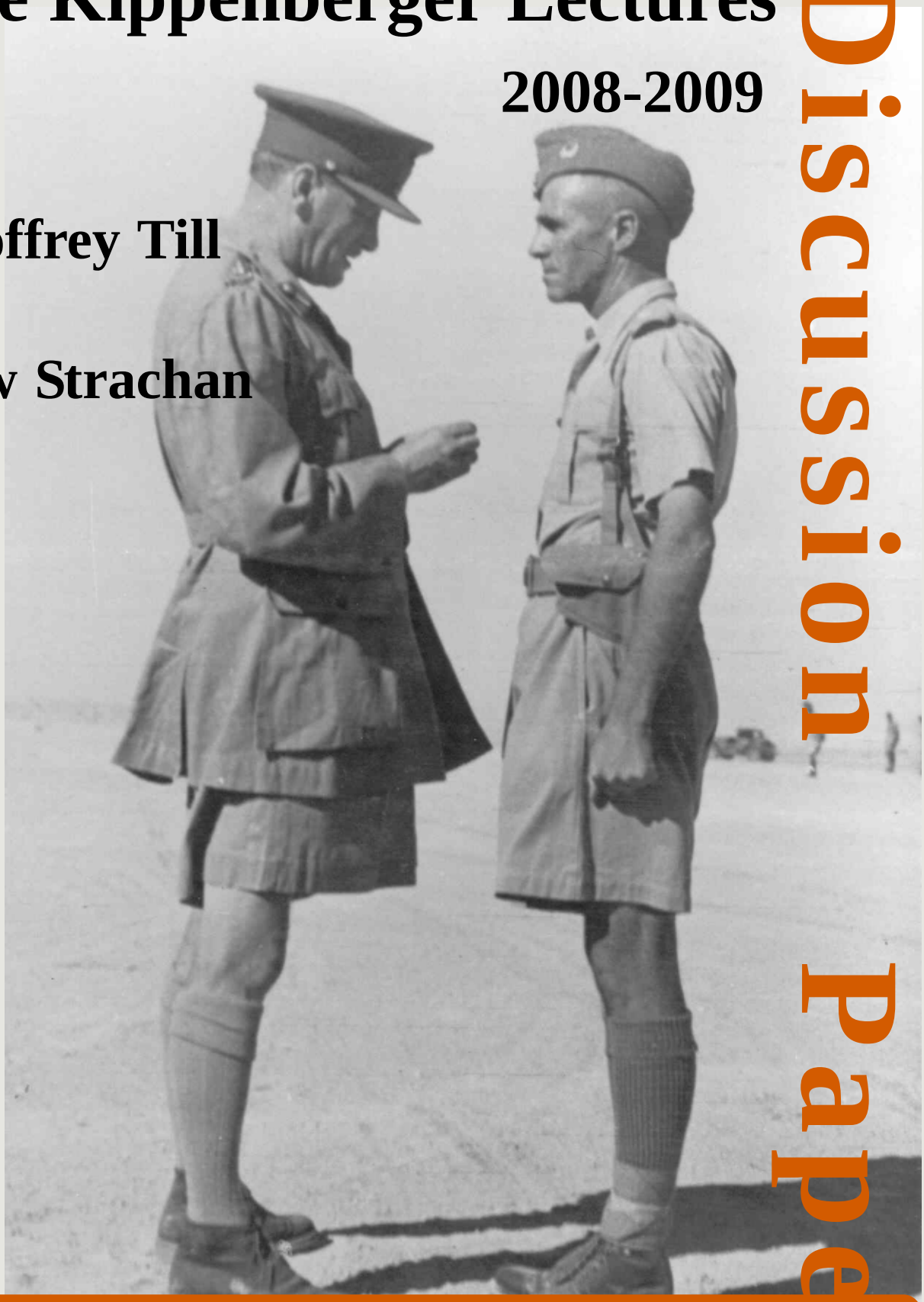
The Kippenberger Lectures

2008-2009

Geoffrey Till
and
Hew Strachan



Discussion Paper

Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand
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Discussion Papers

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For further information or additional copies of the Discussion Papers please contact:

The Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand
Victoria University of Wellington
PO Box 600
Wellington
New Zealand.

Tel: 64 4 463 5434
Fax: 64 4 463 5437
Email: css@vuw.ac.nz
http://www.victoria.ac.nz/css/

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Foreword

The Centre for Strategic Studies is extremely pleased to publish here the public lectures of the first two holders of the Sir Howard Kippenberger Visiting Chair in Strategic Studies at Victoria University of Wellington. This professorship, named in honour of one of New Zealand's most distinguished military officers, has been made possible by generous funding support from the Garfield Weston Foundation in the United Kingdom, and also from the New Zealand Defence Force and the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association.

Given the New Zealand-United Kingdom connection which is embodied in the establishment of this Chair, it is only fitting that the initial holders of this visiting professorship have been two of Britain's leading scholars of military and strategic affairs, Professor Geoffrey Till (of King's College London) and Professor Hew Strachan (of All Souls College Oxford). Their lectures, presented here in edited form, are similarly apt in their content. Both speak to the importance of the historical dimension of New Zealand's participation in the strategic affairs of the wider world, participation which has often occurred in conjunction with leading partners from the northern hemisphere. They also speak to the challenging choices which New Zealand defence policymakers in the 21st century need to bear in mind, reminding us of the risks of regarding today's challenges as somehow novel and revolutionary, and for the need for us constantly to see the bigger picture: a need the Centre for Strategic Studies is very keen to emphasise.

The Centre is extremely grateful to Professors Till and Strachan for their lively and scholarly contributions to the strategic debate in New Zealand as the inaugural holders of the Kippenberger Chair, contributions which are reflected elegantly in these published lectures. I am most grateful to all the work my predecessor as Director CSS, Mr Peter Cozens, undertook to welcome Professor Till and Professor Strachan to Wellington, to Tricia Walbridge of the Victoria University of Wellington Foundation for her ceaseless work and encouragement, and to Synonne Rajanayagam for her careful management of the publishing process. We are also grateful to the funders of this Chair for making the publication of these lectures possible.

I am sure readers of these lectures will agree that the two inaugural holders of the Sir Howard Kippenberger Chair have set a very high bar for future recipients of this important academic appointment in the strategic studies calendar.

Professor Robert Ayson
Director
Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand

About the authors

Geoffrey Till

Geoffrey Till is the Professor of Maritime Studies at the Joint Services Command and Staff College and a member of the Defence Studies Department, part of the War Studies Group of King's College London. He is the Director of the Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies.

In addition to many articles and chapters on various aspects of maritime strategy and defence policy, he is the author of a number of books. His most recent are *The Development of British Naval Thinking* published by Routledge in 2006, a volume edited with Emrys Chew and Joshua Ho, *Globalization and the Defence in Asia* (2008), and a second edition of his *Seapower: A Guide for the 21st Century* published in Spring 2009.

In 2007 he was a Senior Research Fellow at the Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, in 2008 the inaugural Sir Howard Kippenberger Visiting Chair in Strategic Studies at Victoria University of Wellington and in 2009 returned to the Maritime Security Programme of the RSIS as Visiting Professor. He has completed a major study of the impact of globalisation on naval development especially in the Asia-Pacific region. This will appear as an Adelphi paper for the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London. He is currently working on a historical study of naval transformation. His works have been translated into 9 languages, and he regularly speaks at staff colleges and academic conferences around the world.

Hew Strachan is Chichele Professor of the History of War at the University of Oxford, Fellow of All Souls College, and Director of the Oxford Programme on the Changing Character of War.

He was born in Edinburgh in 1949, and educated at Rugby and Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. Having been a Research Fellow of Corpus Christi from 1975-1978, he became Senior Lecturer in War Studies at the RMA Sandhurst, and then returned to Corpus in 1979, where he was successively Admissions Tutor and Senior Tutor, and is now a Life Fellow. From 1992 to 2001 he was Professor of Modern History at the University of Glasgow, and from 1996 to 2001 founding Director of the Scottish Centre for War Studies. His books include: *European Armies and the Conduct of War* (1983, and also translated into Spanish), *Wellington's Legacy: the Reform of the British Army 1830-54* (1984), *From Waterloo to Balaclava: Tactics, Technology and the British Army 1815-1854* (1985) (awarded the Templer Medal), *The Politics of the British Army* (1997) (awarded the Westminster Medal), the first volume of his projected three-volume, *The First World War (To Arms)* (2001) (awarded two American military history prizes and nominated for the Glenfiddich Scottish book of the year), and *The First World War: A New Illustrated History* (2003), published to accompany the 10-part Wark Clements television series for Channel 4, (nominated for a British Book Award and translated into German, Italian, Dutch, Spanish, French and Greek). His latest publication is *Carl von Clausewitz's On War: a biography* (2007, and translated into Portuguese, German, Dutch, Polish and Italian). He is joint editor of the journal, *War in History*, and editor of *The Oxford Illustrated History of the First World War* (1998), *The British Army, Manpower and Society into the 21st Century* (2000), *Big wars and small wars: the British army and the lessons of war in the 20th century* (2006), and (with Andreas Herberg-Rothe) *Clausewitz in the Twenty-First Century* (2007). He was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh in 2003 and awarded an Hon. D. Univ. by the University of Paisley in 2005. He is a Deputy Lieutenant for Tweeddale, and a Brigadier and Member of Council of the Queen's Bodyguard for Scotland (Royal Company of Archers).

Home and away: Defence priorities in a globalised world

The Sir Howard Kippenberger Visiting Chair in Strategic Studies
First Public Lecture
16 April 2008

Geoffrey Till

Introduction

The University Chair in Strategic Studies which I am currently honoured to hold is named after General Sir Howard Kippenberger, one of New Zealand's most famous sons, a natural, heroic and outstanding soldier with the common touch, Editor in Chief of the New Zealand war histories for the Second World War and a serious scholar of conflict and war. On the face of it the association between such a man and my chair here in New Zealand makes eminent sense - but, it is reasonable to ask, whether this is really so. After all, Kippenberger, or Kip as he was usually known, died on the 5th May 1957, just over exactly 50 years ago and the world has changed a great deal since then. How relevant to today's world and to today's choices, then, can be his reputation and his ideas? These are the issues I would like briefly to address in this article.

New Zealand's choices

Whatever their period, defence forces both reflect and mould the circumstances in which they operate. They are not only interesting and important for themselves but they also provide a window into the workings of states and the international system of states, for they are shaped by these things and, of course, they have an influence on them as well. Studying the military and the military's problems, therefore, tells us a lot about the world.

My focus in this essay, of course, will be on New Zealand and its armed forces, on what they offer and, in particular, on the issues they raise. I do not intend to pontificate or to give an outsider's assessment of the answers that New Zealanders should come to, but instead the aim of this article is merely to raise issues that might need further thinking about. These issues are not unique to New Zealand though – far from it. Most countries are grappling with them to some extent and have many of the same difficult choices to make.

The fundamental choice, however, is for countries to decide their overall approach to, and place in, the general scheme of things, and then to design the armed forces that go with their choice. So, what are the choices available to the world's diplomats and defence planners? I would suggest that they largely revolve around the twin questions of identity and role.

Developments in the Asia Pacific Region suggest that in terms both of identity and role, defence forces fall into three categories, and that these categories reflect the nature of states and the developing relationships between them. These categories are inevitably fuzzy and they are certainly not mutually exclusive. It is perfectly possible for states and their armed forces to

exhibit characteristics from two or even three such categories.[1] Indeed most states do. It's all a matter of degree.

First, you have pre-modern states and pre-modern armies and perhaps pre-modern navies and air forces. In many ways these are hardly states, hardly armed forces. Applying the label 'pre-modern' to states and armed forces in this condition is almost a contradiction in terms. These are armed forces characterised by insufficient resources and quite often confronted with huge potential responsibilities; plagued with corruption and inefficiency, directionless, quite unable to cope with the security situation in their area. They tend to be associated with weak or failing states, such as Indonesia might have become a few years ago, Somalia or some of the less successful Pacific island countries today. Such security as their citizens enjoy have, may often be largely provided by others, for pre-modern countries almost by definition are security consumers – not security producers. In so far as they have a view on globalisation, their leaders see it as something simply to exploit.

Second, you have the modern armed forces of modern states, and for modern you might want to read 'conventional' in the sense that these are armed forces that have many of the traditional preoccupations of those of the great powers of the 20th Century. They serve states basically wedded to the notion that international politics is still basically a struggle for who gets what, when, and how and that states remain the essential elements in regional and global politics. The leaders of such states are sceptical about the long-term durability of the largely benign world expected by the post-modernists and inclined to think that globalisation may prove to be no more than a passing interlude and in Colin Gray's words, the 21st may be 'just 'nother bloody century'[2] Accordingly, their focus is on the national interest and on the maintenance of their own independence. They tend to be mercantilist, protectionist and interventionist in their economic outlook; concerned above all for their own sovereignty they are lukewarm about the concept of international community, especially if it raises the prospect of intervention in the domestic affairs of other countries and in logical consequence, perhaps their own. Their security focus may well be internal and/or geographically local. Such states are reluctant to interfere in distant problems in which they are not directly affected, not least for the precedent in liberal interventionism this might set.

The approach of their armed forces will therefore be: state-centred, their essential concerns local, concentrating on the immediate national interest, their operational focus is on peer competition. They base their military preparations on the preparations of other military formations more or less like themselves. This is a question of like against like, quite different from today's common preoccupations with asymmetric warfare. Insofar as resources allow, they will tend to concentrate on the development of high intensity capabilities that would make sense largely against other armed forces just like them. If they can, they strive to maintain a balanced force, in order to keep their options open, so as to preserve as much independence of action as possible. As much as they can, they maintain a national, defence industrial base for essentially the same reason. Preserving their identity, their sovereignty of decision, is hugely important to them.

Some of these considerations apply to New Zealand, a country which over the past twenty years or so has gone out of its way to preserve its independence of outlook, to develop a New Zealand kind of high-minded idealism that derives from a strong sense that as a country New Zealand has something special to offer – rather like the Americans, in fact, for all the two countries' past

[1] The inspiration for these categories comes from the ground-breaking Robert Cooper, *The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-first Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2003, pp.22-6.
[2] Colin Gray, *Another Bloody Century: Future Warfare*, Phoenix, London, 2005.

differences. New Zealand has become a country pre-occupied with its own identity, intent on exploring what it really means to be a New Zealander, that seeks to maximize its unique cultural and ethnic heritage and approach, to develop a very special and strongly *national* New Zealand brand if you like.

This trend would not have been a surprise to Kippenberger. He was conscious of the need for the New Zealanders to fight as *New Zealanders* and was perfectly aware of the country's gradual coming of age through the interwar period. This was expressed by the cultural nationalists like Denis Glover who in 1936 wrote,

> I do not dream of Sussex Downs,
> Or quaint old England's quaint old towns –
> I think of what may yet be seen
> In Johnsonville and Geraldine.

But what Glover missed here was that Britain and indeed the rest of the world was changing too and, in some ways even more, arguably, than New Zealand was. Because of this, and for all the changes, both countries were all in the same boat then, more or less, and arguably both still are. We will return to this point later.

Geography on the other hand doesn't change. Because of its geographic isolation, New Zealand doesn't face an immediate threat, so its policy options were then and are now much more discretionary than they are to most other countries. Like the Canadians, New Zealanders can choose.

Because New Zealand is not preoccupied with a local potential adversary, it feels it can afford to downgrade its war-fighting potential. Its defence spending is low by international standards. Its ANZAC frigate force has been reduced, the combat parts of the air force scrapped. The focus is on a new model Navy with a strong emphasis on the 'home game' and the protection of New Zealand's maritime domain. This is an area potentially rich in fish, oil, gas, minerals and 'known unknowns' like the famous 'black smokers' whose future benefits are incalculable. Moreover, with the recent expansion of the Australian EEZ this area is likely to get larger still.[3] Given the huge, indeed probably 'transformational,' impact that this domain is likely to have on the future of the New Zealand economy such a focus becomes readily understandable. Outsiders are also increasingly well aware of some of these assets. Accordingly, there is clear need to develop a strategy for the conservation and sustainable exploitation of these resources and the jurisdictional capacity to exert and if necessary to defend their ability to enjoy them. Some wonder whether six new patrol boats, good ships though they are, will prove enough for this essentially 'modern' defence of sovereignty task.[4]

Much, but not all, of the emphasis of the rest of the activity of the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) is on low intensity, not high intensity, operations. With this, we start to enter the realm of the third category of states and armed forces – the post-modern. Post-modern states are preoccupied not so much with each other as with the effects of globalisation. Globalisation depends on the sea-based maritime transportation system that makes trade possible. These days this level of trade is such that responses to it are the main characteristic of international behaviour. It's what world politics, basically, are all about.

[3] 'Strewth, Australia just doubled in size', *New Zealand Herald*, 23 April 2008.
[4] 'Crew Plucked off Burning Boat', *The Dominion Post*, 27 February 2008, may illustrate the issue. Here the rescue of the crew of one trawler had to be carried out by another as there was no other vessel within 120 miles of the incident.

For post-modern states, like the Manchester School of the 19th Century, globalisation is seen essentially as a positive thing productive of peace and prosperity. It may need reforming to make its impact more equitable but in essence its broad strategic effect over time is benign. Moreover as an economic phenomenon, globalisation is increasingly recognised as operating trans-nationally, at a level largely beyond the reach of national governments. The approach of post-modern states, accordingly, is system centred, not state centred. Generally, such post-modern states maintain trade-efficient regimes and open economies. They tend to be internationalist in outlook, thoroughly aware of the importance of the maritime domain and inclined to think that the function of their armed forces is to contribute to the defence of the system on which their peace and prosperity absolutely depend. They see themselves not as security consumers but as security producers, helping to make the system safe, for their own and everyone's sake.

Their armed forces, accordingly, are chiefly preoccupied with the need to maintain the qualities that will allow them to defend the system against a wide range of threats, many of which of which are of a non-traditional sort, although there is, and must surely remain, a concern for the long-term security of the sea lines of communication [SLOCs] on which the system rests. The problem is seen not so much from other states, and other armed forces, as from irregular forces, transnational crime, international terrorism, disorder, environmental pollution, humanitarian disasters and the like. These are threats, not just to trade, but to the *conditions* for trade.

Most of these threats demand an expeditionary response – going to the crisis before it comes to you – the 'away game' rather than the 'home game'. The range of threats is so wide that possible commitments are bound to exceed possible resources at the national level and so the emphasis is on close, continuous and probably proactive cooperation with like-minded others. The emphasis is on collaboration and a contributory approach towards strategy making and the creation of military forces. The post-modern armed forces of a post-modern state do not necessarily try to maintain a total balance - they hope instead that gaps will be filled by reliable allies. The same goes for a post-modern state's policy towards the defence industrial base. Here, too, there will be realistic acceptance of the need for dependence on others, if necessary at the price of some compromise on the sovereignty of their own views. For all these reasons, they will think it important to maintain the international consensus that sustains collective action.

On the face of it, this description fits New Zealand rather well. New Zealand's prosperity depends absolutely on its markets and its suppliers abroad, it depends for its imports and exports on the SLOCS. Over 95 per cent of its exports and imports by weight and volume go by sea. Moreover two thirds of this goes to East Asia, which is itself an indisputably maritime area in every sense of the word. The current New Zealand economy and life-style depends absolutely on its being a part of the world's sea-based trading system. Without it, New Zealand in its current state could not survive, and it is probably true that 'we need the world outside the South Pacific more than the world outside the South Pacific needs us'.[5]

Not surprisingly, therefore, New Zealand's outlook is global. Every Kiwi wants an overseas experience. New Zealand prides itself on its internationalist approach, regards itself as a good international citizen, and takes the high moral tone appropriate for a country on top of the world, as some of its favourite up-side down maps portray.

New Zealand is sceptical about the prospects of traditional inter-state conflict in the Asia Pacific Region, or even on its effects on New Zealand should it occur, although it would of course be at

[5] 'Defending New Zealand: Vigilance, Responsibility, Contribution, Nationhood', *RNZRSA Report*, April 2005, p.26.

risk should these interfere with the SLOCs. And of course there is the natural temptation to wonder what difference New Zealand's involvement would actually make, anyway. Accordingly, high-intensity war-fighting capabilities do not attract the funding that they do elsewhere, and indeed when these come in a nuclear form, New Zealand's moral distaste is well known, and over the years has had significant consequences, for New Zealand, if not for anyone else.

New Zealand does, however, have a long history of contributing to collective expeditionary peace-support operations around the world in distant locations. As a proportion of the total numbers in the NZDF, this level of international engagement is actually rather high by international standards, and the professionalism of New Zealand's armed forces commands the respect of the other countries with which its armed forces work- although, because with Kiwis you tend to get more 'bang per buck' than you do with some other contingents, they might privately wish there were more of them.

New Zealand has demonstrated a particular and continuing concern for the broader security of its 'near abroad', the South Pacific area, accepting the fact that the root of the area's problems are social and ethnic, and that a military contribution there is only part of the required response. The main emphasis here is on the low-intensity effort to encourage the locals to make the most of their tremendous maritime potential through sensitive capacity building, where again, New Zealand's comparatively non-confrontational approach seems to have paid dividends.

Broadly, there appears to be a wide-level of national agreement and general content with the present modern/post-modern balance that the size, shape and activities of its armed forces shows New Zealand to have adopted - especially as the decision allows a relatively low-level of defence expenditure, and the diversion of such funds to other apparently more immediately worthwhile causes.

This compromise did not come about easily however. The last twenty years have seen contentious debate, especially over the suspension of the ANZUS agreement, the cutting of the blue-water frigate force and the disbandment of the Air Force's air combat force. In general, though, the consensus is that this historic debate is over and that it is time to move on and to make the current perfectly acceptable outcome work to New Zealand's and the world's benefit. I note that to date defence has hardly appeared as an issue in the pre-election debate.

But, however, laudable and understandable it is, the view that the general debate over the balance of New Zealand's defence options is over is probably wrong. The issue has not gone away. Nor should it. There are several issues coming up which will force a re-evaluation of the present modern/pre-modern balance. This article will focus on just one – namely the issue of the replacement of the ANZAC frigates. This is arguably by far the biggest ticket item on the defence horizon, and one that is likely to cost a large amount of money. It also seems a particularly appropriate issue to analyse because it has particular relevance to sea-based conceptions of globalisation and to the very maritime nature of the Asia-Pacific Region.

Even with the current and projected upgrade packages, which are expensive enough on their own, these ships are unlikely to serve a useful purpose much beyond 2023 or thereabouts. Given the ten year lead-time such projects commonly take, especially for a country increasingly unfamiliar with conducting them, and all the many programmes associated with such a project, New Zealand will need to start thinking seriously about whether it wants to replace them, and if so with what, in the next few years, conceivably starting in the life-time of the next government. Further, the matter may be complicated by the fact that Australia's very different programme of

fleet renewal may make the convenient coincidence of need that helped in the original acquisition of the ANZACs rather more complex next time.

For all these reasons, the putative replacement of the ANZAC frigates will be a major issue and will need serious reflection, not least because key defence decisions such as this depend on so many other prior defence and security assumptions. There are perhaps six closely inter-related issues that will need investigation because their outcome will determine the answer to the ANZAC replacement issue.

The first and most obvious of the six issues is whether New Zealand will wish to continue contributing to the defence of the system in the way it does now. This is a more complicated issue than might appear at first glance, not least because it depends on a set of assumptions about the future state of the world over the next 40 years or so [that is the next five years, plus the ten year ANZAC replacement programme, plus the projected twenty-five years of any such replacement]. If we assume that such relatively high quality ships are chiefly of value in contributing to serious coalition operations, and for their capacity to go usefully into harm's way, this question really boils down to a question of estimating demand for the particular qualities that ANZAC type ships represent. So, what are the prospects of New Zealand's being involved, directly or indirectly, in inter-state conflict or in situations where New Zealand's ships might need either to project power ashore, to defend themselves against submarines or hostile air attack, or to integrate themselves into advanced coalition operations against systemic disorder and conflict ashore? Will these be more or less than they are now?

Forty year futures are extremely hard to predict of course; the world of 1967 after all was very different from today's, a point made earlier when the relevance of Kippenberger's views and experience was first raised in this paper. Who knows, who can know, what the consequence of the decline of the USA relative to China, India, Japan, even Europe that so many predict will be? Who knows what the international consequences of drastic climate change will be? Who knows whether Asia's future will indeed reflect Europe's past? In face of such systemic uncertainties, an assertion that New Zealand will never be attacked directly, nor need to get involved in such activities elsewhere would indeed seem to be 'flying in the face of history', as one recent commentator put it,[6] and suggests a level of confidence in one's capacity to predict the essentially unpredictable that borders on the irresponsible.

But things are not so simple as even this. The capacity for high intensity operation is a relative matter not an absolute one. The lower the 'high-intensity' bar is set, the more affordable it becomes. It is therefore impossible to avoid the issue of quality versus quantity and real, high quality as the Americans, British and Australians in their fleet renewal programmes are re-discovering, is very, very expensive. Even if New Zealand does decide it wants to be able to participate in such operations to some degree there will still remain the issue of extent. This will be a matter of striking a balance between how capable it wants its ANZAC replacements to be, and how many of them it feels it needs. This in turn might affect a future government's decision either to cooperate with Australia again should that option be available, to buy some derivative of the French *Lafayette* light frigate, the American *Littoral Combat Ship* or something of that sort, or simply to revert to the second hand market that has served the country well enough in the past, and which was a serious option at the time of the original ANZAC procurement programme.

It is pretty clear where Kip would have cast his vote, if asked. He would have made the point that a country's crucial, vital interests are not restricted to the defence of its territory, that New

[6] Richard Wolfe, *Our Honour*, *Our Army Our Country*, Viking, Auckland, New Zealand, 2007, p.201.

Zealand needed to participate actively in world security and to spend the money and so secure the forces that would allow it to do so, whether they be naval, army or air force. He might have made much of the significance of New Zealand's choice of a national bird - the Kiwi - a charming creature that was quite defenceless since it was completely without a natural predator but which became utterly vulnerable when conditions changed; the Kiwi he might have pointed out, has had to be rescued from oblivion by external interventions. There's undoubtedly a moral there somewhere!

The second of the six issues is the related one of whether New Zealand will face this future on its own or in the general company of others. There was not much doubt where Kippenberger stood on this, either. He and his generation took it for granted that New Zealand needed to take its place alongside Britain, Australia, Canada and the rest of the Commonwealth in international action against a world of threats. Admittedly, this would take the form of a specifically New Zealand formation but one that would still be part of the British team. There always has been a strong tendency this way in New Zealand, initially of course in playing a full part in the defence of the British Empire. A tremendous upsurge of feeling led to its playing a disproportionate part in the Boer and First World Wars, and even in 1922 to an enthusiastic response to the Chanak crisis.

The birth, life and death of the battle-cruiser *HMS New Zealand* exemplifies all this, brilliantly. New Zealand's willingness in 1909 at a time of perceived crisis in the Empire, to fund a battle–cruiser, or two if needed, thrilled everyone. Said Earl Grey, then Governor General of Canada:

> The offer of gallant New Zealand, with a population equal to half that of the Province of Ontario had…caused the blood of every Briton in all parts of the world to pulse more buoyantly in his veins.[7]

Wellington loyally acquiesced in the Admiralty decision not to base the ship in China as had originally been intended, but to bring it back to European waters because of the impending threat from Germany. The closest interest was taken in the naming, building and provisioning of the ship and the Admiralty scrupulously sent back day to day accounts of such things as '22 sets of Brackets, Cable eyes, securing screws and cables for the 4" P.IIx Gun mountings' for 12 [pounds] 16 [shillings] and 8 [pence]'.[8] The voyage of the completed ship around New Zealand in the winter of 1913 was a triumph of unalloyed patriotism and Imperial togetherness. Nearly two hundred thousand people visited the ship despite bad weather and difficulty in getting them safely on board and off. 'Your men and ours', wrote the Minister of the Interior, H.D. Bell 'will have more strongly espoused the feeling that we are all of one people, and that the strongest bond of our union is the king whom you serve and whose subjects we are'.[9] During the war *HMS New Zealand* was in the words of Bonar Law 'in the thick of it' being present at all of that conflict's three major naval engagements. Shortly after the battle of Jutland, the Admiralty wanted to 'put "on the record" the debt of the mother country to New Zealand for the generosity which has enabled the Navy to place so valuable a unit in the fighting line'.[10] Nonetheless, time moved on and in 1922, it was decided that the ship would have to be scrapped as part of the Washington naval disarmament treaty, and there was huge interest in New Zealand for salvaging as many trophies, equipment and furnishings of *HMS New Zealand* as would be of value to naval forces operating from the country or which or as the Headmaster of the Central School in Palmerston

[7] Speech of 21 May 1909 at a dinner in Ottawa. 1A 71-1-1913/1661 Pt I, NZ Archives.
[8] Signal of 8 Feb 1913. IA 71 1 1913/1661 Pt 3. NZ Archives.
[9] Letter to Captain L Halsey, Captain of *HMS New Zealand*, 23 April 1913. NI 1 6/9 NZ Archives.
[10] Letter from Bonar Law, 8 June 1916. Ibid.

North put it, would serve 'to remind the school perpetually of the part the country played in the naval History of the Great war'.[11]

In the Second World War, New Zealand was perhaps the least questioning member of the British Empire and Commonwealth [as evidenced for example by the fact that unlike Australia it was content to leave its forces in the Mediterranean after the start of the Pacific War]. After the war, New Zealand fought alongside Britain in the Korean War and the Malayan Emergency, and famously provided a frigate purely to relieve the pressure on the Royal Navy during the Falklands conflict.

All this derived from a strong sense in all these conflicts that these were not 'England's wars' as some profoundly unhistorical re-inventions of the past would have us believe when commemorating ANZAC day[12] but New Zealand's too. This was for two reasons. The first was simply then a strong sense that New Zealanders were British as well. As one of his men, Martin Uren, remarked when talking about the problems of the Greece campaign:

> That seems to be the trouble with *us British*. There is too much red tape and old school tie about everything we do, too high a degree of honesty and sportsmanship in our international dealings'.[13]

Later, when talking to the 'Tommies in the armour', Uren remarked on the peculiar way of talking the English had: 'It seemed strange at first to listen to their dialects and accents, but we liked them a lot; they were our sort of people and could grin and fight back just like us'.

The second, and these days perhaps much more immediately relevant, reason was that New Zealand's strategic interests were at stake as well. And, arguably, they still are. As Australia's High Commissioner to London remarked in 2003, while there is less *identity* of national security interests between Britain, New Zealand, Australia, Canada there is at least as much of an *intersection* of those interests.[14] Beneath the surface, and often little remarked upon by the public, there is still extraordinary strength in these often hidden connections, which according to commentators as varied as Greg Sheridan, foreign editor of *The Australian* and James C. Bennett, American author of *The Anglosphere Challenge* now incorporates the United States and in some respects India too, involving them all in what Mahan once called 'a community of commercial interests and righteous ideals'.[15]

This did not and does not mean that the interests of such countries could not diverge from time to time, for of course they have and still can. New Zealand did not support Britain over Suez in 1956, perhaps partly because it was not fully kept in the picture.[16] The British did not participate in the Vietnam War although New Zealand did. Likewise New Zealand and Australia have had

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[11] Letter of 16 Nov 1922. AD 1 833 17/69 NZ Archives.
[12] For a strident if bizarre view of this sort see Chris Trotter, 'From the Left', *The Dominion Post*, 25 April 2008 and the subsequent refuting correspondence of 28th and 29th April 2008.
[13] Martyn Uren, *Kiwi Saga: Memoires of a New Zealand Artilleryman*, *Collins*, Auckland, New Zealand, 1943, p.80. Emphasis supplied. Also ibid, p.265.
[14] His Excellency Michael L'Estrange, 'Australia and the United Kingdom, 1915 and 2003: From an Identity to an Intersection of National Security Interests', the Annual Gallipoli Lecture, *Journal of the RUSI*, June 2003.
[15] John O'Sullivan, 'The Anglosphere could be the making of Britain, if we dare', *Daily Telegraph*, 29 December 2007, Alfred Thayer Mahan, *Retrospect and Prospect*, Sampson, Low, Marston, London, 1902, pp.177-8.
[16] Malcolm Templeton, *Ties of Blood and Empire: New Zealand's Involvement in Middle East Defence and the Suez Crisis*, University Press, Auckland, 1994.

their differences too. Australia's Prime Minister Curtin, for example was inclined to think New Zealand's attitude to the composition of the United Nations for example too idealistic and their policies consequently differed.[17] Over the vexed issue of the nuclear visits, the alliance with the United States, together with the advantages of influencing American behaviour, freer access to the American markets, and to its Intelligence, was seen by both the main parties in New Zealand as less important than the country's position on the moral high ground. In the same way, New Zealand was prepared to take a very different line over the 2003 Iraq war than did its long-term ally across the Tasman Sea. Australia, by contrast, appears much more conscious of the need to secure the American connection and if necessary to accept the limitations on its sovereignty of decision that this implies. In the 1990s there appeared the Closer Defence Relations initiative to improve co-ordination and cooperation between Australia and New Zealand, but again this has not progressed as far as it might.[18] Generally, though, convergence not divergence is the default setting of this 'Anglosphere'. It is manifested in a variety of ways that range from the air passenger traffic patterns to the routine habits of defence co-operation evidenced for example in the shared use of dock facilities in Singapore.

After his experience though the North African and Italian campaigns, Kippenberger would have thought this continuing association of exactly the same set of nations as more than merely coincidental, not based simply on sentiment or ethnic homogeneity but instead on common values and enduring interests. Not for a moment did Kippenberger think that New Zealand in his day had been fighting 'other peoples' wars' and he was quite clear about what now needed to be done:

> 'We must build up our population and our armed services'. He said, 'Then …we can take our share as a partner in the British Commonwealth…and we will be an ally of value to the United States and not an unwelcome liability'.[19]

One of the chief justifications for sophisticated ANZAC type ships is that they allow, and indeed do much to develop, just such close co-operation with allies, whoever they might turn out to be.

But how allied will New Zealand actually want to be? For all New Zealand's internationalism, this would still seem to be an open question. The Prime Minister's recent likening of New Zealand to Ireland, Switzerland and Scandinavia, three areas extraordinarily varied except in their sometime tradition of non-alignment and neutrality suggest that the prospects of New Zealand's being isolationist as well as isolated should not entirely be discarded.[20] If over the next few years there develops the perception, suggested perhaps by the Madrid and London bombings, that getting involved in distant crises actually brings unnecessary crises and troubles home then this would provide further incentives *not* to get involved in wider affairs, the away

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[17] Michael King, *Penguin History of New Zealand*, Penguin Books, Auckland, New Zealand, 2003, p.406.
[18] 'Clark, Rudd 'as close as can be' after chat', *The Press*, 26 February 2008.
[19] Kippenberger, *Where is New Zealand to be Defended?*, p.4, 1949. Cited Emmet McElhatton, *The strategic thinking of Major General Sir Howard Kippenberger*, Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand, Discussion Paper No. 06/08, p.43.
[20] 'If New Zealand only traded and only entered into trade agreements with countries with which it had identical interest and views, then apart from apart from Ireland and Switzerland and Scandinavia it would be pretty 'slim pickings''. 'China trade pact not at risk, says PM', *The Dominion Post*, 18 March 2008. Compare to rower Dan Slater on the same topic. 'Me saying my two cents worth won't solve anything. What are we going to do? We're four million people down here. China's a huge nation, they own half the world. We rely on China for all the trade that goes on. You've got to be careful about what you say and do. I don't think we're big enough to make a stance'. 'China bracing for world wide anger', *The New Zealand Herald*, 25 March 2008.

game if you like - but to focus instead only on a minimalist protection of local and home concerns which would probably not require ANZAC type ships.

The third issue, also related, is to focus not on the fact but on the *nature* of New Zealand's future participation in the defence of the system. Here the undesirability of isolationism is accepted, on the basis that New Zealand should stick to its reputation of being a 'decent country making a decent contribution,' and devoted like Henry Holland to the task of 'freeing the world from unhappiness, tyranny and oppression'.[21] This is a call for common rather than collective security, for action not with historic allies but instead through, and with, the international community at large and the UN in particular. Moreover, since so many of the world's troubles are due to poverty, disease and humanitarian disaster, the most appropriate response might be to focus New Zealand's response on the provision of developmental aid [which deals with the causes of the problem] rather than military action [which generally responds largely to its consequences].

Here the focus may be on what New Zealand will in the future regard as peacekeeping. This is often interpreted in New Zealand as applying only to the lowest reaches of the peace support spectrum. Combat aircraft and further frigates were rejected on the basis that 'neither can be considered a priority if peacekeeping is to continue to be the focus of deployment of our armed forces'.[22] The Balkans, Somalia, Sierra Leone and East Timor all, by contrast, seem to demonstrate the continuing relevance of high-end capabilities such as main battle tanks, combat aircraft and frigates. Indeed as General Cosgrove famously observed:

> Forces structured and equipped, ready if necessary for war were actually very effective, probably more effective than had they been less capable. Our troops were able to starkly demonstrate to all interested parties the penalties and sanction that would accompany any attempt to deliver on the wealth of violent rhetoric. A force optimised for peacekeeping would have in my view invited more adventurous behaviour by our adversaries.[23]

If this line is not accepted, however, it might arguably be more cost-effective to shift resources away from defence [although it is already low by international standards] towards developmental aid [which is also surprisingly low, given the country's preference for the high moral ground]. This too would weaken the case for an ANZAC replacement.

Before the war, Kippenberger was well aware of this tendency in New Zealand's defence thinking. It arose partly from an anti-militarism that itself derived from the waste and the disproportionate losses that the country had suffered in the First World War. As one of his recent biographers has remarked:

> Kippenberger soldiered on in a country that had turned its back on its armed forces and that did not seem to be too perturbed by the growing international threat.[24]

[21] Henry Holland memorial, d 1933, in Bolton Street memorial park.
[22] Phil Goff, 1999, cited David McCraw, 'The Defence Debate in Australia and New Zealand', *Defence Studies*, Vol.7, No.1, March 2007, p.103.
[23] General P.Cosgrove, 'Peacekeeping Subcontracted: The UN in East Timor', ANZAC Lecture at Georgetown University, 4 April 2000.
[24] Glyn Harper, *Kippenberger: An Inspired New Zealand Commander*, Harper Collins, Auckland, 2008, p.58.

Kip's concerns about the consequences of this were reinforced by his personal experience of the consequences of military unpreparedness in Greece, Crete, North Africa and Malaya. After the Second World War, he was quite ferocious about this:

> It may be a good thing to continue doing nothing as at present and trust in the mercy of God to a people too selfish and lazy to help themselves. We can say, truly, that New Zealand cannot alone defend herself…so, perhaps, we had better leave it to others, or deny that there is any danger and get on with our amusements… Or we can pull ourselves together and act as a grown up Nation.[25]

Not much fence sitting there!

The fourth related issue is that of the geographic focus of New Zealand's involvement in the world's affairs. Here the choices boil down to three possible areas of focus – the first of these is New Zealand's 'near abroad', the island states of the South Pacific, whose troubles are unlikely to be resolved in the short term. Here, in the maritime dimension, the arguments for a continuation or even an up-graded *Project Protector* force working alongside the light Army and Air forces, the police and other agencies of government would seem very strong as an obvious, non-offensive, means of local capacity building, humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.

ANZAC type ships would be of utility for these tasks as well, although less cost-effectively so, as that would not be their primary designed role. Using ANZAC ships for maritime patrol and/or capacity building amongst the island states of the South Pacific would indeed seem like taking a sledgehammer to crack a nut. They would, however, be necessary in more potentially contested types of engagement such as the East Timor situation a few years ago.

The case for ANZAC type ships becomes stronger the further from home the area of concern is thought likely to be, however. If over the next 40 years, New Zealand should feel the need to establish its existence and views amongst the movers and shakers of the Asia-Pacific Region, then the capacity to engage in defence diplomacy tasks in South-east and North east Asia through such means as the Five Power Defence Arrangements exercises, and increasingly in the Indian Ocean too would seem to be important, and these activities depend on the existence of high quality warships, with the necessary tanker support. Part of the ANZAC replacement issue after all might well be the need to replace the tanker *Endeavour* which is fast approaching the end of its useful life.

The same goes for activities even further afield linking New Zealand in with partners such as Australia, the UK, Canada and the US, in places such as the Gulf, through such means as periodic and much welcomed participation in maritime patrols in support of what the Americans call *Operation Enduring Freedom*. These forces might not usually be engaged in combat operations like the SAS in Afghanistan where New Zealand's forces are indeed coming up against the hard requirements of the more coercive, 'kinetic' kinds of peacekeeping that appear to increasingly common[26] but they are playing a strategic role entirely equivalent to the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team operating there. Thus *HMNZS Te Mana* deploying to the Gulf on 7th April 2008, the fourth such frigate deployment to the Gulf since the last Iraq war:

> The deployment is part of new Zealand's contribution to the international campaign against terrorism...*Te Mana* will patrol the waters of the Persian Gulf, monitoring

[25] Cited McElhatton, p.41.
[26] Denis McLean, *Peace Operations and Common Sense: Replacing Rhetoric With Realism*, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, 1996.

shipping activity to promote the free-flow of commerce, protect infrastructure and counter terrorism, piracy and drugs, arms and people smuggling.[27]

At the moment this near annual task is creditably performed by two ANZAC frigates which between them deliver about 280 operational sea days a year. Many would consider this to be a bare minimum. The New Zealand contribution might indeed be high quality and of which New Zealanders might justifiably be proud, they would argue, but there is simply not enough of it. Unless some way is discovered of getting more deliverable days out of platform [by such means as double-crewing, for example[28]] then the number of ANZAC replacements ordered will be influenced in large measure by the importance attached to this kind of defence diplomacy in the future. Again, there is not much doubt about where Kippenberger would have stood on this. Like Freyberg, he was an expeditionary leader entirely supportive of the need for his country to get seriously involved in the 'away game'.

The fifth of our six related issues will be for New Zealand to decide the continuing issue of the balance within its armed forces. Simply because of its geographic position and the fact that it is a country surrounded by a thousand miles of sea, New Zealand's strategy can hardly help having a 'maritime' strategy in the sense that Julian Corbett used the term, namely a strategy determined by the principles conducting activities in a situation in which the sea is important.[29] But there is an issue of just how 'naval' it thinks its contribution should be.

All three of the services have their force-based agendas, of course. The Air Force might feel some limited restitution of its combat capabilities will be called for in a more troubled future; the Army would certainly welcome an expanded overseas role, provided it had the necessary resources and might well urge the acquisition of tanks and medium artillery. After his searing experiences in Greece, Crete and North Africa, Kip would have been at one with them on both of these points this, and on the need for the closest cooperation between the three services. He would also have sympathised with the view prevalent even within the US, the UK and Australia that an expeditionary focus for all its dependence on sea transportation, sea-basing and logistical and tactical support from the sea is still essentially a matter of 'boots on the ground', and that future defence priorities should reflect this. When it comes down to it, 'the long war', [or whatever it may be fashionable to call the global struggle against instability], finally rests on the soldier in the street. Accordingly, land commanders might justifiably feel, defence spending priorities ought to reflect this simple, unavoidable fact.

On the other hand, current experience in Iraq and Afghanistan might yet breed a preference in the future, even amongst the most hardened of interveners, for less ambitious operations, for less operational liability, for more sea-based types of operation, [such as East Timor, Sierra Leone] which cost less and risk less but still serve useful purposes. Here the expeditionary focus could result in the kind of operational synergies that Corbett and even more General Sir Charles Callwell[30] wrote about at the beginning of the last century – light, highly mobile expeditionary

[27] Hon Phil Goff, Minister of Defence, 'Navy frigate to deploy to Persian Gulf,' Media Statement, 2 April 2008.
[28] Although this is a good way of making the best use of capital resources, the RNZN is amongst many finding it difficult to attract and retain sufficient qualified people even for conventional crewing of warships. These attitudinal problems are, in many ways, *the* problem.
[29] For more on this see my *Seapower: A Guide for the Twenty-first Century*, Frank Cass, London, 2004, pp.48-49 passim.
[30] Charles E Callwell, *The Effect of Maritime Command on Land Campaigns Since Waterloo*, Blackwoood, London, 1897, and *Military Operations and Maritime Preponderance: their Relations and Interdependence* Naval Institute Press, Annapolis MD, 1996. See my *Seapower A Guide for the 21st Century* op cit, pp.53-5.

armies totally integrated with, and highly and mutually dependent on, both the navy and an expeditionary air force.

It is not easy to speculate about what Kip would have made of all this. He was all too aware of the fact that the strategic circumstances of his day, demanded heavy land forces and the capacity to prevail in a sustained campaign against serious and highly professional adversaries. On the other hand, despite his love of soldiering, he had considerable maritime interests. Presented with Alfred Thayer Mahan's famous 'Influence of Seapower Upon History 1660-1783' by the Canterbury Branch of the Navy League as first prize in an essay competition, he briefly annotated the book[31] and while still at school, had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the battleships, battle-cruisers and cruisers of the Royal Navy. Seapower was his first interest and landpower his later profession.[32] Given his military experience in the Mediterranean campaign, he could hardly have failed to be aware of the centrality of seapower to the fortunes of the conflict ashore. In the Crete campaign, many of the invading German forces were dealt with at sea, and the defeated allies were eventually extracted at considerable cost again by sea. There was also a direct correlation between the control of the Central Mediterranean and the resultant fortunes of the Allies and the Germans in the so-called Benghazi handicap, as they surged backwards and forwards along the North African shore. He would surely have sympathised with the views of General Cosgrove whose experience in East Timor led him to argue:

> Another military blinding glimpse of the obvious is the utility of sea power in the East Timor operation. The persuasive, intimidatory or deterrent nature of major warships was not to me as the combined joint force commander an incidental, nice to have 'add on' but an important indicator of national and international resolve and most reassuring to all of us who relied on sea lifelines.[33]

The final of our six issues is when to seize the nettle of debate and preparation. Here Kippenberger's experience of the terrible consequences of being unprepared at the start of an unexpected conflict, seem directly relevant. Enlistment for service in the Second World War's New Zealand Division started on September 12th 1939; they sailed for the Mediterranean in January and May 1940 but were only declared ready for combat in March 1941, and they still had much of their trade to learn.[34] In the same way those New Zealand fighter squadrons cut to pieces by the Japanese in Malaya in 1941 and 1942 were still essentially raw recruits in antiquated aircraft.

The assumption that a future crisis in the Asia Pacific Region or anywhere else would provide time for such leisurely preparation, while insulating participants against the consequences of unpreparedness seems very doubtful. So the dilemma for military planners is that raw military logic demands that preparations for such serious encounters start now, however remote such a contingency might be thought to be, and well before the need for them is accepted, if at all, by public, media or government.

Indeed, even in the defence sphere, the government will have more pressing things to spend its money on. In the US and the UK, for example, there is considerable tension in defence spending

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[31] I am grateful to Colonel Ray Seymour and his staff for the opportunity to review the Kippenberger Library at the Army Museum at Waiouru.

[32] Harper, pp.26-7. Also, McElhatton, pp.92-3. I am much indebted to Denis McLean, Kippenberger's latest biographer, for his generous help on this and other points. See Denis McLean's biography *Kippenberger: Dauntless Spirit*, Random House, Auckland, 2008.

[33] Cosgrove, op cit.

[34] Michael King, *Penguin History of New Zealand*, Penguin Books, Auckland, New Zealand, 2003, p.392.

between preparing for a long-term and possibly more 'modern' future on the one hand and, on the other, for what might be called the 'tyranny', not of distance, but of the immediate commitment in the current, more post-modern present.

These are difficult issues, and I am sure that Kip, inspired by the sense that such issues as ANZAC replacement were looming on the horizon would have warned us of the need to start addressing these preliminary issues sooner rather than later. Kip was concerned about the need for a proper understanding of these issues, which he thought had gone effectively by the board in the interwar period because of an absence of significant debate. Reflecting on his experience in the Mediterranean, he concluded that as much as anything else, the set-backs had been 'just another example, of which our history abounds, of our political policy having no strategical backing'.[35] By building up his personal library, probably the biggest military library in New Zealand at the time and now with the Army at Waiouru, Kip sought to improve his understanding of the place of the military in national security and of the need to reflect on and debate the issues that followed.

In rather the same way, Professor Sir Michael Howard, who also fought in the Italian campaign, alongside Kip and the New Zealand Division, urged the encouragement of strategic thought in the UK in the early 1960s at a time when he thought,

> [O]utside the armed forces themselves there is no community of well-informed laymen capable of or interested in developing any kind of expertise on [defence]. Public debate is left very largely to passionate but ill-informed ideologues on the left, and equally passionate and barely better-informed supporters of government policy, often themselves retired service officers, on the right. ...But at the strategic level – what military forces were needed, how they should be raised and equipped , how they should be used as an instrument of national policy, above all what national policy should be – the opinion of an educated laity is indispensable.[36]

In the UK, Michael Howard therefore set about first by creating that educated laity so necessary for the effective and equitable management of defence in an established and healthy democracy by establishing a serious, independent, academic department with a critical mass of scholars and students interested in defence, and second by helping to set up the now world wide International Institute for Strategic Studies in London. Their remit was not to push a particular line, but merely to get such matters seriously addressed.

Given the importance of New Zealand's working out the place of its armed forces in an uncertain and troubling world, this is an approach of which Kippenberger would surely have approved. And, of course, this is the idea behind the founding of Victoria University's Centre for Strategic Studies and the creation of the chair of which I am the current holder. I only hope that this brief working paper will also have helped to make a contribution to this crucially important aim.

[35] Cited, Harper, op cit, p.79.
[36] Michael Howard, *Captain Professor: A Life in War and Peace*, Continuum, London, 2006, pp.160-1.

War is war: Current conflicts in historical perspective

The Sir Howard Kippenberger Visiting Chair in Strategic Studies
Second Public Lecture
5 August 2009

Hew Strachan

'Cool and steadfast under fire. Sound tactical ability. In operations in Greece & Crete showed ability to meet unexpected situations. In command of the 10th Brigade in Crete he showed confidence, aggressiveness, power of command and an undefeatable spirit. His deep distaste of showmanship has given him a somewhat retiring manner, which tends to obscure his great ability. Has a deep knowledge of military history'.[1]

This is the report on Howard Kippenberger after the battle of Crete, the action in which 'Kip' earned the first of his two DSOs. Written by Edward Puttick on 25 July 1941, it recommended Kippenberger for promotion to brigadier, the rank in which his reputation was made and from which he took the title of one of the classic memoirs of the Second World War, *Infantry Brigadier*. Two qualities in particular in that list are important for what follows – the ability to meet the unexpected and a deep knowledge of military history.

The standard wisdom is that the latter is the enemy of the former. The British military theorist, Basil Liddell Hart, used to say – in his characteristically snide manner – that generals spend too much time thinking about what happened in the last war and not enough thinking about the one they are actually fighting. In reality Liddell Hart, who became a bête noire for Kippenberger when he was the editor in chief of New Zealand's official history of the Second World War, used military history just as extensively as Kippenberger did. In criticising the abuse of military history, we can too easily dismiss its use – indeed its essential and vital utility. Without the context which it provides, students of war are like ships at sea without charts and for which the stars are obscured by cloud (at least in a pre-GPS era). We have no reference points by which to judge what is new or to frame the questions to be asked of what seems to be new; as a result we are disproportionately disconcerted and even frightened by its unfamiliarity.

One of the more genuinely reprehensible abuses of military history is the current passion for anniversaries, whose commemoration may betoken nothing more than the lapse of time and the opportunity for commercial exploitation. But there are two centenaries which fall in 2009 which should prompt further reflection. The second has been overlooked for understandable reasons, but the first should have attracted more attention in New Zealand.

In 1909 the New Zealand Defence Act remodelled the country's armed forces, creating the Territorial Force, establishing a liability for compulsory military training, and incorporating the principle that New Zealand might despatch an expeditionary force overseas in the support of

[1] Denis McLean, *Howard Kippenberger: Dauntless Spirit*, Random House, Auckland, New Zealand, 2008, p.186.

the British empire. Both elements of the act have shaped the military history of New Zealand from that day to this. Kippenberger, a provincial lawyer, was a Territorial soldier whose reputation was gained on battlefields more than half a world away from the direct defence of New Zealand. Today there are New Zealand Territorials serving in Afghanistan – in exactly the same theatre as that for which New Zealand first offered troops for imperial service in 1885.[2]

The Defence Act established that the training of the New Zealand Defence Forces would be conducted according to lines set out in the British army's *Field Service Regulations*.[3] That is the second, if more obscure, centenary which falls in 1909: the publication of the British army's first ever statement on doctrine. The process had begun five years previously, when the army had finally (it was the last major European army to do so) set about the formation of a general staff, a process completed in 1906. The general staff was tasked to do the army's thinking and planning in peacetime, as well as being responsible for its command and administration in wartime. In 1908, General Sir William Nicholson had been appointed its chief. 'Nicholson's career', the 'old' Oxford *Dictionary of National Biography* remarks, 'was as peculiar as it was brilliant, for though he never commanded a unit in peace or war he became a field marshal, and though he never passed the Staff College he became chief of the general staff'.

This observation is not quite correct, for Nicholson was appointed not Chief of the General Staff, but Chief of the Imperial General Staff. His responsibility was the defence of the empire. The general staff was to be a body whose task was to ensure that all British imperial forces could operate together. The Territorial Force in New Zealand needed, if necessary, to be able to take the field alongside the Grenadier Guards from that other Wellington (the barracks in London). To do that the armies of the empire required a common doctrine, a common way of thinking about war, and a common method of applying those thoughts in practice.

Before 1914 this was the principal purpose of studying military history. Academic military history was in its infancy: the chair of the history of war at Oxford, the oldest such chair in the world, was also established in 1909, another centenary, and it was designed as much to address current defence issues as to study past wars. On 19 January 1910, at the general staff's third annual conference, that body discussed the possibility of introducing a course in military history for junior officers. 'The only remark I can make about this', Nicholson (himself an engineer) said, 'is that, I think, taking people generally, there are few who for the love of it will study military history just the same as there are few who study mathematics out of love for this branch of study. People study both subjects, in nine cases out of ten, for the hope of professional advancement'.[4] In 1909, as opposed to 2009, when military history is read because it is massively popular, military history was studied because it was believed to be useful – a belief which has been almost completely obliterated in the British army over the last four decades.

The challenge for the British army was that its history seemed to make it inherently very difficult to produce doctrine. In 1909 France knew that its most probable enemy was its immediate neighbour, Germany, and that it was therefore likely to fight on its northern or eastern frontier, as it had done in 1814-15 and in 1870-71. Britain had no such historical or geopolitical framework against which to set its thinking about war. Colonel G.F.R. Henderson, who had read history at Oxford, was the professor of military art and history at the Staff College between 1892 and 1900, and as such taught most of the generals of the First World War – including Douglas Haig, William Robertson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff between 1915 and 1918, and

[2] Ian McGibbon, *The Path to Gallipoli: Defending New Zealand 1840-1915*, GP Publications, Wellington, New Zealand, 1991, pp.43-9.
[3] Ibid, p.185.
[4] *The Haig Papers*, National Library of Scotland, Acc.3155/81.

Edmund Allenby, the victor in Palestine. His books are to be found on the shelves of Kippenberger's library in Waiouru. Henderson had written in 1900: 'It is useless to anticipate in what quarter of the globe our troops may be next employed as to guess at the tactics, the armament, and even the colour … of our next enemy. Each new expedition demands special equipment, special methods of supply and special tactical devices, and sometimes special armament. Except for the defence of the United Kingdom and of India, much remains to be provided when the Cabinet declares that war is imminent'.[5]

Henderson's views were not only widely shared, they were also a fair reflection of the truth. The British army studied European warfare but practised colonial campaigning, which on the whole it did not study. The first proper publication on the wars of empire was C.E. Callwell's *Small Wars*, which appeared first in 1896 and is best known in its edition of 1906. In other words the army encapsulated its thinking on colonial wars just when the practice was about to stop being imperial campaigning and start being European warfare. The challenge which therefore confronted the British army was not only doctrinal – not only how it should think about war when it did not know whom or where it was most likely to fight, but also how it should be equipped and organised.

For the war with France in 1870 the Germans had mobilised over a million men. In 1863, seven years before, for the biggest operation of the New Zealand Wars, the invasion of the Waikato, British had reckoned that they needed a force of 10,000. The Prussian army was recruited through short-service conscription; the British through long service voluntary engagements. In New Zealand it was the Maori, not the Pakeha, who had to adopt a system for war which embraced an entire society.

Confronted with this contrast, those who earned their spurs under the command of Garnet Wolseley in Africa or of his great rival, Frederick Sleigh Roberts, in India and Afghanistan divided war into two categories, civilised war and uncivilised war. Civilised war was war in Europe, fought against armies uniformed and disciplined like one's own, where the laws and customs of war applied. Uncivilised war was war outside Europe. The principal problems here were those of transport, supply and geography. The great advantages which a regular army possessed in uncivilised war were discipline and organisation. The security which they provided meant that, in the words of Major-General Patrick MacDougall writing in 1864, 'in irregular warfare, generally received military rules must often be violated, and may be so with comparatively small risk, provided such violation be methodical'.[6] MacDougall was referring to rules in terms of tactics, but armies in wars outside Europe also broke other rules - both sides often killing rather than taking prisoners, both sides attacking women and children, and both sides in general committing atrocities which would have triggered outrage within Europe.

Implicit here is what we might call a binary vision of war: regular versus irregular war; European versus colonial war; civilised versus uncivilised war. It is a division which has resonance for the coalition armies in Afghanistan today.

Since 1945, and particularly since the late 1960s, the British Army and the New Zealand Defence Force have pursued increasingly divergent courses in terms of both policy and politics. During the Cold War, British defence policy focused on Europe, beginning with Duncan Sandys' Defence White Paper of 1957, which abolished conscription and confirmed nuclear deterrence as the United Kingdom's principal means of defence against the Soviet Union. This was a process

[5] Cited Jay Luvaas, *The education of an army: British military thought 1815 -1940*, Cassell, London, 1965, p.244.
[6] Patrick MacDougall, *Modern Warfare as Influenced by Modern Artillery*, J.Murray, London, 1864, p.396.

confirmed by 1969, when the British completed their withdrawal from East of Suez. The 1982 Falklands War was an echo of the past – 'the empire strikes back' – not a pointer to the future. By contrast New Zealand defence policy, although still inherently expeditionary, focused increasingly on the Pacific and Southeast Asia, as the wars in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam all showed.

But the armed forces of the United Kingdom and New Zealand continue to share some core assumptions, beyond those simply of a common history and the joint legacy of the two world wars. For both powers real soldiering has become focused on counter-insurgency warfare. The British may not have fought in Vietnam, but between 1945 and the end of the twentieth century their campaigns were above all campaigns of so-called low intensity fought mostly outside Europe – from Malaya to Northern Ireland, via Cyprus, Kenya, Oman and Aden. As a result by the 1960s the British Army was increasingly divided according to a binary vision of war. On the one hand the British Army on the Rhine, located in Europe, stressed armour, artillery, and divisional and corps levels of command. On the other the infantry, its thinking shaped by the counter-insurgency operations of colonial withdrawal, stressed platoon and even section tactics. This division deepened in the 1980s, as the British Army (like that of New Zealand) aped and was shaped by the army of the United States.

The United States also inherited a binary vision of war from the nineteenth century. European models were embodied in the experience of the American Civil War, and they contrasted with the frontier wars fought against native North Americans. Moreover, the United States had its own wars of empire (even if it did not use that term) in Cuba and the Philippines.

The Vietnam War reawakened that inheritance, but the lesson that the US army took from Vietnam was not how to win the next counter-insurgency campaign, but how to avoid ever fighting such a war again. The norm was to be major war, fought with overwhelming force for unequivocal objectives, with a clear exit strategy – a response driven by Colin Powell both when he was military adviser to Caspar Weinberger (and reflected in the Weinberger doctrine of 1984) and when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (and reflected in the Powell doctrine in 1992). The US Army in Iraq and Afghanistan is only just beginning to recover from its legacy.

As a result the US Army in the 1980s refocused on major conventional operations in Europe, and it used doctrine to drive change and to recover a sense of professional self-worth. NATO armies followed in its wake, with a stress on the operational level of war, 'airland battle', manoeuvre and the corps counter-stroke. Although a trail whose start point was to defend northern and central Germany from a Soviet invasion, it led, through the first Gulf War of 1990-1, to the 'revolution in military affairs', 'transformation', network-centric warfare, and ultimately to the invasion of Iraq in March and April 2003. It culminated on the deck of USS *Abraham Lincoln*, where George W. Bush hubristically appeared beneath a banner declaring 'mission accomplished'.

What became important for NATO armies in the 1990s was matching themselves against the United States, not against the enemy. They wondered whether they could keep pace with the United States technologically, straining their defence budgets to remain interoperable with the world's military super-power. Meanwhile most of their enemies were perfectly happy with equipment that represented not the highest common factor of warfare but the lowest common denominator – the AK47 rifle and the hand-held rocket-propelled grenade, available to and useable by all fighters, including children.

The British Army was both part of this trend and promoted it. Its most conspicuous success since the Falklands War of 1982 has been in Northern Ireland. But Northern Ireland was pig-a-backed onto the continental commitment to Europe. It never became the driving factor in British defence policy. In the 1990s, and up until – and including – the tenure of General Sir Mike Jackson as chief of the general staff, the gold standard for British doctrine remained the conduct of major war, not the waging of counter-insurgency campaigns. The army fought to maintain a corps headquarters through the ARRC (Ace Rapid Reaction Corps) in NATO, and it argued that an army, which was equipped for major war, and prepared and trained for it, could also fight lesser forms of conflict. These 'lesser' forms of conflict went under an increasing and bewildering array of titles. Nomenclature became all: counter-insurgency and low intensity conflict; peace enforcement, peace keeping, and peace support operations; and, more recently, asymmetric warfare and, by 2009, stabilisation operations.

One pillar of the binary vision of war was becoming endlessly sub-divided and re-categorised, and each of those categories depended on the notion of so-called major war for its intellectual coherence. A common understanding of major war, or a common assumption as to what it was, was crucial to the intellectual coherence of the rest. This was the pole around which they circled. The 'lesser' forms of war defined themselves by their relationship to, and in opposition to, major war.

Small wars were inherently under-resourced, whereas major wars required the full mobilisation of the nation. In major wars command was united, but in the operations in the 1990s in Bosnia and elsewhere it was often divided, as it is to all intents and purposes in Afghanistan. In small wars the objectives were also small, scattered, and often not decisive when gained, and forces were dispersed and not concentrated, as they would be in major wars. In small wars operations would often deliberately be protracted; in peacekeeping the aim could even be to postpone a decision by holding the ring between conflicting parties. Finally, in small wars the need for full force protection, to avoid casualties, tended to work against the principles of manoeuvre and operational flexibility.

Today therefore the binary vision of war has the effect of pulling armed forces apart, not providing coherence. The tension has become insupportable. In the autumn of 2008, the British Chief of the General Staff, General Sir Richard Dannatt, organised as his annual staff ride a battlefield tour to look at the Russo-German war of 1944-45. This used to be the subject of the sole purely military historical lecture delivered in the war studies course at the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, but that was during the Cold War, when the British Army might reasonably expect to have to fight a defensive battle against Soviet armoured divisions as the Germans had done in the final months of the Third Reich. Dannatt's purpose in 2008 was different: he felt that it was important that the pressures of current operations should not cause the army to forget the other sorts of warfare. But for many who had served or were about to serve in Afghanistan it seemed more important to win the war in hand than to prepare for a future war which might never come.

New Zealand is not exempt from similar pressures. The public consultation document issued in 2009 as part of the first defence review for a decade says that current defence policy requires the New Zealand Defence Force to be 'appropriately equipped and trained for both combat and peacekeeping' (p.16). Combat remains the gold standard for the Defence Force, but the document says no more about it. Instead, the paper goes on to state, reasonably enough, that 'participation in peace support operations has become a major element of the Defence Force's role over the past two decades' (p.18). Its failure to say more about war-fighting is significant. As the Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association's report on Defending New Zealand,

published in 2005, put it: 'we do a great disservice to the nation if we size, shape and equip the armed forces of New Zealand as though civil assistance were their dominant purpose'.[7]

The issues therefore are not only conceptual, but also budgetary. Small armed forces – which means those of both the United Kingdom and New Zealand, however comparatively large those of the UK might seem to a Kiwi – cannot afford any longer to pursue balance, even if they may want to do so. In January 2009, Robert Gates, the US Secretary of Defense, wrote an article in *Foreign Affairs* entitled 'A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age'. This was not so much a plea for the retention of major war capabilities as a signal to the dinosaurs of the US armed forces that they had to accept the long-term need to retain the capacities generated by and for the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Gates was refusing to let the United States army do again what it had done after Vietnam. But balance of Gates's sort, generating the skills for 'small wars' while keeping the practitioners of 'major war' in business (and up to speed intellectually as well as in terms of high-end equipment), assumes massive resources, possibly too massive even for the United States and certainly too great for the rest of us. In the United Kingdom, even before the economic recession, it was clear that British defence spending was carrying one major equipment programme too many. Another British writer who has straddled military history and the study of contemporary conflict, Sir Max Hastings, argued in the *Guardian* on 30 April 2007 that the British Army should become de facto the senior service, that the chief of the defence staff should be always be a general, and that the other services should be restructured to support the army in what will be its sole function for the foreseeable future – irregular war. In other words the aircraft carriers so ardently wanted by the Royal Navy should go, and so too might the renewal of the British nuclear deterrent. This would be not so much the abandonment of the binary vision of war as the unilateral embracing of a singular vision of war.

At this point it is pertinent to refer back to the 1909 *Field Service Regulations* for a bit of context. The British General Staff was caught between the daily demands of colonial garrisoning with an over-stretched and under-funded army, while simultaneously needing to prepare for a possible war with Germany in Northwest Europe – or even with Russia on the Northwest Frontier of India. Its solution was to embrace not a binary vision of war, but a unitary one. *Field Service Regulations: Part I: Operations* contained a chapter on 'warfare against an uncivilized enemy'. Paragraph one began: 'In campaigns against savages, the armament, tactics, and characteristics of the enemy, and the nature of the theatre of operations, demand that the principles of regular warfare be somewhat modified; the modifications in this chapter are such as experience has shown to be necessary' (p.196).

Note the emphasis was on modification, not on polar opposites. The Director of Staff Duties in 1909, Douglas Haig, had wanted the *Field Service Regulations* to begin with a note 'at the top of the first page, which said that these Regulations were not intended for small campaigns'. There is no such note in the published version. Haig's ambition, in his words 'the creation of a National Army … based on European and not Asiatic conditions', had run into a wall erected by Henderson before his premature death in 1902.[8]

Henderson too had wanted an army capable of engaging in European warfare, but recognised that the primary requirement was for an army that was flexible and adaptable, that

[7] Royal New Zealand Returned and Services' Association, *Defending New Zealand*, Wellington, April 2005, p.iii.

[8] Report on a conference of General Staff officers at the Staff College, 7th to 10th January 1908, held under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff, Haig Papers, National Library of Scotland Acc.3155/81, pp.3, 27, 46, 48; see also John Gooch, *Plans of War: The General Staff and British Military Strategy c.1900-1916*, London, 1974, pp.113-15.

could use its judgement to meet the circumstances that confronted it. Regular and irregular warfare, European and colonial wars, were therefore subsumed within the same publication, and were united because they rested on the same general principles. Henderson, confronted with the diversity of war, did not abandon the effort to find coherence. His answer was to stress the principles of war – principles which might conflict with each other; which were 'neither to be so rigidly applied nor over-scrupulously respected'; and which were 'to obeyed rather in the spirit than in the letter'. 'The strategist, to be successful,' he concluded, ' must know exactly how fast he can go in disregarding them or modifying them'.[9]

Henderson therefore embraced a unitary view of war, not a binary one, and this was the philosophy that permeated the army in his day and which found its way into the *Field Service Regulations*. In 1897, Brigadier-General Reginald Clare Hart, late director of military education in India, published the second edition of his book, *Reflections on the Art of War*. Like most such books, Hart's discussed the great commanders of European history – Turenne, Marlbrough, Eugene, Frederick and Napoleon. However, Hart himself had won the Victoria Cross in the 2nd Afghan War, rescuing a wounded sowar of the 13th Bengal Lancers in the Bazar Valley. It had been suggested to him that he write 'a separate chapter on savage, mountain, or jungle warfare', but he had decided against it 'because the principles are the same in all kinds of warfare' (p.ix). William Robertson, the future chief of the imperial general staff, and one of Henderson's most loyal pupils, taught, when commandant of the Staff College in 1912, that the aim of the *Field Service Regulations* was 'to train the judgment of all officers so that when left to themselves they may do the right thing'.[10]

In other words the British Army one hundred years ago responded to the challenge of war's diverse character by embracing a unitary view of war's nature. It stressed that fighting lay at the heart of war; that war therefore depended crucially on moral factors; and that war was waged against an enemy who should be presumed to be adaptable, resourceful and not an inanimate object. War was a reciprocal act where seizure of the initiative and the ability to do the unexpected were the essentials in delivering victory.

A criticism often levelled against the *Field Service Regulations* of 1909 is that it made frequent reference to general principles, but that it did not list the principles of war in precise and aphoristic fashion (a defect corrected in the later editions of the 1920s). That too is a criticism levelled at Clausewitz. *On War* contains many references to the need for principles and system, but never delivers in a way designed to be learnt by spoon-fed examinees and the parrots of military crammers. Just as *On War* aims to promote understanding by debate and dialectic, so the 1909 *Field Service Regulations* aimed to teach judgement and discrimination. Clausewitz's unitary view of war, like that of the *Field Service Regulations*, was a matter of morale, coup d'oeil, and military genius, all of which found their expression in the resistant medium of fighting and battle. It is embedded in the books three to five of *On War*, with their graphic descriptions of what he himself had seen and experienced in the wars against Napoleon.

The underlying point is simple: one war is more like another than it is like any other human activity, and that is sufficiently true across time for us to identify the nature of war as possessed of enough enduring characteristics to be a common phenomenon.

Is that a helpful observation, or is it merely trite? Self-evidently each war in practice possesses different characteristics, so much so that the presumption that the last war can teach

[9] G.F.R. Henderson, *The Science of War: A collection of essays and lectures 1891-1903*, 1st edn, 1906; London, Longmans, Green, 1919, p.42.
[10] Liddell Hart Centre for Military Archives, King's College London, *Robertson Papers 1/2/12*.

you about the next has too often proved to be wrong, particularly in the eyes of superficial critics. This brings us back to the beginning of this lecture – and to Liddell Hart. The generals of the inter-war British Army were often criticised, not least by Liddell Hart, for being too caught up in the experience of the First World War to recognise the impact of armour, mechanisation and airpower. But the experience of 1941-2 in North Africa revealed that British military thinking in the 1930s had in fact become too subject to the fads and enthusiasms of Liddell Hart and others to be able to retain a sense of context. It so emphasised the independent use of armour that the capacity to coordinate it with infantry and artillery was thrown away. This is a point made repeatedly by Howard Kippenberger in *Infantry Brigadier*. Not until October 1942, beginning at El Alamein, did the British and Commonwealth forces fight their battles in ways that owed much more to the attritional fighting and heavy artillery preparation characteristic of the allied victories of 1918 than the vainglorious Montgomery, despite being their author, was ever wont to acknowledge. Kippenberger wrote of the earlier battles: 'It seemed to me that Libya '41, or the Winter Battle, or Auchinleck's offensive, or 'Crusader', as it was variously called, was fought with total disregard of what one had understood to be the principles of war' (p.81).

So what had happened between 1918 and 1942? In the early 1920s, when Liddell Hart was a callow captain writing about infantry tactics and hanging onto the coat-tails of J.F.C. Fuller, the fashionable books to read in the British Army still included works whose origins predated the First World War. One author represented by three volumes in the Kippenberger library was G.F.R Henderson, who remained as well studied after 1918 as he had been before 1914. Another was Ferdinand Foch, whose *The Principles of War*, although written in 1903 by the man who ended the First World War as the allied generalissimo, was not translated into English until 1918. Foch justified the 1918 edition, despite the immense changes wrought on warfare in the interim, by saying that, 'it is always necessary to establish the principles of war'. And, his preface went on, 'The present work, although dating from 1903, can still serve for the formation of men called to lead troops or simply anxious to reflect on the demands of war'.

That was the aspiration of the Territorial Force officer in Canterbury, Howard Kippenberger. His citation of the principles of war in reference to the North African campaign in 1941 might have been an unconscious tribute to Foch, as his book too was in his library.[11] So too was the second edition (1925; the first was published in 1920) of W.D. Bird's *The Direction of War: A Study of Strategy*. Bird's book, like Foch's, had begun its life before the First World War, its basic outline and arguments taking shape in *A Précis of Strategy*, published in 1910. Like Foch, Bird saw little cause to revise his basic assumptions about the nature of war in the light of what had happened in the intervening period. Indeed he quoted Foch on exactly this point in the preface to the second edition of *The Direction of War*: 'The rules and principles of war are always the same. It matters nothing whether your soldier is on his feet in the open or shut up inside a tank…The development of the art of war is like that of architecture. The materials you use for your buildings may change. They may be wood, stone or steel. But the static principles on which your house must be built are permanent'. As Bird went on to explain the principles of war were what enabled a soldier to balance continuity with change: 'The principles, then, that govern the direction of war are constant, although their application varies with the means at the disposal of a government or commander, and with the conditions prevalent during a campaign. The exact conditions on which any campaign was fought are unlikely to be repeated, and reliance on the experiences of one war is liable to lead to false conceptions'. Kippenberger was particularly taken by Bird's stress on the importance of geography, a point entirely in conformity with the 1909 *Field Service Regulations*, which had sub-divided 'uncivilized war' not according to the changeable

[11] Emmet McElhatton, *The strategic thinking of Major General Sir Howard Kippenberger*, Centre for Strategic Studies: New Zealand, Discussion Paper No. 06/08, pp.45-56.

characteristics of its belligerents but according to the more permanent factor of the terrain over which it was fought.

In 1909 uncivilized war was categorised according to whether it was fought in mountains or in jungle. The post-1918 editions of the *Field Service Regulations* added desert. The development was symptomatic of a broader trend: successive editions, greater in bulk, fell victim to complexity, losing in clarity. As doctrine became increasingly sophisticated, theory swamped reality. The *Field Service Regulations* tried to do more but in the process delivered less. Some soldiers took doctrine as prescriptive, not inquisitive; as providing solutions more than prompting questions; and so they stopped thinking for themselves.

We confront a similar problem today. We recognise, I hope, although I sometimes wonder, that the war in Afghanistan is different from the war in Iraq, because each is a different country, with different political, economic and social structures, and different geographies. But if that point – that each small war is different – is clearly understood, then what is less clearly recognised in the typologies embraced by most soldiers today is that each major war has also been different. The major war which strategic pundits use as their benchmark – an existential war for national survival – depends on the Second World War for its construction. Deterrence theory during the Cold War extrapolated from the Second World War to make a truly global war, with deaths - civilian as well as military – in the millions, a theoretical norm rather than an exception.

This leaves the inter-state wars waged since 1945 in a limbo. They do not fit into the paradigm of major war because they have been limited – in the British case from the Falklands War in 1982 via Kosovo in 1999 to Iraq in 2003. That point is also true of wars fought more recently by other powers, including Russia's invasion of South Ossetia and Israel's attack on Gaza in 2008. The limits have operated in various ways – in terms of geography, weaponry or time, but those limitations have been sufficient to ensure their exclusion from our notion of major war. But nor do those wars fit comfortably into the norms developed for small wars.

The problems posed by definition and categorisation are more complex still. Many small wars have taken place within big wars: guerrilla war in Spain, Italy and Switzerland during the Napoleonic Wars; revolutionary war in the Middle East and central Asia, as well as in Ireland, in the First World War; and partisan war in central and south-east Europe in the Second World War. And, furthermore, those major wars swept up within them many inter-state wars which were themselves limited, including Japan's war against Germany in 1914-18 and the Soviet Union's war with Japan in 1945.

The challenge which students of war confront, whether pure historians or those who study war as a practical business of immediate, albeit terrifying, relevance, is how to bridge the divide between the nature of war more generally and the specific character of war of each war in particular. What is striking about the British Army's response to this problem in 1909, and about its continued application of the 1909 *Field Service Regulations* throughout the First World War, was that it focused on the relationship between strategy and tactics, and not on that between strategy and policy.

In plumbing the nature of war, as opposed to the characterisation of each war, the relationship between war and policy is frankly secondary, not primary. Policy determines which wars are fought, where they are fought, and why they are fought. The function of policy is pervasive but it is proximate. It is policy which makes it so hard to anticipate future wars and what they will be about. The salience of policy in war, the belief that it determines the nature of war, is very largely a product of the Cold War, because policy shaped deterrence. Of course this

is profoundly nonsensical as the Cold War was not a war and, if it had been, policy might not have remained so pervasive. But the duration and stability of the Cold War themselves created a sense of continuity which experiences since 1990 have been slow to slough off. The fact that the wars since 1990 have been wars of lower intensity rather than higher has played its part here, because political effects are disproportionately more important in wars of lower intensity. In past wars of higher intensity corps commanders have operated in what was to all intents and purposes a policy-free zone. Policy in major wars of national survival works with the grain of war and its drive to escalation. In wars that are more restrained policy can find itself at odds with war's nature, a point observed by Clausewitz when contrasting the wars of the eighteenth century with the Napoleonic wars. As a result political effects stand out more distinctly in wars of lesser intensity. The strain on civil-military relations becomes more pronounced and the activities of somebody like Lindy England at Abu Ghraib can have dire political consequences.

Currently fashionable titles (at least in the United Kingdom), such as stabilisation operations and the comprehensive approach, with their emphasis on the fact that the military is not the most important element in today's war in Afghanistan, reinforces this notion of policy's logical supremacy. However, the bread and butter of what most soldiers do, in small wars as in big, lies not at the interface of policy and strategy, but at that between strategy and tactics, and in the vast majority of cases at the purely tactical level. In Geneva in September 2008, General Sir David Richards, the former ISAF Commander in Afghanistan and the British Chief of the General Staff from September 2009, asked, 'If it is decided that our armies need to be capable of succeeding in both [wars against non-state actors and wars against states], do [those charged with designing and equipping armies] believe that the two types of conflict would in practice look surprisingly similar, at least to those actually charged with fighting them at the tactical level?'[12]

His answer was yes. At the 2009 Land Warfare Conference, an annual event held at the Royal United Services Institute in London on behalf of the British Chief of the General Staff, Richards spoke of 'generic future conflict' and a 'single version of war'. Nor was he alone. The outgoing Chief, Sir Richard Dannatt, now voiced similar views, and at the same event General George Casey, Chief of the Staff of the US Army, and General Jim Mattis of the Joint Forces Command made related points. Général Vincent Desportes, formerly Director of the French Armed Forces' doctrine centre and now head of the joint defence college in Paris, has put it as clearly as anyone. 'War is war', he has written, continuing: 'For centuries, we have had the feeling that we are fighting new wars, unrelated to previous conflicts, [but] with the benefit of hindsight, it is surprising to see the stability of the general characteristic of conflicts, their unchanging logic and the error that could have been avoided if the "trendsetters" of the period had simply had longer memories'.[13]

The binary vision of war has two crazy consequences. First, it treats current operations as exceptional, as deviations from the norm of major war. Secondly, it can make many long-term procurement projects look irrelevant and sometimes irrational. It then presents national armed forces with an unpalatable choice. Either they make massive investments in order to maintain balanced forces capable of prevailing in both sets of options, a cost which seems disproportionate to the threats, or they concentrate on specific roles. All armies worth their salt fear the threat that they will become a gendarmerie. A decision to prepare and sustain armed forces specifically for

[12] David Richards, 'European Armies: The Challenge', in Tim Huxley and Alexander Nicoll (eds), *Perspectives on International Security*, IISS Adelphi Paper 400-401, London, December 2008, pp.53-62.
[13] Vincent Desportes, *La guerre Probable: Penser Autrement*, Paris, 2007. This book is now available in English as *Tomorrow's War Thinking Otherwise* Paris, 2009; here p.115.

what are now called stabilisation operations looks to those opposed to such ideas like the acceptance of an inability to fight and win what they would see as real war.

A unitary vision of war, with its focus on war's nature, can offset this. It would treat short-term, not long-term, procurement in the immediate build-up to war, and within the war itself, as the prevailing pattern. And in situations where there is no imminent likelihood of war, it would treat flexibility and adaptability as the sine qua nons, not just of the doctrine embraced by the armed forces but also of the weaponry which flows from that thinking. As General Sir Rupert Smith has pointed out, equipment used in most operations since 1990 was designed with the Cold War in mind. Embracing the unitary nature of war as a departure point will not be a substitute for hard thinking about the character of wars which are either imminent or in hand, but it will mean that that hard thinking rests on a secure, rather than a superficial, foundation.

The binary vision of war creates a ready-made characterisation of wars based on theory but often insufficiently flexible to reflect reality. A model derived from British counter-insurgency in Malaya or in Northern Ireland cannot simply be applied wholesale to Afghanistan; nor is the 1st or 2nd Afghan war of the nineteenth century an appropriate model for the Afghan war of the twenty-first century. A war having been slotted into one envelope can jump into another but the change can then go unrecognised for too long, as armies remain caught in the web of their own theoretical expectations: the United States, having fallen victim to this in Vietnam, ran foul of it again in Iraq in 2003-4. A recognition of the nature of war in its broader sense can self-evidently only be theoretical and therefore demands that those who profess it go on to ask fundamental questions of the war that actually confronts them, and do so on that basis – in a spirit of enquiry – rather than on the basis of a flip and easy solution, pulled off the shelf of ready-to-wear clothing.

On 24 August 1941, two months after Puttick had written his report, Howard Kippenberger wrote to his wife, Ruth: 'The fact is that I've read & studied & thought about war so much that almost automatically I know the right thing to do in a crisis'.[14] Military history had enabled a Territorial Force officer, who had spent most of his service in the Canterbury hills of the South Island, to be able to respond to the unexpected. For the historian, there is a further and final point: a distinction between the nature of war and the character of particular wars will prevent the impact of short-term issues from swamping a sense of perspective on long-term continuities.

[14] McLean, *Kippenberger*, p.337.