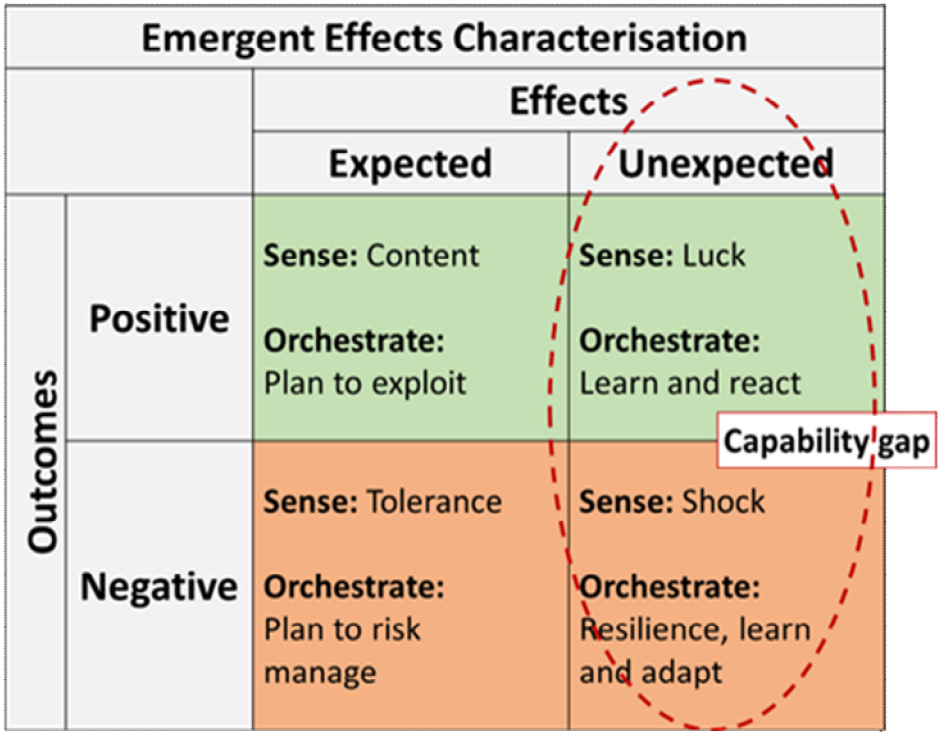
Changes in behaviours and interactions within and between:

1. **Organisations.** Authority, reductive command and hierarchical levers of bureaucratic control.
2. **Systems.** Technology and system hyper-connectivity. Dispersion, distances and speed. Data dissemination, volumes, overload and decision paralysis.
3. **People.** Including responses to command authority and leadership of a greater diversity of actors within uncertainty.

Insights realised through three capability gap visualisations (Figures 1-3):

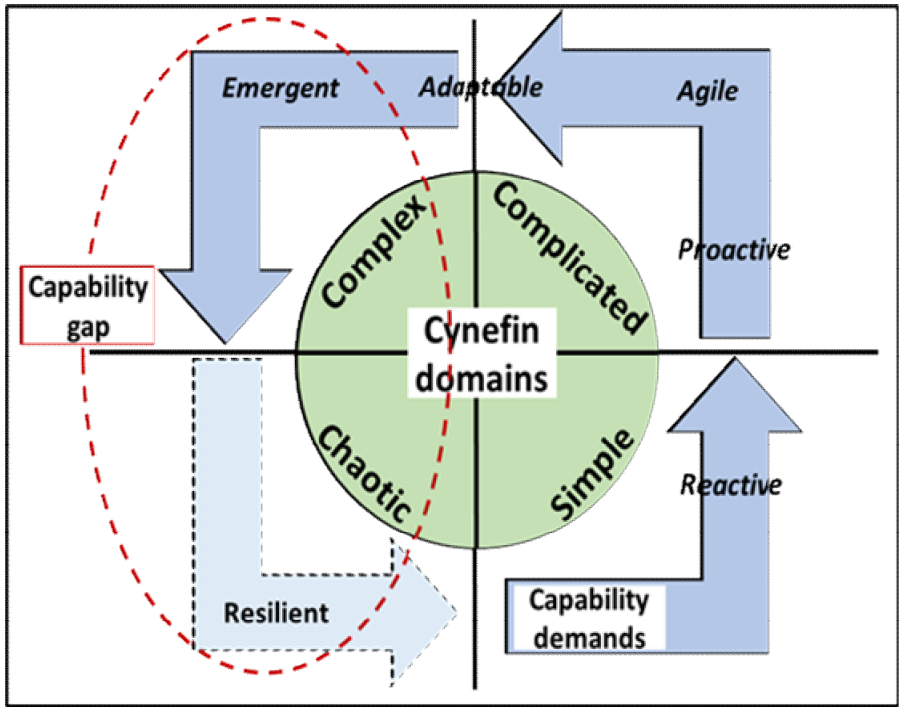
Capability gap 1 (organisations) – Drivers for behavioural change

- Defence authority structures.
  - Traditional central controls.
  - Reliance on established protocols and SOPs. Past success is only a guide.
  - Siloed functions and reductive command planning. Good for simple and complicated controlling but not complex emergence.
  - The compartmentalisation of functional roles, reduced communication and collaboration.
  - Hierarchical levers of bureaucratic control.
  - Cultural barriers and othering.

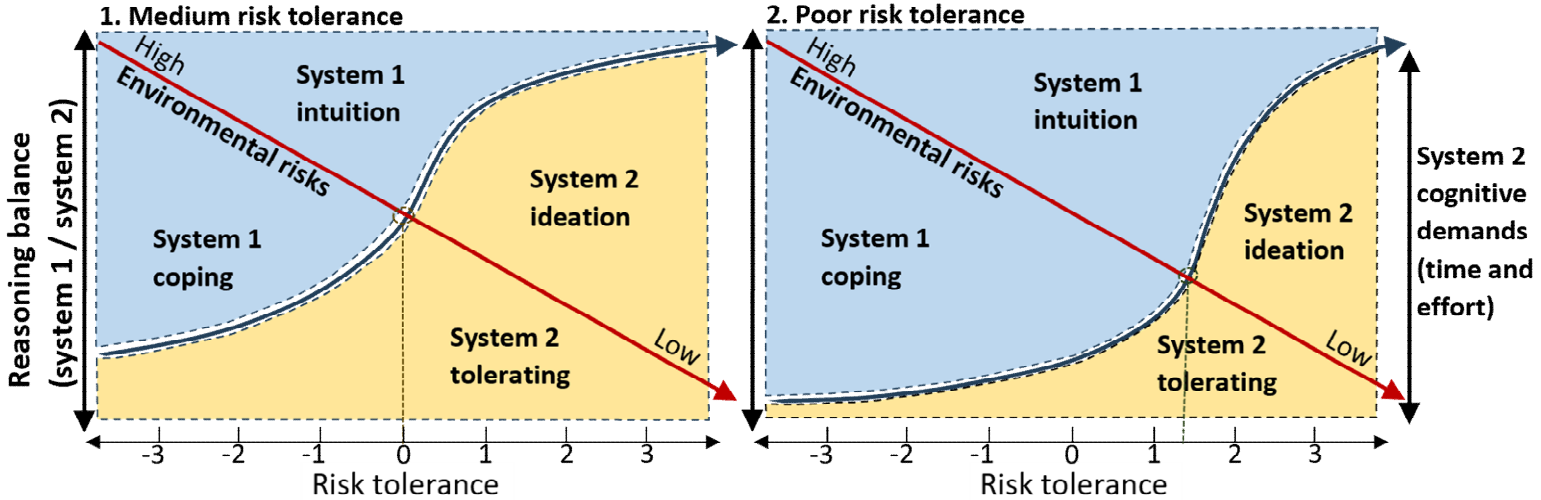


Capability gap 2 (systems). Systemic change within environmental risks

- Systemic hyper-connectivity.
  - Increasing the relative tempo of change.
  - Distances and dispersion, vs static mindsets.
  - Recognising and capitalising on novel ideas and opportunities.
  - Implementing solutions in isolation without interdependence implications.
  - Inefficiencies or conflicts between systems.
  - Human fear/resistance to change.
  - Decision paralysis and information overload.



Capability gap 3 (people) – Reasoning and risk tolerance



- **Leadership.**
  - Staff education focus on classical management theory and need to forecast, plan, organise and control.
  - Reductive approaches within uncertainty. A misalignment with evolving threats. Limits adaptation to novel situations.
  - Lack of contextualised vision. Focus on short-term tactical success without strategic context.

- **Cultural resistance.**
  - Failure to reflect evolving socio-political context and values.
  - Conservative institutional mindsets. Overreliance on established protocols.
  - Cultural norming towards homogeneity.
  - Failures to empower and reward innovation.

Questions

References

Systemic approaches. (Daigneault, 2013; Bryman 2016). Described by Senge (1994, pp. 181-186), as mental models for “overcoming the diseases of the hierarchy”, Checkland and Scholes’s (1999) approach to Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) advocated qualitative systems analysis approaches to address complex, unstructured problem situations.

Power intersectionality.(Crenshaw, 1994), Concurrent effects at the intersections between different power structures, resulting in conflicting influences and say/do gaps between espoused identity values.

Power entanglement. Motivational agency or empowerment through a lens of Nietzsche’s individually focused “will to power” (2008, pp. 15-36) and Foucault’s (1980, pp. 90-109) organisationally focused ‘knowledge as power’. Behavioural motivations were structured through focused application of the motivational function of Michie et al.’s (2011) COM-B behaviour change framework and sub-divided using Kahneman’s (2011) system 1 and 2 ‘modes of thought’, as the cognitive processes, interactions and influences that shape human decision making.

Surveillance as a control mechanism. Dandeker’s (1990) evolution of power systems in bureaucratic organisations as control mechanisms with Foucault (1980), transposed onto military contexts through the administrative management to exert behavioural controls and impose hierarchical expectations of social order.

Perspective philosophy and interpretations of phenomena. Von Bertalanffy’s (1971) General Systems Theory (GST) perspective philosophy to contrast Kant’s (1787) use of space, time, and causality (a-priori structures) as ‘common intuitions’ to categorise perspectives on realities.