

<p><b>Institution:</b> University of Exeter</p>
<p><b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 23 – Sociology</p>
<p><b>Title of case study:</b> Understanding and Influencing Military Transformation and Operations</p>
<p><b>1. Summary of the impact</b></p> <p>Since the end of the Cold War, and especially in the last decade, the armed forces have undergone profound organizational and cultural transformations. Anthony King's research has been able to make a notable contribution to this process. Through critical sociological analysis, he has: enhanced the British army's socio-political grasp of key contemporary theatres of operation; informed the education and training of high-ranking officers; and stimulated debates about defence policy. He has also developed close relationships with the armed forces and the defence policy communities, as well as communicating his expertise to a wider audience through various media appearances. In sum, King's work on and with the armed forces has had an impact in three key areas: <b>influencing the execution of military operations; shaping military training and education; informing public policy debate.</b></p>
<p><b>2. Underpinning research</b></p> <p>For most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the armed forces prioritised 'conventional' inter-state wars. Such wars are no longer the norm. Since the 1990s, Western forces have been primarily involved in complex stabilization operations in the Balkans, Africa and Afghanistan. The Arab Spring and, recent events in Syria suggest that hybrid warfare will continue to predominate in the near future. These changes have compelled the military to revise many of its practices, concepts and organizational culture. King has helped shape this response over the last decade. He has been able to exert influence because his research is seen to be a faithful representation of the armed forces, not only by academics but also by military practitioners themselves. Using rich empirical, comparative, historical and ethnographic methods, he has plotted the organizational dynamics at the heart of contemporary military transformations, to highlight the role played by the distinctive corporate identity and ethos of the armed forces. In an attempt to heighten the self-awareness of armed force personnel, he has shown how dynamics of ethos and identity have influenced the ways in which campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan were conducted.</p> <p>In the face of new conflicts, and in light of budget cuts following the Cold War, many scholars have argued that the armed forces are getting smaller. King has taken an alternative view. In his 2013 monograph, supported by grants from the British Academy and ESRC, he described how the globalizing armed forces of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century are undergoing a process of concentration and transnationalization. Accordingly, mass citizen armies have been replaced by smaller, increasingly professionalized military organisations. These professional forces are more technically capable than their predecessors, and now co-operate with each other ever more closely across national borders in training and on operations. In his 2011 monograph on European military transformations, King analysed military headquarters and the evolution of Western military planning procedures, to develop a deeper understanding of military practice. This focus has been the basis for much of the impact his work has generated. His most recent work on infantry tactics and cohesion, supported by Nuffield and ESRC, extends this story back to World War I, to explore the different ways in which today's professional armies generate cohesion among their soldiers on the battlefield. He has gone against conventional views, to argue that females can serve as combat soldiers. Contributing to current debates about female accession in the US and UK, he has published a number of policy-relevant papers in practitioner journals. King's 2010 and 2011 articles in the journal <i>International Affairs</i> represent critical and widely cited analyses of the armed forces and defence policy today. They highlight the complexity of today's multi-agency military operations, and suggest the ethos of the UK's military - with its preference for high-intensity warfare, its regimental traditions and its inter-service rivalries - might have actually undermined its own performance on operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Professor King joined the University of Exeter in 1997.</p>

### 3. References to the research

#### Key Publications:

- 1) *The Combat Soldier: Infantry Tactics and Cohesion in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013 [submitted output]
- 2) *The Transformation of Europe's Armed Forces: From the Rhine to Afghanistan*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011 [submitted output]
- 3) 'Understanding the Helmand Campaign: British Military Operations in Afghanistan', *International Affairs*, 2010, 86(2): 311-332. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2346.2010.00884.x
- 4) 'Military Command in the Last Decade', *International Affairs*, 2011, 87(2): 377-96. DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2346.2011.00978.x
- 5) 'Women in Combat', *RUSI Journal* (Royal United Services Institute), 2013, 158(1): 4-11. DOI: 10.1080/03071847.2013.774634

**Research quality:** All King's research was published by internationally recognised University Presses and journals, and was supported by major funding agencies following competitive peer review processes.

#### Key Grants:

- a) *Combat, Cohesion and Gender: The Elementary Forms of the Military Life*: ESRC standard research grant ES/J006645/1, 2011-13 – £187k
- b) *The Profession of Arms: Infantry Tactics, Cohesion and Gender*: Nuffield Foundation Grant 044030, October 2009-10 – £6.6k
- c) *Europe's Rapid Reaction Forces: An Institutional and Interactional Sociology*: ESRC standard research grant RES-000-22-1461, 2005-2006 – £46k [End of Grant Award rating: Outstanding]
- d) *NATO Transformation and the New Networks of European Military Expertise*: British Academy Small Grant, 2007-8 – £5k

### 4. Details of the impact

#### **Influencing the execution of military operations**

In early 2008, acknowledging his expertise about military planning developed during British Academy- and ESRC-funded research projects, King was invited to contribute to Britain's new counter-insurgency doctrine, Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40, *Security and Stabilisation: The Military Contribution* (Section 5, Reference 1). His work, contained in Chapter 9 - *Political and Social Analysis*, fuses sociological thinking with military planning procedures, and allowed Headquarters to understand better the political dynamics of a military theatre.

King was subsequently invited to become a member of the NATO International Security Assistance Force's (ISAF) Regional Command (South) HQ, in Kandahar, from October 2009 to November 2010, when 6 Division of the British Army provided the Commander and core staff to the Headquarters. Joining the Prism Cell, whose function was to give non-military and critical advice to the Commander, a British Major-General, King conducted the first full socio-political analysis of the South region while 'in theatre', from November to December 2009. Drawing on this, King wrote a political engagement plan, which had the effect of revising ISAF's counter-insurgency strategy, which, up to that point, had focused exclusively and quite unrealistically on gaining the local population's consent for a centralised Afghan state (2, 3). King recommended that the headquarters engage with local power-brokers to develop a political campaign through existing

patrimonial networks, with the military element being subordinate to this political strategy. This concept was implemented as part of the civil-military campaign to secure Kandahar City in 2010. The Head of Prism Cell said King's contribution to the latter '*cannot be overstated*' (2), and the Chief of Staff of the Headquarters claimed that King's plan had '*influenced strategic thinking*' (3). King's impact on the reframing of strategy was recognised with an ISAF medal. The success of the Prism Cell is noted in the MoD Joint Doctrine Note 3/11 'Decision-Making and Problem-Solving: Human and Organisational Factors' (para 313) (4). Since 2011, initially under the aegis of the Defence Cultural Specialist Unit, and starting with 3 Commando Brigade Royal Marines, King has advised successive brigades deploying into Helmand province about the area's complex power dynamics, and mentored the final Helmand task force in September 2013. He has sought to persuade Task Force Helmand and ISAF to place political engagement at the heart of their current transition strategy.

### **Shaping military training and education**

As a result of his contribution to military operations and his continuing research on the armed forces, King has played an increasingly prominent role in military education. He was invited to contribute to Royal Marines Young Officer training (60 officers a year since 2010), lecturing and mentoring future lieutenants on stabilization and counter-insurgency in preparation for operations. King also delivers a Continuing Professional Development course at Exeter on counter-insurgency to 25 military personnel a year (since 2010), attended by operationally-experienced officers and non-commissioned officers who have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, often in combat roles, including members of the Special Forces. In recognition of the esteem in which his input to strategy is held, the armed forces have requested that this course now runs twice a year. King is an annual contributor to both the *Advanced* and *Higher* Command and Staff Courses at the Joint Services Command and Staff College (JSCSC), lecturing and instructing officers, including those destined for the highest levels of command. Since 2010, 1400 middle-ranking officers from the UK and overseas have attended his teaching on the Advanced Course (350 a year). From 2011 onwards, 120 senior UK and NATO military officers, diplomats, intelligence agents and civil servants have attended his contribution to the Higher Course. One Commanding Officer recorded that King's '*considerable effort to generate a better understanding for our people paid off handsomely*' (5). He was appointed to the new advisory panel of the Joint Services Command and Staff College in 2012, is currently contributing to course design, and is a mentor on the Higher Command and Staff Course. There is thus an increasingly numerous cohort of officers in the British armed forces who have been taught by King and with whom he has close professional relations, and whose strategic thinking has been impacted upon and shaped by King.

### **Informing public policy debate**

In November 2010, following the publication of his paper on Helmand province (Section 3, Reference 3), King was asked to give expert testimony through both oral and written evidence to the House of Commons All-Party Parliamentary Defence Committee hearing into operations in Afghanistan (Section 5, Reference 6). This evidence and the paper itself have been widely cited in the resulting discussions and the Committee's report. A former UK Defence Secretary twice cited the paper in his testimony to the Defence Committee's inquiry on operations in Afghanistan (7). The paper was listed on the Chief of Defence Staff's 2013 recommended reading list for military personnel, with a commentary by a senior officer (8).

King has also influenced public debates by using the media to communicate his work beyond the military and policy-making communities, including an appearance on BBC2's *Newsnight* (20 September 2010) with a former commander of the SAS, and articles in *The Guardian* and *Prospect* (9, 10).

Most recently, as part of ESRC and Nuffield Foundation projects on 'cohesion', King has contributed to practitioner debates about female accession to combat units, demonstrating that the evidence from Iraq and Afghanistan shows that in a highly professional military, women should be able to serve in the infantry. To promote this view widely and effectively, he organised a major international joint scholarly and practitioner conference at All Souls College, Oxford in March 2013

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entitled *Frontline: Combat and Cohesion in Iraq and Afghanistan*. The conference included 48 prominent academic and military practitioners from 11 countries, including representatives from the highest ranks of the British Army and NATO, such as the Deputy Supreme Allied Commander's special gender representative. King's report from this conference has been sent to the latter and to selected senior officers in NATO, the British Army and the UK Ministry of Defence. In response to the decision by the former US Secretary of State for Defence, Leon Panetta, to integrate women into combat units, King has published pieces on female accession in the premier defence/military policy/practitioner journals in the UK and US, such as *Parameters* (the journal of the US Army War College), the Royal United Services Institute's *RUSI Journal* (Section 3, Reference 5) and the *British Army Review*, thus reaching a range of influential professional audiences. He has also appeared on Radio 4 to discuss these issues (Section 5, References 10). Through giving talks and seminars at venues in the US such as West Point and the Army War College, to military personnel both affected by Panetta's decision and/or currently attempting to institutionalise it, he has advised key practitioners and sought to impact on their thinking and professional practices.

**5. Sources to corroborate the impact**

- 1) <http://bit.ly/16tHWP>
- 2) Head of Prism Cell - email correspondence to Dean of College of Social Sciences and International Studies, U. Of Exeter
- 3) Chief of Staff, HQ, ISAF Regional Command (South) - letter to Vice-Chancellor, U. of Exeter
- 4) <http://bit.ly/1aQaSp5>
- 5) Director, Higher Command and Staff Course, JSCSC - letter to King
- 6) All-Parliamentary Defence Committee: Operations in Afghanistan, transcripts and final report <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/10110302.htm>
- 7) <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201012/cmselect/cmdfence/554/554.pdf> (see Ev 90-1, Q414, Q419)
- 8) Chief of Defence Staff's Reading List: <http://www.da.mod.uk/recommended-reading/warfare>
- 9) Guardian and Prospect articles: <http://bit.ly/100jWy> <http://bit.ly/a2n6RD> <http://bit.ly/cxza3F> <http://bit.ly/1qGYjqv>
- 10) BBC appearances by King: Radio 4 *Thinking Allowed* <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b01rlnhh>  
BBC2 *Newsnight* <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/9020094.stm>