

RUSI FUTURE LAND WARFARE CONFERENCE- 12 JUNE 2008

THE LAND ENVIRONMENT – MOVING TOWARDS 2018

General Sir Richard Dannatt KCB CBE MC ADC Gen

Chief of the General Staff

- May I start this morning by adding my welcome to that of our Chairman, and in particular thank Professor Michael Clarke, the Director of RUSI and Lieutenant General Ted Stroupe, the Vice President of AUSA, for hosting and putting together this important Conference. May I also thank our many sponsors, too, for their generous support. I believe that our discussions and conclusions over the next two days could prove to be a significant turning point in the way that we address Land Warfare over the next decade or so. There are key questions to be addressed and I welcome this opportunity to exchange ideas and aspirations.

- In that spirit I particularly welcome our contributors from overseas, and would like to formally welcome:

- (US) Gen Hondo Campbell
- (Kenya) Gen Jerry Kianga
- (Canada) Lt Gen Andrew Leslie
- (Pakistan) Lt Gen Masood Aslam
- (France) Maj Gen Jacques Le Chevallier (representing Gen Cuche)

- Now to get our proceedings under way in a substantive sense, my aim this morning, over the next 20 minutes is to give you an indication of the direction of travel for the British Army over the next ten years. Now I should caveat this by saying that I am only speaking on my vision for the Land Environment and that elements of wider Defence policy are still being discussed and formulated, but this is where I, and my senior Army colleagues, would like to see the Army moving within that Defence context. This direction has been formulated following what I would describe as a very lively and spirited debate across the Army as to what the force of the future should look like, particularly after our experience on current operations. We have recognised in recent months that we are at, what we could call a Question Four Moment, - that moment that occurs occasionally when the Mission hasn't changed, but the situation and circumstances around it have – and so a new plan is needed. We believe that our experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan and elsewhere have called us to question whether our previous assumptions regarding current practice and future development have been right – and we have looked at all the issues very carefully.

- After what has been this very constructive debate I believe that we now have a wide understanding and consensus certainly at the top end of the Army about what we consider the likely shape of the land environment to be in ten years time and how we need to adapt to meet these new challenges. So our internal debate is over, and our conclusions will now hopefully better inform the overall defence discussion as we move towards the future.

CONTEXT

- Before I set out the specifics of the Army vision, I think it is important that I comment on the baseline context for our debate, as there must be some underpinning assumptions. That said, it is always difficult for defence planners to fix assumptions with certainty, but we must try and at least agree on the nature of the future operational challenges that are likely to confront us.

- First of all, we must be clear that the Army in 2018 will be shaped by our current campaigns; we have no clean sheet of paper from which to work and we cannot go back to where we were in terms of equipment or capability in 2003. We know too much about the future now. But equally, we will be constrained in our development for the future by the need to succeed on our current operations. There is no point in developing grand sounding future concepts if we fail to resource and structure to the required standard to deliver success today. If we do not succeed, the future for Defence will look pretty bleak.

- Secondly, the National Security Strategy and all that I hear from government and other political parties leads me to believe that there is a continuing national acceptance of the need to continue to conduct discretionary military operations in support of policy – liberal interventionism has wide support – and within those interventions land operations will be the decisive element. Even though the differences between the different lines of operation, including military force, have become increasingly complex and in some ways blurred, I am convinced that Clausewitz's philosophy on the need to be constantly guided by the political aim remains extremely relevant:

- *“If we keep in mind that war springs from political purpose, it is natural that the prime cause of its existence will remain the supreme consideration in conducting it. That does not imply that the political aim is a tyrant. It must adapt itself to its chosen means, a process that can radically change it; yet the political consideration remains the **first** consideration. Policy, then, will permeate all military operations, and, in so far as their violent nature will admit, it will have a **continuous** influence on them.” (Clausewitz)*

- We must also make the assumption that the British Army – indeed all elements of Defence - of the future must remain relevant. By relevant I mean several things. I mean that we must have capabilities that are highly likely to be needed and used in the foreseeable future. We need relevant capabilities so that we can both intervene, and contribute to stabilisation. I also mean that we must be relevant to our Allies, and bring the kind of capabilities that they need. Our primary ally is, of course, the US with whom we have a bond forged through the blood spilled together in the sands of Iraq and Afghanistan – a bond which is stronger than any policy guidance – but we must focus on operating with the US, and not necessarily as the US. It is my belief that the US looks to us to do two principal things in a Coalition of the Willing – to bring a manoeuvre capability of some size under a Divisional Headquarters – and to put boots on the ground until overall success in the Campaign is achieved! However, in addition to allies and partners, we must remain relevant to the needs of our own Government and across Whitehall. We, the military, do not own the Comprehensive Approach, we are but one element and we must ensure that we are organised to be able to help Other Government Departments deliver overall success. This, again, places a particular premium on the relevance of our Land capabilities.

THE USE OF FORCE

- Underpinning all of this consideration of relevance and of capabilities is the need to be clear about the purpose of military force over the next ten years for the Land Environment. I am afraid that there is a tendency in the Army to think in terms of binary responses, - it is either left or right, it is on or off, it is all or nothing - and this equally applies to the nature of war. We also have a tendency to like what JFC Fuller referred to as “empty catchphrases” as they allow us to try to capture essentially very complex issues in a small number of words or on a powerpoint slide. But, conflict is complex and thus cannot be captured in this zero-sum manner. At the risk of going against the flow of public opinion, I do not agree with Rupert Smith when he says: “A paradigm shift in war has undoubtedly occurred...the old paradigm was of interstate industrial war. The new one is the paradigm of war amongst the people”. In accepting what Rupert said we run the risk of a binary response – and life is not so straightforward.

- I would argue that the position in which we find ourselves now is nothing new, in fact the debate about what the Army should look like in order to fight current and future campaigns has been with us since at least Cardwell in the late Nineteenth Century. On the two occasions I have met General Masood Aslam in his role as Commander XI Corps of the Pakistan Army operating in the North West Frontier Province and in the FATA, he has said to me “We have learned the lessons of your fathers and grandfathers – have you?”. Well I am not sure that we have up to now – at least not sufficiently. So forgive me, if I now spin off into a history lesson, but it is contextually important for our current operations.

- From the 1880's the British Army was structured to operate as both a colonial police force, involved in so-called “Small Wars”, whilst simultaneously maintaining a smaller Continental Standing Army to be able to meet major contingencies. Prior to the 1930's it was entirely clear that the resources would go to the Imperial tasks first, as these were the current operations in the national interest that could not be lost. One of the lessons of the 1st World War was that the balance had swung too much in favour of the colonial force and as a result a great deal of understanding of the higher levels of warfare had been lost over the generations – a subject to which I shall return. Later, as we withdrew from Empire, I think there were two critical factors that still impact on us today. The first is that the balance of resources and priority in thinking shifted dramatically to the Cold War and to defence in a possible war of national survival. Insurgencies still occurred as we withdrew from Empire, but as the Army became smaller, so these operations (less Northern Ireland) took on a second priority as far as national defence priorities were concerned. Our policy was to disengage and return from East of Suez. So even our residual ‘Out of Area’ capabilities needed to be dual-rolled. Additionally, in a desire not to be considered to be still colonial, I sense that we lost the mindset and skills across Government that our fathers and grandfathers instinctively understood and there was perhaps – and still is in some quarters – a reluctance to do anything that appeared to be colonial in nature.

- Colonel Calwell wrote his excellent work on ‘Small Wars’ in 1906, which I think were made even more relevant by Major General Sir Charles Gwyn in his work ‘Imperial Policing’ written in 1934. He divided operations into three categories:

- First, he described Small Wars where there is a large amount of freedom of action for the military, as they prepare the way to establish civilian control. These are very much the wars of Empire, but perhaps could be compared to the early stages of Iraq or Afghanistan.
 - Second, he described Campaigns where civil control has broken down to such an extent that the military needs to fulfil the roles of civil control, at least for a while. The situation we find in parts of Iraq and Afghanistan today - very much the stabilisation task.
 - And third he talked about Campaigns of giving aid to an existing military power by reinforcing police forces – very much what we would call capacity building more widely, today.
- Gwyn assessed that in the 1930s the second type of operation – the Stabilisation task - was the most likely and I could not provide a better description for the type of operation we currently face.
- So what I am trying to demonstrate is that there is no new type of war – we are in a continuum - we have been in that continuum for several generations. What has changed is the distinction between the different types of warfare. We can no longer be prescriptive about taking part in either Major Combat Operations or Stabilisation Operations, the boundary between them has become increasingly blurred – the antithesis of the beloved binary response. I cannot envisage a conflict where there will be no role for stabilisation operations, but equally stabilisation is highly likely to involve combat as it does today. But more importantly the Army does not subscribe to the view that major combat operations are a thing of the past. I am quite clear that as an Army, we must play our role within national defence as well as provide security. The man who looks ten years out and says he knows what the strategic situation will look like, is, frankly the Court Jester. Look how foolish those who claimed the end of history in 1991 look now. Defence is about an insurance policy as well as the ability to conduct current operations – and we do not throw away our home insurance policies just because crime statistics are down in our neighbourhood.
- Let me return to our binary tendency. I have heard during our debate that we should think about structuring and equipping ourselves for either Major Combat Ops or for Stabilisation Ops, when of course the reality is that the line between them will be extremely imprecise. Even these definitions are too precise. There is an entire spectrum between on the one hand, traditional 'empty battlespace' warfighting and, on the other hand, terrorism, with a vast array of irregular activities in between. The problem is identifying exactly what type of conflict we face at any one moment in time. And to make it even more complex these activities may be either sequential or simultaneous. Reality defies neat definitions – but neat definitions can lead to precise solutions – in which case you are in trouble.
- So I do not accept that we should be either one thing or the other. But before I go to specifics about the future, I want to go back to the context.
- The reality is that Defence has some significant challenges in trying to balance the traditional highly desirable capabilities with the absolutely essential. Even in the Land environment there are additional challenges in meeting the demands of being able to succeed on current ops, whilst simultaneously preparing to structure ourselves for Major Combat Ops and Stabilisation Ops of the

future. I am realistic enough to know that – especially with the current national economic position – Defence is unlikely to get all that it wants and the budget is highly unlikely to increase substantially under any government. But what we must recognise is that wars are great forces for change and innovation. Much of the equipment and capability that we have available now in Iraq and Afghanistan is first class, but it cannot be uninvented – we cannot go back to the 2003 capability, our soldiers will not accept it – and nor will I. We know too much now. Particularly in discretionary operations we have the legal and moral duty to put soldiers into the field with the equipment that we now know we need. If this is the case, then we must provide this equipment in greater depth to a far greater degree so that it becomes the norm to give our people the modern equipment of our current operations across all our training more generally. You cannot transform in contact, and regress back in barracks. This is an important context for our debate.

THE FUTURE

- So if that is the context of the debate, where do I, and my fellow Generals, want the Army to go over the next ten years? Critically, the start point of this journey is firmly rooted in the present. We will not be setting our aspirations for 2018 in a far flung technological age or in an ill defined strategic context. In a break from traditional defence planning, we would like to see planning go from today as the start point and work forward. This may seem slightly at odds with current practice, but we must be flexible enough to take account of shifting current operations and to veer and haul our capabilities and resources accordingly. We must get away from blue skies thinking and from programmes that take a generation to introduce – current pressures do not give us that luxury.

- So let me focus on our key conclusions - which is that the Army of tomorrow must retain the capability to fight MCO and Stability Ops, both simultaneously and sequentially. We have reached the point now where the most likely operations are amongst the most demanding. Our operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have clearly demonstrated that even with integrated technology and systems, the mass and footprint given by numbers are an essential element of the future Army – in other words we cannot get any smaller and I would argue strongly that we need to be bigger and to fully integrate our Regular and Territorial manpower focussed on most likely tasks.

- Although we must maintain our ability to be expeditionary, the Army is moving away from the short lived doctrine that all campaigns can be short in duration. “Go First, Go Fast, Go Home” had a very short shelf life as a policy aspiration. We must have an increasing capacity to endure, which implies not only greater mass of people, but enough depth in joint enablers to allow wider concurrency together with greater endurance. In order to do this, I need a structure that is capable of the wide range of tasks in great numbers, which means that we will not be going down the path of a two tier specialised Army. We might need 30,000 for an MCO operation, but equally Stabilisation might require even more in certain stages. And I think it is also important to consider the inescapable fact that some Stabilisation Operations could be greatly shortened if large numbers are deployed. I have taken a lesson of the past 5 years of conflict that if you have an economy of force operation it will take far longer to reach your endstate – it is therefore a false economy.

- It does not mean that we cannot have specialisation. I think that there is a place in the future orbat for specialist stabilisation units – to which I will return later – but more critically, I think specialisation is the key area where the Two Star Divisional HQ level of command plays a critical role.

- There is also an absolute requirement to retain a capability to manoeuvre at Divisional level. But let me be clear by what I mean by manoeuvre. In Army Land Operations doctrine, it is defined as “to gain a position of advantage relative to the enemy”, which I believe is far more applicable to the entire spectrum of operations than we perhaps currently understand – it is not just about armour out manoeuvring other armour. So, I am hard over that we must retain deployable 2* Divisional headquarters that are capable of the command and control of manoeuvre within a variety of environments. The Division is the basic level of command that must be capable of both planning and conducting MCO and Stabilisation Ops at all levels simultaneously in order to be able to out manoeuvre our enemies in thought, time and space. However, perhaps there is a debate about how we optimise our divisions – and this is a piece of work that we are looking at in more detail. I would like to see the 3 deployable divisional structure (1st Armd, 3rd and 6 Divs) endure, with a cycle of optimisation, which would include structures and resources allowing a spine of Major Combat Operations expertise while routinely doing Stabilisation. I am certain that we must retain – and indeed enhance - our 2* Divisional HQs to ensure they have the ability to orchestrate manoeuvre in the widest sense. Essentially, it is back to that question of relevance, and what others want from us.

- I would take this argument one stage further. The 3* level of command through the ARRC is a capstone Land capability. Not only does this allow for an institutionalised NATO assigned, national HQ that is able to operate routinely at the Operational level of command on NATO, EU, Coalition or National Land-focussed operations, but it allows us to nurture future generations of officers in the higher levels of manoeuvre. I go back to my point that we lost the capacity to think at the highest levels during our Small Wars experience prior to the 1st World War - I do not want us to lose again our capacity to think at this level. The Reichswehr kept the flame alive in the 1930s. So, later this year I am running a Staff Ride to be attended by our bright up and coming Colonels, to consider just this point. We will study the “War that Never Was” by considering the Soviets 3rd Shock Army and NATO Northern Army Group planning of the 1980s using the experience of retired officers who commanded and operated at the higher levels of command. Hopefully we will implant their lessons into the next generation of senior officers of the British Army – who in the last five years have almost exclusively focussed on High Intensity Counter Insurgency, and stabilisation Operations, in Iraq and Afghanistan.

- Now, moving from the conceptual to the physical, under the Future Army Structures work of four years ago, we structured the Army on the basis of the most likely type of operation and as I have already said this has almost certainly become the most demanding in terms of complexity. Therefore, the only logical deduction is that we must continue with the direction of travel to *optimise* the One Star Brigade level for Stabilisation Operations, whilst being able to task organise to conduct Major Combat Operations within readiness and within a Divisional framework. This is the very heart of the Army Transforming in Contact.

- So what does that mean? I think that the past few years have taught us that the days of specialising the ground manoeuvre brigades as either armoured or mechanised, may be at an end. The emerging concept of homogenous, or identical, brigades means that we can develop dedicated organic capabilities at Brigade level. This gives us the advantage of being able to train as we fight – we must start to equip our brigades routinely with the capabilities that they use on current operations. Now this does mean that we will have to spread some of our heavier elements more thinly across the brigades, but not only will that reduce our logistic drag, but our increased confidence of delivery of effect from the air and the potential for major force enhancement of grouping aviation with any of our brigades will offer huge opportunities. These brigades with an organic balance of heavy, medium and light capabilities optimized for intervention and stabilisation operations must also be capable of training for MCO and retask organising rapidly within readiness to provide a range of force structures for any particular enemy scenario.

- Now, there is a huge amount of detail still to be developed about what these brigades might look like and what the balance of capability will be, and there will be down arrows as well as up. We are working on the implications of this – but the outcome will be a package, and not one in which I will allow the savings to be cherry-picked while the rest stagger on!

- So, I hope you will see that I want to continue the shift towards balanced and capable brigades optimised for stabilisation – but I stress that these are still generalist organisations.

- I mentioned earlier that there was a role for specialisation. There will be a requirement for niche capabilities that cannot be attributed to any major combat ops task in the land environment – but they need to be force drivers in Stabilisation. It is clear to me that we must start to develop in Defence niche capabilities against what is now being called Military Assistance, Security and Development tasks – MASD – and this is a new, emerging Military Task.

- In support of the Defence Strategic Guidance 08 work, I have directed an Army study to look at the feasibility of forming permanent cadres of stabilisation specialists. These small units would specialise in the training and mentoring of indigenous forces – the type of tasks conducted by OMLTs in Afghanistan or MiTTs in Iraq. But I see these organisations as being far more. My vision is that they would form the spine of our enduring cultural education and understanding. I can envisage a multi-disciplined and inter-agency organisation that would be capable of both fighting alongside local forces, and delivering reconstruction and development tasks in areas where the civil agencies cannot operate. I believe we should develop a career path that would see an officer spending a tour with indigenous forces, followed perhaps by an attachment to DFiD overseas, or a local council at home or a police force in Africa or elsewhere. Perhaps, this is where we start to embed our deep language and cultural training, not just for our current areas of operation, but potential future conflict zones. This is the stuff of our grandfathers and great uncles but, as I have argued, we are in a continuum, not in a new paradigm – so these skills are still very relevant.

- I think at this point, it important in passing, that we make a differentiation between civilians delivering effect and delivering civil effect itself. There will be times when the security situation will not allow other elements of Whitehall to deploy people on the ground, or in the numbers needed. We must not allow inter agency misunderstanding from preventing any kind of necessary activity within a Comprehensive Approach, but we must equally ensure that we do not send poorly

prepared soldiers to do the work of specialists. Hence I see a role for specialists – not necessarily under the direction of the military, but contributing to the delivery of civil effect - and I think there is a major role here for the reserves, too.

- So, I think the development of the MASD tasks and specialisation is fundamental to the lessons of the past few years, but most importantly it ensures that we continue to adapt to the future security situation to ensure that we give the government options for relevant military forces.

CONCLUSION

- I am afraid that this has been a canter through some very detailed developing work. What I want to leave you with is the sense that the British Army is determined to continue to adapt and develop from our start point on current operations. We have spent the past 5 years transforming to meet the demands of our current wars and the potential conflicts of the future, but I do not believe that anything I have outlined changes the course of that transformation in contact; it is merely a clarifying of the endstate. The developing concurrent nature of both Major Combat Operations and Stabilisation Ops means that the most likely is the most demanding. Therefore – and this is key to what I am saying - we must continue to optimise for the most likely – which is Stabilisation Operations – whilst maintaining our ability to dual role and meet the demands of Major Combat Operations – while remembering that at the lowest level fighting can be very intense whatever label you have applied to the operation.

- Our current experiences tell us that we cannot uninvent the massive leap forward in capability forced on us by an ever adapting threat and the increased demands of operations. We are morally and legally bound to ensuring that this capability is delivered across the force, as a matter of policy.

- And it is this which provides the logic for the strap line for this conference of Sustaining the Force – Soldier First. We have to have an Army that is capable of sustained Stabilisation Operations but capable of adapting to Major Combat Operations, within readiness, but at the heart of that Army are the fighting people and their families which make up our overall capability. And, in all our discussion about concepts and structures, we must never lose sight of the fact that the constant between all types of warfare is that it is a brutal human activity. No amount of technology or capability will change that factor and it must be at the forefront of our minds when we conduct our defence planning. We need the right number of people – Regular and Territorial – who are motivated, supported, rewarded and recognised for the key work they do.

- I am also conscious that I have only talked about the Land Environment and the Army in particular, but the land environment is more than just the Army. This is a joint and increasingly inter-agency activity and I would welcome the widening of what has been a largely Army debate to include the role that all environments can have in these most demanding and likely of operations. As I have said, I am sure that we will end up with some down arrows in our existing resource requirement in the Army, and I am ready for that debate right across Defence, where I expect to see other down arrows. Overall, we must recognise that we are unlikely to have enough to do all that we would like – we must now look seriously at what we really, really need.

- This is why the debate about taking the Military Assistance, Security and Development tasks seriously is so important. This is at the heart of properly enabling our key Stabilisation tasks without completely eroding our ability to adjust to MCO at readiness. It is essential that the military continue to adapt to ensure that we are relevant to policy ends. If we fail to continue to adapt – if we fail to make ourselves relevant in the modern world to the needs of government policy then we will simply develop a self serving military machine with no rationale based on realistic policy – Clausewitz was right to say that “*the political consideration remains the **first** consideration*”, but we must remember that after the military intervention, however short or protracted that may be – it is to politics that we return.