CHATHAM HOUSE

Chatham House, 10 St James's Square, London SW1Y 4LE
T: +44 (0)20 7957 5700 E: contact@chathamhouse.org.uk
F: +44 (0)20 7957 5710 www.chathamhouse.org.uk
Charity Registration Number: 208223

Transcript

Annual Defence Lecture: Military Command in the Next Decade

Professor Anthony King, Exeter University

Chair: Dr Paul Cornish, Head, International Security, Chatham House

Thursday 23 September 2010

Professor Anthony King:

Thanks very much. Two weeks ago, the United States commemorated the ninth anniversary of 9/11. In those nine years, British forces have been involved in operations in scale, intensity and indeed location which has been unexpected by I think almost all commentators.

Over 500 British service people have been killed in the course of those operations. Now I think the deaths of that number of people itself raises a number of important issues on a number of different levels. However, in order to prepare ourselves for the coming decade out to 2020, the next nine years, I think the issue of military command is a key area which we might want to investigate since it seems to me fairly certain that the next nine years are likely to be no less traumatic and difficult for civilians and for military personnel than the last nine years have.

Indeed, if we look at Clausewitz, Clausewitz was explicit about the centrality and importance of military command to successful military operations. Indeed, he argued that military command was the supreme test of the individual and was decisive in military campaigns. I think his work remains as a key guiding point, a key load stone for us, thinking about military command in the next nine years.

So what did Clausewitz say? Well, I would argue that there's two central claims which Clausewitz makes about military command. The first is laid out in chapter one in his brilliant work on war and which everybody knows. War is a continuation of politics by other, and we might put brackets, violent means.

What did he mean by this? He meant that it's the duty of the military commander to identify, or if we're lucky in our political leaders, to be given a clear political objective which the commander is able to fulfil through the use of violent military means. So there is a strategic dimension to command which Clausewitz was very clear about.

However, I would suggest that perhaps the most interesting part of the book, and which comprises most of the rest of the volume and the very large volume that it is, actually constitutes what I would call an operational manual. Now, Clausewitz never used the term operations or operational art, though that kind of lexicon developed later. However, I would suggest that it constitutes a manual of operational art.

And what did operational art mean for Clausewitz? Well, I think the key chapter here is the chapter three, the famous chapter on military genius. What did Clausewitz say here? I think it's deeply interesting. He has some

quite beautiful, lyrical descriptions of the experience of going into warfare, 'Entering warfare is like entering into the night,' into a darkened a room or into night. And the experienced commander, the experienced soldier is able on the basis, the glimmerings of light on the objects that he sees, able to judge the environment. The military commander, the successful military commander, the military genius, has coup d'oeil.

Of course, based on that coup d'oeil, that instinctive ability to see what a campaign is going to involve, the successful military commander is able to create the conditions for military success. 'The greatest strategic skill will be displayed in creating the right conditions for battle, choosing the right place, time and line of advance and making the fullest use of its results.' In other words, for Clausewitz, operational art involves the coherent and co-ordinated use of military means in a theatre of operations to achieve the strategic ends. The two elements are fused but separate.

Now even if we thought that British commanders had demonstrated great competence, even if they had demonstrated the highest level of Clausewitzian military genius over the last nine years, I would still suggest to you that it would be worth thinking carefully about military command in the next nine years, out to 2020, in the next decade.

Military command is a skill that needs to be reinvigorated, refined and reaffirmed and as I say, I suspect that there is going to be strategic and tactical shocks that we suffer over the next decade. So therefore, military command stays as a key area that we must maintain. Unfortunately, I think it will be difficult for us or anyone to suggest that British military campaigns over the last nine years have always been, always reached Clausewitzian levels of military genius.

Indeed, if we look at civilian commentators over the last three to five years, we fine an increasing disquiet among them. In 2007, some good friends of mine, Tim Edmunds and Anthony Forster produced a Demos paper which started to suggest some tensions at the level of command in the British armed forces.

That has been followed subsequently by numerous pieces. My good friend Paul here has produced a couple of really excellent important articles last year in international relations, which identify in a critical but appropriately evident to non-polemical ways some of the difficulties and problems which British commanders have experienced. Most recently, the Times produced a major exposé of command in Afghanistan which the editor must have been

delighted, rubbing his hands about the title, 'The Officers' Mess', in June this year.

The civilian commentators, certainly I would suggest to you and hopefully as a civilian, they are not irrelevant in terms of thinking about military command. But perhaps one of the most striking things is that military commanders themselves have questioned and been seriously concerned and sceptical about the performance at the level of command of British forces.

Let me give you two examples. At the strategic level, General Mackay and General Newton produced two papers, one Shrivenham paper last year, and General Paul Newton has just produced a RUSI paper, both on strategy and indeed the potential lack of deficiencies of British strategic command. Now what's very interesting about those papers is both take their cue from a quote from the Chief of the Defence staff, Sir Jock Stirrup, and I quote again, 'We have lost an institutional capacity for and culture of strategic thought.' That is three generals effectively saying that.

Now at the level of Clausewitzian war is a continuation of policy, military commanders themselves seem to be worried about Britain's performance over the last nine years. At the level of operations, this level of design in the campaign and delivering a campaign in sequenced and co-ordinated manner, there are equal concerns and various papers have been produced by well-respected British officers, which have documented and commented on the concern at that level.

I will only refer to one. Peter Mansoor, who's a respected US army colonel, produced an article last year in British Army Review. Even for a British civilian, this is I think, somewhat sobering and difficult material to listen to, and this was about Iraq: 'The British failure in Basra was not due to the conduct of British of British troops, which was exemplary. It was rather a failure by senior British civil and military leaders to understand the political dynamics at play in Iraq, compounded by arrogance that led to an unwillingness to learn and adapt.'

So what I'd suggest to you is that in terms of both civilian and military commentators, and in terms of the military commentators, we have some very well respected officers who I suggest that we might want to take some notice of, point to two key shortcomings within British military command since 9/11. One at the strategic level, that we have lost our capacity for strategic thinking, and two at the operational level, that we have failed to co-ordinate and sequence and organise campaigns in a way that can coherently lead to an operational endstate which we are seeking.

It is these two areas, strategy and operations, which I would like to spend most of the rest of the talk talking about and discussing in more depth. What I want to do is two things, which is to provide a kind of deeper diagnosis looking at Iraq and Afghanistan, and then hopefully a slight deeper diagnosis outside the military sphere in order to lead into a conclusion where I offer some perhaps useful remedies, which we all might apply to the problem that's confronted, namely this difficulty at the strategic and operational level.

Let's think about strategy. There are many problems with Britain's performance in the Second World War. A multitude of problems. But what we would say about the British performance in the Second World War is that eventually they did actually hit upon and stick to a coherent strategy, which actually won out in the end. And of course, the individual who was principally responsible for that identification of a clear strategic mission for a clear strategy to which we could plausibly commit ourselves was of course a field marshal, Alan Brooke, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

It's worth considering the case of Alan Brooke quite at some little detail. I hope you'll allow me to just go back over material which may be very familiar to you. Alan Brooke faced, after he took up the job as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, faced some evident difficulties. Not least his Prime Minister was bordering on lunacy at certain points. Alan Brooke's diaries are filled with beautiful stories and vignettes of Winston Churchill, who was a genius and this is the problem with dealing with geniuses, was certainly a genius at certain points but who was extraordinarily volatile.

Alan Brooke has some lovely phrases about Churchill's puerile proposals at every point during the war. Proposals that could never, never work in a military sense. There's a lovely phrase, one of my favourite ones in the diary, where he goes, 'God knows where we would be without him. But God knows where we should go with him.' At every moment, Churchill was thinking up some made scheme to send his commandos into Sumatra, again back into Norway, wherever the enemy effectively weren't, Churchill was seeking to find an engagement there.

Now how did Alan Brooke counter this situation? Well, it was compounded by other difficulties as well. Once the United States entered the war, the United States brought with it war winning capabilities that the British certainly did not have. But of course, they brought with it their own national agenda. Which at certain points was significantly different to Britain's agenda at that time, remembering that Britain itself had an empire that crudely the Americans had a certain eye upon. I wouldn't push that argument too much, but certainly

there was an imperial agenda that Great Britain had at that point which contradicted the Americans' national agenda significantly at certain points.

Of course, as always, Alan Brooke didn't have enough resources. He was fighting two major enemies in two theatres of war. He did not have enough resources. So he had these three problems. A Prime Minister who was extremely volatile. An ally who was extremely powerful and we respected them and were dependent upon them, but who was different to us. And also, the inevitable lacking of resources.

But Alan Brooke did something extraordinary and I think also absolutely vital which links with Clausewitz's point. He identified a strategy. And he identified a strategy very early on, 1941, from which he never, ever, wavered. And it was this: 'From the moment I took over the job, as CIGS, I was convinced that the sequence of events should be- A. Liberate North Africa, B. Open up the Mediterranean and score a million tonnes of shipping, C. Threaten Southern Europe by eliminating Italy, D. Then, and only then, if Russia is still holding, liberate France, and invade Germany.'

Now, he conceived that idea, that concept, that strategy, early on. He came under enormous and recurrent pressure from Churchill himself, no surprise there. But also from the Americans. His diary is replete with very interesting encounters with the American army Chief of Staff, General Marshall.

And General Marshall really was not particularly happy with this strategy and at one point even as late as 1943, Alan Brooke records in his diary, discussion or debate, an argument with Marshall where Marshall says, 'I look upon your North African campaign with jaundiced eye.' And Alan Brooke turns to him and says, 'Well, what do you want instead?' Marshall goes, 'Well, we should invade France quickly and get in and defeat the Germans early.'

Alan Brooke returned with that beautiful laconic style that he was known for, he just turned to Marshall and said, 'Yes. Probably. But not the way we hope to finish it.' What he was saying is that we could invade France, we could invade Normandy in 1943, but the war would end in a manner which was not quite what we wanted.

Now, Alan Brooke took it as a matter of pride that that vision that he personally develops in 1941, this sequencing of campaigning in the light of the resources that we had, in the light of the alliances that we had, in terms of North Africa, Italy, Mediterranean, then France, was one which he took pride, because it was one that was actually enacted in the Second World War. And we might even say subsequent to the Second World War, a substantial

reason why the Western allies were successful was precisely because the Western eye stuck to that modest but realistic set of strategic goals.

In the Second World War, Britain was obviously facing an interstate war. And we're no longer facing that scenario now. However, what I suggest to you in last nine year, although our enemies may not be primarily a state, that actually many of the conditions which Alan Brooke faced have resonances.

A volatile government. We might characterise the unfortunate Blair-Brown coalition government as a strange hybrid of vain glory and miserliness, but different from Winston Churchill, but a difficult political situation. Similarly, we have the alliance with America who provide and whose military support we are substantially dependent upon, and majorly dependent upon. But also who have their own national agenda. And finally, of course, as ever, we don't have enough resources.

So what I suggest is, there are interesting echoes from the Second World War in the contemporary environment. Although the 21st century is completely different in many, many ways.

But, what we find and what we sadly might be able to identify, is that the same Alan Brookian strategic vision has been absent, has been noticeable in fact, by its absence. There's been a lot of media attention on the Chilcot Inquiry, and particularly on the spectacular aspects of it. Tony Blair's apologies. Gordon Brown's miserliness exposed, etc.

What I'd suggest to you is actually the Chilcot Inquiry is a very useful document for picking apart some of the strategic problems that we in Britain have faced. And I refer here particularly to the two testimonies by General Shirreff, and General Binns about their experiences as multinational division Southeast commanders in 2006 and 2007 in Basra.

And they are, I think, quite shocking and eye-opening statements. Shocking and eye-opening because General Shirreff and General Binns are understate and are not attempting in any way to create some unnecessary furore or controversy. They are extraordinary powerful, precisely because their statements are of fact, essentially.

Both generals point to the woeful and indeed, one might almost say criminal under resourcing of the campaign in Basra. At one point, Richard Shirreff points out that in 2006, there were 200 tactical troops available to patrol a city of 1.3 million. But, that may be a bad enough accusation, but it's in the next section of their testimonies that I think that the concerns really become accentuated.

What they suggest is this. Both of them suggest that effectively the lack of resourcing from 2006 wasn't just a political problem, but it was a military problem and it was about the issue of balancing Afghanistan to Iraq. And Shirreff says, 'The decision had been taken to open a second front in Afghanistan before the situation in Iraq was satisfactorily resolved.' Binns said the same thing, 'It was inevitable, as our commitment to Afghanistan increased that people started looking in two different directions.'

Very interesting. Binns emphasises that what he needed was attack helicopters. His forces in the combined operating base out in the airport were being mortared and IEDed, mortared and indirect fired, almost everything at night. He wanted attack helicopters to try and interdict the firing point. Not available.

Indeed, he didn't even bother to submit a request to PJHQ for them, because, 'he had been given an indication that there wouldn't be any point.' 'I think they'd started to pull to Afghanistan, so I think there was a capacity issue.' Now what would be very nice and convenient for military commanders at senior level in the MOD would be to say, 'Oh, well that's Brown and Blair once again. It's Blair's wars and Brown's budgets, have once again undermined British military performance.' There, the Chilcot Inquiry once again is unfortunately candid and indeed brutal.

If we look at John Reid's statement, he explicitly records, and this is on record so I think we can assume it is truthful, that he asked to see the CDS and indeed insisted on a written statement from him, that if operations in Afghanistan took an unexpected twist, that both operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, if Iraq continued longer than we were thinking, would be manageable.

Specifically, he asked for an insurance from the CDS that there would be enough helicopters for both operations. John Reid was no mug and recognised the political weight that gets put on things like helicopters, and Land Rovers. He asked for a written insurance that there would be significant resources, as I say in either event, Afghanistan was more intense, or Iraq took longer than we thought.

That written assurance was given by the CDS. Now I would suggest to you, that puts in a very different light the complaints that General Sir Richard Dannatt subsequently made about being asked to fight wars with half an arm tied behind his back. I would also suggest that it puts the question of British strategic thought into the spotlight, and unfortunately falls some significant

way short of the kinds of ideal that Alan Brooke had set for us in the Second World War.

Operations. Let's think about them. Brooke himself was critical of British commanders' ability to conduct operations coherent, co-ordinated campaigns throughout the Second World War. And it was certainly true up to a certain point. But there are many examples of good operational art in British commanders in the Second World War.

Of course, one of the most famous is Bill Slim's 14th army and Bill Slim, I would suggest to you, represents the finest British general of the 20th century by some significant margin. And that his experiences in Burma are something that might be usefully explored as a means of trying to identify the key aspects of operational art.

The entire Burma campaign was very interesting, but there's one bit that I think is particularly relevant to thinking about operations today. And that is namely his use of Chindits. Now the Chindits were a series, a venture brigade force of about five brigade forces eventually by 1944, run by Major General, by that stage, Orde Wingate.

Orde Wingate was an extraordinary character and Slim himself describes him in these terms, 'Wingate was a strange, excitable, moody creature, but he had fire in him.' He was an impossible individual. But also, like all charismatic and brilliant individuals, he expired loyalty but also hatred in the same measure.

As a result of that extraordinary character, he was able to not only to animate his own troops, but to mobilise extraordinary political support, and indeed political support from the highest level from President Roosevelt and from Winston Churchill. He used to routinely use Churchill and Roosevelt in order to leverage things out of senior commanders. He would actually threaten them that he would write to his buddy Winston or Roosevelt and report the bad behaviour of this senior commander.

So Slim faced a very difficult problem here with Orde Wingate. What developed in 1943-44 was a debate about how to use the Chindits. Orde Wingate was a complete fanatic about it and believed that the Chindits alone, these deep forces that would be inserted behind Japanese lines would be able to defeat the Japanese army in and of themselves.

Many people totally rejected that as absurd, and Slim thought it was absurd to think that they could take on a force as formidable as the Japanese and

defeat them on their own terms when the whole logistics support line for them was a disadvantage to the Japanese.

However, Slim recognised that the Chindits could be extremely important and play an important operational role in disturbing the Japanese and helping the main effort of his core advances. In March 1944, he deployed five brigades of Chindits behind Japanese lines into this area around Indoor, to support the Chinese advance at that point.

A very interesting moment happened. It's the 5th of March 1944 that they eventually enplaned and were on the runway and planning. A very interesting point happened. An American airman came up and showed a photo to Wingate and Slim, showing that the landing zones, these clearings in the forest which were going to be used, that trees had been felled and there was one of the landing zones that was not usable.

And frankly Slim was very nice to Wingate in his memoirs, but Wingate completely panicked and he's jumping around the place saying, 'Ah, it's going to be murder, cancel the whole operation!' In the end, he completely deferred to Slim in terms of what should happen. Slim made an assessment, he surmised that the Japanese didn't know that the Chindits were coming. There was no alternative but to go ahead. And he laconically said, 'The operation will go on.' And the operation did go on and achieved the success.

A number of things about this. Slim showed not only his conceptual and operational superiority over Wingate, but ultimately his moral superiority. He had a clear vision of where the Chindits sat within the operational structure that he'd created and he assigned and determined that they should remain there.

If we look at operational art today, I think such a discipline, an operational discipline, is extremely lacking. What we see is in-theatre commanders given insufficient strategic guidance and insufficient political endstates for which they are aiming. We see in-theatre commanders subsequently under resourced, not enough intelligence, not enough political understanding, not enough political power, that effectively in-theatre commanders are having to almost, in Iraq or Afghanistan, had to almost make it up as they go along.

What they've of course resorted to, they've resorted to time honoured British military characteristics, war fighting ethos, emphasis on activity with results we've potentially seen.

A lot has been said about Helmand including a little bit by me. And I don't want to mention that tonight. But what I do want to bring as an example is the

use of Special Forces, British Special Forces, over the last nine years. And I do so with some trepidation because obviously their operations are clandestine and classified and it's deeply difficult to know precisely the decision-making process in which they were deployed.

What I would suggest to you is this: that the Special Forces are an interesting case study because they represent modern day Chindits, not least they are Special Forces just as the Chindits were. But also their leaders, their commanders have that same charisma, typically have that same charisma, that same fire that Slim had noticed from Wingate. And not irrelevantly, they often enjoy the kind of political patronage that Wingate also enjoyed. So they have an interesting resonance for us with the Chindits.

Let's look at the use of Special Forces, primarily in Iraq. What occurred from 2003, the invasion, effectively the commanding officer of the SAS and the direct Special Forces invented a mission for the SAS in Baghdad. It was alongside the Delta Force, a kill and capture mission of Al Qaeda operatives in the Baghdad area. Indeed, at one point Mark Irwin's book on this is very interesting, and Mark Irwin is someone I rate hugely highly in terms of his reportage.

He reports at one point how, it's this typical British thing, where literally saw where the Delta Force compound was, moved in next door, bashed a hole through the wall. It was another version of the neighbours from Hereford, or the neighbours from Hell emerging. As a result of this kind of ad hocery, British ad hocery, the British SAS started working alongside Delta.

Now we've got to emphasise a number of things. They were superbly disciplined, brought superb skill and amazing commitment and bravery to that operation. Indeed, given the defeatism that was infecting the British forces in the south, the SAS has a major role in sustaining our strategic credibility with the USA.

However, there I say two things about that operation. Firstly, it created and engendered a sense of bitterness and resentment among conventional forces and force commanders down south, who did not have Britain's best resourced, best trained, and best selected soldiers at their disposal. Admittedly we might say, had the SAS been operating in Basra and not in Baghdad, I suspect that the subsequent negligence which was demonstrated by the Blair-Brown coalition, would not have been possible. That they have such a strategic and emotive force and a reputation that it would not have been allowed, the MOD would not have been allowed to just sweep Basra under the carpet.

So what I've tried to say here is that we, over the last nine years, we see two recurrent faults. A lack of strategic vision, a lack of operational coherence. How are we to explain these?

First of all, I want to eliminate entirely an individualised explanation. Totally inadequate to the problem, and indeed it would be totally invidious to single out single commanders for fundamental campaign failures. It would be invidious because it would tear them out of the pressurised intense situation in which they were operating. Indeed, it would trivialise what I think a fundamental institutional and indeed social problems.

So where are the problems to be located? I'll give you two. Firstly, I think the historic institution of the British armed forces can give us some clue. British armed forces are totally unlike any continental army. It was never really an army in the 19th century. It was a bunch of regiments who happened to operate under something called the army. British had developed a general staff extremely late, developed a staff college extremely late.

And up till the Cardwell-Childers reforms in 1870 and 1881, colonels owned their own regiments, commissions were bought. The regiment was a club, was an entity, was an estate for the gentry who owned that organisation. Now after those reforms from 1870 to 1881, there's a rationalisation of the regimental structure, but the regiment remained a key point and British preferred that regimental structure. It worked, in terms of the roles that were primary for the British army at that time, which was imperial policing.

So the British army structured itself and became encultured to a low level, small numbers, flexible, ad hoc approach to military operations. I would suggest to you, despite all the changes since 1945, that such a small scale, ad hoc, disorganised form of military activity, has endured.

Of course the point is here I want to make a much stronger point, in a certain sense, to illustrate the point. The British regimental system was only a manifestation of British civil society and British professional society in the 19th and 20th century. I think if we look at the structure of British professional society, we find something quite interesting.

Famous historian David Landes has written a brilliant book called 'Prometheus unbound' , which tells a story of the process of industrialisation. What he argues, he gives an outline of the strange process of British industrial development. What he noticed are two effective points.

Firstly, the British state is always incredibly weak. It's weak and fragmented and doesn't direct and regulate and support industry in the manner that the

German, French nation-states do. As an equal and opposite condition of this, British professional classes are themselves extraordinarily independent and want to preserve and maintain their own liberty. What we see in Britain in the 19th century, and I would suggest to you endures in professional society today, is a decentralisation of the professions. And therefore, a preference for small-scale, ad hoc activities.

One example we might take here is think of the history of British car manufacturers and think of Leland versus Volkswagen. I'll give you one example. The Mini is the one successful car that Britain produced, the one successful popular car that anyone normal could actually afford in the post-war period. And the Mini I think stands beautifully for British civil society. It is small. It is cheap. It is nippy, it is brilliant getting around small streets in a traffic jam.

Yeah, try driving it on an autobahn. It doesn't go very fast, it's not particularly comfortable, and you cannot get anything in it.

In that way, I would suggest to you, it absolutely encapsulates all that is both good and bad about British civil society and British culture. We're a culture that prides ourselves on individual liberty, on the liberty and independence of the professions, and the armed forces are no different in that. They are a reflection of those ingrained cultural habits.

If I was to draw a map of British civil society, it would be of Dartmore. Everything is pretty flat, pretty low-lying, and pretty interconnected. A map of German professional society would be alpine, where things are orientated to the commanding height and are organised around a central point. Indeed, at certain points in German history, we might say the society was volcanic around one Kilimanjaro, and in certain cases the Kilimanjaro was active. But that's a different question.

So what I'd suggest is that the problems of strategy, the difficulty which British commanders have had in identifying a clear strategy, the extraordinary laissez-faire operational command that we see in Iraq and Afghanistan, where in-theatre commanders are given an extraordinary latitude for activity. And therefore we get decisions made which don't fit into a coherent overarching command and campaign structure, are a manifestation of British civil culture.

To conclude, how in the next 10 years are we to turn, to transform, to refine, to reform our military command to address these issues of strategy and operations? In short, how are we to turn war into a continuation of policy by other means? And how are we to generate and affirm British military genius in Clausewitz terms?

Well, what I'd say here is the important point. We're not looking for some Jacobin revolution in which everything is swept away. British military commanders have shown evident skills in the last nine years. If we look at major events in Iraq and Afghanistan, in many cases British command has been behind them. The Anbar uprising, Operation Charge The Night. Both, British officers were fundamental to those events,

In Afghanistan, ISAF-9 was a key moment. That was run by David Richards. Currently in Kandahar, General Nick Carter is running a key campaign around Kandahar city, which will be decisive in one of two ways. It will either succeed and we will win, or it will not and we will lose. But the actual operation has been conceived and executed in the first phase by a British commander.

So what we are not saying, what we should avoid, is some catastrophic loss of confidence across the board, an institutional collapse of confidence in the British armed forces. They have evident capabilities and they have many talented commanders.

What I suggest is perhaps, and this lecture is attempting to do that, what is required is some therapy. As in a Freudian moment of self-observation and recognising the faults which have occurred over the nine years, but also the strengths and the mere act of recognising and being honest with ourselves about those difficulties, I would suggest to you would mitigate some of the problems in the future in the next ten years. It would prioritise those strengths of British command, which we've been evidently demonstrated, whilst simultaneously hampering those laissez-faire, ad hoc, liberated forms of command that have caused us trouble over the last few years.

Final point. British commanders are not alone in making decisions. They never have been. But especially not now, in this networked, inter-agency era. Everybody- civilians, academics, politicians, media, are responsible for the decisions which our commanders make. We are a strategic community. And what I would suggest is that if there had been failures in Iraq and Afghanistan, they're the failures of the strategic community, civilian and military actors together.

What I would suggest and what I would like to finish this talk, is this. There's been a lot of talk about a military covenant over the last five years. I would like to propose that we, civilian actors and military commanders form a strategic covenant. That we self-consciously go into the coming decade with an undertaking to assist each other in the generation of a clear strategic vision for this country and when we execute that vision at the operational

level, that the operational design that we put in place is disciplined and appropriate for what we want to achieve politically.

Absolutely final point. Total conclusion, but I do want to say this. Private Darren George was the first soldier to be killed in Afghanistan. He was killed on the 9th of April 2001, it was a friendly fire accident. Last Saturday, two British soldiers were killed, one of them Sergeant Andrew James. Unfortunately, there will be a first and last British death, from today through to 31st of December 2010.

And what I would suggest, and what I would advocate, is the strategic covenant tries to take this covenant. Which is, let us try to create a condition in which those first and last soldiers that die and all the soldiers that die in between those first and last soldiers, die for a clear strategic purpose with the best and most coherent operational design that can be generated. And the fewest number of them die as possible. And I would suggest to you, that would be an appropriate legacy for the masters of strategy and operations themselves, Alan Brooke and Bill Slim. Thank you.