

Official portrait – His Excellency John Ralston Saul



HIS EXCELLENCY JOHN RALSTON SAUL J.D. YOUNG MEMORIAL LECTURE

“A NEW ERA OF IRREGULAR WARFARE?”

LECTURE DELIVERED TO FACULTY AND CADETS ROYAL MILITARY COLLEGE KINGSTON, ONTARIO

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This is an astonishing hall in which to speak. If you gaze up at the initials on the ceiling and at the paintings and the painted insignia around the walls, you are reminded that Canada is not a new country. It is an experiment, but an old experiment. Its success lies in its ability to continue as an experiment. That is one of the central things that makes Canada different from other countries.

Militarily speaking, we have been at it for a long time. This hall is a conceptualization of our participation in the First World War. All of that grandeur and tragedy is

pulled together here in a remarkable way. I'm not sure that we could reproduce a hall of this sort to describe our military experiences of the last half-century. I do not feel we so easily think of ourselves in such a singular way. What we now do – and what we imagine that we do – is complex and resists conceptualization.

And yet, it could be conceptualized. It needs to be conceptualized. But first, we must allow ourselves to embrace the intellectual idea that we have been acting in an intentional manner.

That is my topic tonight.

It is a great honour to give the J.D. Young Lecture. It is a particular honour to give this lecture in this hall. Arthur Currie is everywhere around us in here. I have always felt that Arthur Currie was a great general. And he was a great general in a war that gave generals a bad name. He was one of the few allied generals to come out of that world war with a clean and interesting reputation. Many of the other commanders would have done better to do something else with their time. But that is the subject of another lecture.

J.D. Young was killed landing on D-Day. My own father landed in the first wave on D-Day as a young captain in the Royal Winnipeg Rifles. He was lucky enough to leave the beach unscathed, although his regiment and two others were badly mauled 36 hours later by SS troops.

Most Canadian soldiers went directly from no battle experience to that world-defining moment on the beach. The searing experience of the week that followed would cost them many of their closest friends.

My father remained in the armed forces after the war and so I was brought up on army bases across the country.... I was brought up surrounded by veterans of the D-Day landing, the European campaign and the Italian campaign, among others. It was a very particular group of Canadian army, air force and naval officers who shared the experience of a long campaign known as the Second World War. Their experience, like that of veterans from the First World War, was very different to the apparently broken up and yet intense experiences of today's soldiers. It is probable that you officer cadets in this hall will have a military experience far more similar to that of the last quarter century than to that of the two world wars. But of course, we cannot know for certain.

You have the good fortune to be preparing yourselves to be officers. But you must be aware that you are not preparing yourselves for a *job*. You are not going to have a job for the next twenty to thirty years. You will have a *life*. You will have a vocation. And since we live in a country that has a small military force, you are going to feel that everybody else has a job or is unemployed, while you are neither. You will be extremely employed, but not in a way that is recognizable to most people.

A few days ago, in Kabul, Corporal Murphy was killed when a land mine went off, and Lieutenant Feyko lies seriously wounded. If Corporal Murphy is dead and Lieutenant Feyko is seriously wounded, it is precisely because they had a vocation, not a job. What they did and do, and what you will do, is not related to a nine-to-five life any more than it is related to a five-day, forty-hour week. There will be, in the normal civilian sense of the word, no time off. There will be no normal life. It is not meant to be a normal life.

While you will have families and children and love and happiness and tragedy, all of this will be organized around a way of life that is not normal in a way that most other Canadian citizens would understand that word. What you will have is a very particular life. It will have in it elements of friendship and camaraderie which are at the same time old-fashioned and post-modern. There is no other way you can organize human life in a military force. If you do not arrive at a highly developed sense of friendship among yourselves, you will not find it possible to live the life of the armed forces. You will find it impossible to do what the Canadian Forces will ask you to do in a life of service and vocation. That friendship is one of the eternal truths of successful military forces. It carries with it something that normal employment cannot carry – the reality that your lives will be in each other's hands.

Over the last four-and-a-half years, since Adrienne Clarkson was named Governor General and Commander-in-Chief, I have been lucky enough to see the Canadian Armed Forces in many different circumstances: in many parts of Canada, but also in Kosovo, in Bosnia, on frigates in the Gulf, and in Kabul a few weeks ago. I have often seen them in our High Arctic, as we move around from isolated community to isolated community flown by young air force pilots in those wonderful aircraft – the Twin Otter. When we are up in the Arctic, I go out on the land with the Rangers whenever I can. And I will come back to the Rangers at the end of this talk.

If you consider the smallness of our armed forces, what we are doing today is remarkable. We are in a dozen or so spots around the world. In some places we are there in large numbers. And we're there dealing with irregular warfare. Over the last half century, irregular warfare has been the mainstream form of military activity in the world. The dominant applied strategy in the world for a long time now has had little to do with mobile tank warfare or precision bombing or weapons of mass destruction. Warfare for a half century has meant irregular

warfare. And Canada's armed forces have spent most of their time in the field working out how to deal with this strategic reality.

Our force is small. Our commitment is large for the size of that force. The experience of those in our armed forces is therefore very intense. One of the advantages and one of the strains of being small and having large commitments is that you will be called upon to go abroad again and again. I am regularly meeting young officers and NCOs in their twenties who have two, three, four campaign ribbons. As a result, we have a military force of young officers and NCOs who have a remarkable amount of experience.

In that context, I think we have to be careful about people who protest from the sidelines that they are defending our armed forces, but actually spend most of their time talking as if these armed forces were so badly equipped that they were incapable of doing their job. Yes there is equipment that people want changed. But in general our armed forces have a great amount of good equipment. That is one of the reasons why they are able to do a good job in places such as Afghanistan. Remember that in Kabul they are dealing with a highly volatile situation. And yet the number of incidents and the incidence of casualties are remarkably low in comparison to the experience of other armies in other similar volatile situations.

The point I want to come back to is that we have one of the most experienced military forces in the world today. By the time you are thirty, you will have done more service in war situations than the officers of the post Second World War forces did over twenty or thirty years. They dealt with something complicated and yet frustrating known as the Cold War. They were in Germany. They were not in Bosnia. Most of them were not faced with a series of extremely difficult irregular war situations, each very different one from the other, and yet coming in rapid sequence, one after the other.

I have watched our military operating from that abandoned bread factory and that abandoned carpet factory – our two major camps in Bosnia – and from the two astonishing model camps we built in Kabul, and so on. I feel comfortable in saying that we have a force that is not only experienced, but also impressive. To be precise, it is made up of highly intelligent people who are well educated and appear to handle these delicate and tense situations with great calm and confidence.

When the Governor General and I were in Kabul over the past New Year, I asked whether I could go out on a patrol on New Year's Eve. As you might imagine, this was discouraged by various people. But then General Leslie said that, well, he'd like to go too. So that settled the matter and the two of us went out to spend midnight in a snowstorm on a mountain top lying in the mud. I have to admit that being out there with that platoon was the best New Year's Eve I can remember. The patrol was run, of course, by a young lieutenant, about 23 years old.

As I was lying in the mud, up there, on one of the hills surrounding Kabul, I kept thinking about how astonishing it was that at that age, this young man, apart from being saddled with me and with the general, had the responsibility for such a large number of lives in such a difficult situation in a place where our strategy and our tactics are so good that we have lost few men in an extremely dangerous and uncertain situation. After all, it could be argued that Kabul is potentially a more dangerous and uncertain situation than that which exists in Iraq. At least in Iraq there are social, educational and political structures that can be utilized. In Afghanistan, you are dealing with a situation that could slip into anarchy far more easily. The risks will continue to be high, but we are doing our job well. The RCR are now coming out and another wonderful regiment, the Royal 22^e, are going in. They also will do their job in a sophisticated and experienced and calm manner.

So the pressure that has been put on our armed forces because of their small size has also produced experience and a multiplicity of skills in each member of the military. You cadets will leave here specialized, but within a decade you will no longer think of yourselves in such a narrow manner. You will have a multiplicity of skills because in an armed force of our size we can't afford to have people who think of themselves in a monolithic way. You will gradually become good at many things, even though you may go on being described officially in a more monolithic manner.

One other interesting outcome of our small size is the high level of education in our armed forces. Our officer corps has gradually become one of the best educated in the world, involving more and more officers with MAs and PhDs. This is the result of the long-term education programs run by RMC. We also have one of the best educated NCO groups in any army in the world. When I was a child, it was very rare that somebody who was not an officer would have a university degree. Today, it is more common. Why? Well, because Canadians prefer to operate as if they lived in a fundamentally egalitarian society. Our essential mythology is that we are all middle class. From a more practical point of view, we need everybody to be as intelligent in an applied manner as possible, because we simply don't have three individuals to do three different tasks.

Now, some of you may be surprised to hear me evoking in this hall and in this military context the egalitarian tradition of Canada. After all, if there is one structure that apparently denies the egalitarian idea, it is surely the military. I do not think it is as clear as all that. Of course, armed forces have their carefully worked out pyramidal structures. But the manner in which Canada's armed forces operated already in the First World War involved a constant tension with the classic European traditions – in particular, those of Britain, France and the United States.

You could argue that our closeness to the British traditions, which were related to the French traditions, blocked us for decades from organizing our applied strategy and tactics in a manner more relevant to Canadian habit. The British, French and American traditions are profoundly class-based because they are profoundly class-based societies.

Arthur Currie was clear about that. He and his force saw themselves as more egalitarian than the others. Currie talked about the type of discipline that existed in the other armies, the European armies and the American army. He talked about how they were “totally foreign” to Canadians who were “unaccustomed to showing respect or deference to anyone who could not stand firmly on his own two feet without the artificial support of wealth or titles.”

Wealth and title, indeed rank, even education – none of these things will help you unless everybody feels that you are due that deference. I am not suggesting that there is no need for discipline inside the armed forces, but there is something slightly different in the way the Canadian military functions. Yes, we have the rank system common to all militaries. Of course, it is essential. But there is also an interesting discussion going on. It would benefit from being more openly and intellectually examined. It should be encouraged because this more flexible, egalitarian approach is what allows us to make more of our smaller numbers.

You are therefore going to have to offer very sophisticated leadership in which rank and education are servants of your authority, not guarantors of it. And sophisticated leadership includes the capacity to think about strategy, no matter what your specialization may be.



His Excellency John Ralston Saul addressing students, faculty and military staff in Currie Hall, RMC.

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I said at the outset I wanted to demonstrate that, from a strategic point of view, the Canadian Forces have been acting in an intentional manner over the last half century. Central to that intentionality is the modern reality of warfare in the world today. It is not big armies. It is not big equipment. It is not classic, clean victories in which you defeat the enemy and they admit that they are defeated, after which both sides come to an arrangement such as a peace treaty. That is not the world in which we live today. I am fairly certain that we are not going to live in a world like that for decades to come. I am certain that your careers are going to be spent in an era in which the idea of big armies, big equipment and clean victories will be marginal and not terribly useful.

We have just had two impressive classic military victories by big weapon armies in Afghanistan and in Iraq. Both wars were essentially Western and 20th century in style. High technology allowed armies to rush through complex situations relatively fast and, in the case of Iraq, *very* fast. There was an illusion of speed and of flexible strategy. This echo of speed and flexible strategy seemed to refer back to the great mid-20th century tank strategies of Basil Liddell Hart.

My point is that the real war began after those formal wars were over.

Sun Tzu, whom I am sure all of you have read, said: "A small force is but booty for one more powerful." In other words, if you are a small force and there is a big force coming in your direction, you get out of their way. You melt away. You disappear. And when they've gone by, you come back out again and start fighting by your own rules. From that point of view, warfare hasn't changed much in 2000 years.

The experiences of the late 19th century and the first half of the 20th century seemed to suggest that small forces would not be able to melt away. They would have to cede, to dissolve, when faced by the sophisticated force – both military and administrative staff – of Western civilization. This seemed to be the lesson of the empire experience, the two world wars and the post-war power structures.

But that is very different from what we have experienced increasingly since 1960. The modern reality of warfare is irregular warfare. The small forces melt away when necessary, but do not cede or dissolve. From our point of view – that is, from your point of view – we are extremely well placed in such a situation. Why? Because the experience of Canada's armed forces since the Second World War has been slowly adapted and designed and built upon increasing expertise in dealing with irregular warfare.

A half-century ago, as you know, we invented something called peacekeeping. It gradually evolved into something called peacemaking, which in turn evolved into – and we haven't really got a noun for it – dealing with irregular warfare. Let's call it an expertise in irregular warfare. After all, our role is no longer limited to

standing between opposing forces or reacting to their actions. We are more often pro-active as we attempt to create the parameters that will determine how the opposing parties relate to each other. Often we are effectively *in action*.

This expertise is more than a specialty. It is a strategy. Our armed forces have developed a strategy for irregular warfare without ever saying out loud that is what they have done. They – you – have done it on purpose. We are not doing it accidentally and temporarily while we wait for our return to the normalcy of rushing across great empty plains in massed tanks.

There is a very particular style to the way we involve ourselves in irregular warfare. When I go to places where the Canadian Forces are operating, it can clearly be seen that we are not handling the situation in the way other armies do. There is a fairly clear spectrum when you look at how different armies deal with irregular warfare. On that spectrum, our strategy seems to lie at one extreme and the strategy of our good friends in the United States lies at the other extreme.

Let me reiterate my point. What we are dealing with is a strategy. In part it is the outcome of a great deal of experience. There is nothing accidental or temporary about it. But because we have never admitted that these engagements in irregular warfare were the central function of our armed forces, this strategy has not evolved through intense debate at RMC and our staff colleges. Rather, it has evolved almost by word of mouth within regiments, within squadrons, within groups, within command structures. It has evolved on the spot. Our military have seen problems and have dealt with them at a tactical level. Somehow, those tactics have gradually added up into what now amounts to a strategy. Given the almost subterranean nature of this evolution, it is a miracle that we have done so well, and have ended up with something coherent enough to be identifiable as a strategy.

What I find curious is that we go on talking in public and educating in our colleges as if this strategy were a temporary distraction, a sideline while we wait to get back to real forms of warfare. We continue to talk as if it were an accident that these sorts of missions had fallen upon us. And we worry that they will lead us away from the *real* activity of *real* officers and *real* armies.

In fact, this strategy and this activity is an extremely interesting and positive choice for a small armed force. It allows us to be a leader in international military situations, as opposed to becoming merely an adjunct to someone else's leadership – someone who has large forces and talents of another sort.

What am I saying? Beware the false debate that insists that on one side there is *real* warfare and classic strategy, while on the other side, there is an interlude that is not real warfare, therefore something not requiring real strategy. At its most simplistic this interlude is described as a passive reactive approach, usually summarized as peacekeeping. Such an artificial division suggests that the choice is

“You are not going to have a job for the next twenty to thirty years. You will have a life.”

between real warfare, which is offensive, versus various versions of peacekeeping, which are defensive. This sort of analysis misses reality. It reduces our ability to

deal with strategic realities to the Manichean fallacy, as if warfare comes down to the one good strategy versus bad strategy. It's the old 'good versus evil' deformation of reality. But we are not involved in a Manichean situation. Not at all. If anything, we are involved in a situation that is the precise opposite of the Manichean.

Some of the most interesting theorists of warfare over the last half-century have tried to work with chaos theory as a post-modern way of addressing mobile warfare. But the slippage towards irregular warfare as the strategic norm of the late 20th and now the 21st century is giving chaos theory its real military sense. That sense gives complexity a far more complete meaning.

The real military debate for the next couple of decades is going to be: How are we going to deal with this increasing complexity? Not so much complexity of weaponry, but complexity of forces and methods, complexity of communities. And these are going to require an increasingly sophisticated, nuanced, varied approach towards irregular warfare. That is the real debate.

Irregular warfare is a specific strategy in and of itself. But it is also a term which has come to encapsulate a whole range of military approaches – guerrilla warfare, asymmetric warfare, insurgency, counter-insurgency, terrorism, resistance forces, wars of liberation, jungle warfare, underground forces, the use of special forces. Even espionage, which has grown into such an obsessional fact of modern life, belongs on the list. All of these terms, different though they are, fall into the category of irregular warfare.

Point one: You can't remove one and say, *well, I only want to talk about guerrilla warfare* or *tonight we are going to talk about asymmetric or irregular warfare* or *we're only going to talk about terrorism*. Or, *we are going to undertake a war on terrorism*, as if that could be done in isolation from all the rest. They are all part of a big, interwoven historical and military package.

Point two: As with classic 20th century strategies, some of the elements of irregular warfare will be used by evil people and some by heroic people struggling for ethical values. It is very difficult to attach a strategy to an ethical position. War doesn't work that way. And it will not change reality to say that those who refuse to use classic methods and strategy are somehow acting in a dishonourable way. They may well be. Or they may simply be adopting a strategy that will work for them. How do you tell who is profoundly evil and who is not? It will not be so much by their methods as by who they actually are and what is their aim.

If we are going to make the most of the remarkable experience of the Canadian Forces, we are going to need to debate, talk about and teach irregular warfare with great intensity at RMC and at our staff colleges. I'm not saying that everything else should be dropped. What I am saying is that irregular warfare should be at the centre of what you are learning here, because this strategic phenomenon is going to be with us for a long time. It will be at the very centre of your military life from the moment you leave this College.

Let me put this in historic terms. While making the most of advanced technology, you have to be careful that modern strategy is not influenced by what I call the Omdurman complex. You will remember that famous last cavalry charge across the desert by the soldiers of the Mahdi in 1898. The Omdurman complex consists of expecting that an army from the Third World will suddenly appear out of the desert in great numbers and charge at you in a mass in order to be mowed down by modern equipment. In some ways, our current – as opposed to Second World War – dream of high technology massed tanks charging through developing countries is an inverted version of the Omdurman complex. Smart bombs are a post-modern equivalent of the Omdurman complex. Let me repeat again that the more we are dependent upon and obsessed by advanced technology, the more irregular warfare will rise in importance and make use of unconventional and low technology methods.

Now you may feel that what I say next is self-evident, but sometimes the self-evident has to be put into a speech like this. Irregular warfare is all about uncertainty. It's all about learning to deal with uncertainty. It's all about accepting that uncertainty is normalcy. In all of this, high technology is extremely important. All aspects of high tech are important. High tech knowledge can help us to deal with some aspects of irregular warfare. It can be an advantage for our forces. It already is. But we have to keep reminding ourselves that one of the central purposes of the strategy of irregular warfare, when used by those with the weaker forces, is precisely to duck the effects of high technology. I mentioned that they get out of the way when masses of tanks come across plains. More generally, they attempt to get out of the way of every form of high technology. They are attempting to do things in ways that are so low tech that the high tech cannot see it coming. You will immediately understand what I mean when you think about how this approach is used by terrorists, by various forms of guerrilla armies and resistance and underground forces. Our experience over the last forty-five years has been that this strategy of low tech avoidance is surprisingly successful. Even if you go back to some of the early forms of modern irregular warfare, as experimented with during the Second World War by a wide variety of leaders and groups, from Orde Wingate to the various resistance movements, you see the military potential of the low tech approach.

It is good that our armed forces have, for the most part, very good equipment. To take a single example, the Coyotes are a wonderful piece of equipment. Our sophisticated use



of this equipment is very useful. Nevertheless, the kind of warfare we are going to be dealing with for decades to come will be about uncertainty and it will be about low tech approaches and low tech attacks or unpredictable low tech uses of high tech equipment. It is and will continue to be about threats coming at any possible time and at any possible level.

So, yes, of course the digitized world is important; that is, to the extent that it is used within the concept of uncertainty. We have to be careful that the comfort that can come from technological sophistication does not lead us, seduce us into becoming certain about modern, strategic methods. Technology can indeed make possible surprising new tactical approaches. But it can also produce a state of mind that, in the history of warfare, has been sometimes catastrophic. This technical-solution state of mind has remained surprisingly stable over the decades. To be brutal, there can be a very short and direct line between the fundamental methodological assumptions of the highly sophisticated First World War staff and the highly sophisticated high technology assumptions of today's Western staff. In both cases, a feeling can develop that all wars *will* be won in an abstract manner thanks to the application of machinery in a *certain* manner. If we are not careful, the temptation of technology can cause us to become both physically and methodologically 'top heavy.' The theoretical speed of technology can actually slow down our ability to think and to act in an uncertain and unpredictable manner. Remember that the fundamental structures of technology remain linear, while the fundamental genius of irregular warfare – and of all great generals – is that it is not linear.

Each generation of strategic thinking brings with it interesting initiatives, but also a doctrine that seems more interesting than it may actually turn out to be. Interoperability is a fascinating concept. Or it *may* be a fascinating concept. That actually depends on the level at which it is conceived. It seems to me that it is particularly interesting if it is conceived at a technical level. But if it is conceived at a strategic level, then we risk entering the ultimate logic of the First World War staff, with their certainty that they could win the war from behind the lines. Those First World War staff officers were the ones who first introduced the post-modern theory that you could pull out the maps and decide what to do without having any fundamental understanding of the reality of the battlefield and the battlefield players. In other words, that you could control war from somewhere other than where the war was taking place.

The reality today is that warfare has never been so without lines, without the possibility of being 'teleguided' like a football game from behind the lines or from some central place by remote control. To move towards a centralized approach may well be to give into the most dangerous temptations of the technological illusion, as opposed to the utilitarian use of technology. To move towards a centralized approach may be to offer those who understand and make use of irregular warfare precisely the strategic advantage for which they have been waiting.

Data also is important. But again, we have to be careful. We have seen repeatedly over the last few years that it is extremely difficult to make sense of data. Why? For the simple reason that it comes to us in increasingly large amounts. What are we to do with all of this data? How are we to process it? How are we to discover what it actually means and to make that discovery in time to do something with it? After all, the opponent or opponents, visible or invisible, may well be working at such a low tech level and with so little data that they can move like lightning. This is what so puzzles high tech experts. They are glued to their machines and their data, when suddenly the enemy appears as if out of nowhere. It isn't nowhere. It is the low tech real world. Or the low tech effective use of high technology.

How are you to uncover the implications of these tons of material? If you can't deal with it – or, more precisely, if you cannot deal with it in time – then it is just shapeless data. The more you *know*, the more confused you may become. Data may in fact prevent you from doing the intelligent, strategic thing.

What we in the West have seen over the last few years is that the more data we have and the more people we have working on it, the harder it has been for us to give a shape to our strategy. You can almost imagine that it would be easier to deal with irregular warfare if you had less data and fewer people, and instead had a broader and deeper understanding of cultures, political and community history, religion and ideas.

In other words, instinct, so central to dealing with irregular warfare, becomes useful when it is an expression of understanding. And, of course, you need an exhaustive knowledge and understanding of local and regional military tactics and strategy, both historic and actual.

Let me put it another way. It would be easier to deal with data if it were falling into a context in which thought and uncertainty – and therefore highly sophisticated education – had been given primacy. That kind of intellectual preparation forms people who may be able to grasp the essential meaning of data a great deal faster than people who go at it in a more technical manner.

When you look back over the history of great military leaders, one of the most common qualities you find is an ability to collapse time by thinking in a conceptual and non-linear manner. There is, of course, such a thing as talent. Call it a certain kind of intelligence. Great generals are not entirely made, any more so than great painters. But part of their ability can also come from the richness of the education that many of them received or gave themselves. And, in most cases, these great generals continued to read widely, to observe in many areas and to discuss heatedly all the way through their lives. There is not a single great general I can think of who was primarily concerned with technology, data or administrative structures, or even with purely military affairs.

If we become overly obsessed with data as a solution in and of itself, we in fact discourage thought and understanding. Data does not help us with thought as a method for dealing in uncertainty.

The point I'm making here is that high technology, complex technical systems and data are absolutely essential to what you have to do, providing that they are merely tools of thought. Frankly, I think we're pretty good at using them as tools. But one can also see dangers looming due to a fundamental confusion over the relationship between thought and technology. The rise of technology to any role above that of a mere tool is the equivalent of romanticism – the romanticism of high technology as the latest post-modern strategy.

And if we allow that to happen, we will blind ourselves to how chaotic mainstream warfare now is. I spoke of chaos theory. War has always been about chaos. But the tension between 20th century classic warfare and irregular warfare is perhaps an opening to more chaotic warfare than we have seen for a long time. These are signs of how close we are to slipping off track.

Let me give you the simplest possible example – the language that we use. What is a zero-casualty war? Regularly, I notice that a soldier has been *injured* or has *died*, as if it were a traffic accident as opposed to a landmine. They are not injured. They are wounded. They are killed. If we are unable to differentiate between a conflict and a road accident, then it will be very difficult to explain to civilian populations what is at stake.

The danger in using language that distances the population from the reality of war is that it leaves everyone unprepared for the reality of irregular warfare. For example, today it is far less likely that war casualties will come from sophisticated equipment than from a truck or a bicycle or an individual hidden around the corner. That is one of the great complexities of irregular warfare – it is so simple. Even the horror of 11 September 2001 involved low tech human engagement. They took mere civilian airplanes, hijacked them and ran them into buildings. It wasn't high tech, and it wasn't complex. It may have been the first time it had been done, but it was both very old fashioned and very original in a profoundly disturbing way.

Irregular warfare is resolutely human – in the sense that it is often carried out at an individual level. And I repeat, it is, in most cases, resolutely low tech. That does not mean we cannot use high tech as part of how we deal with it. But we must avoid dreaming about victory through technology.

I'm insisting on all of this because the Western world has had a lot of difficulty accepting the idea that irregular warfare has been growing in importance over the last 200 years. Again and again, the interesting strategists have come forward and talked about versions of mobile and irregular warfare and surprise and uncertainty. And just as regularly, the military mainstream, and the structures that support them, have grabbed hold of these theories of mobility and uncertainty and converted them into predictability and solidity and certainty and size. As a result, they have produced military disasters, such as the First World War. Or they have rendered more complicated many situations that could have been a lot less complicated. That is the history, the drama of strategy over the last two centuries.

The great generals throughout history have been to some extent experts in irregular warfare. The not-so-good generals have usually been experts in large, integrated strategies seen from an abstract point of view. The great generals are able to accept that whatever is going to happen is not going to happen in a human-controlled manner.

Now, let me go back for a moment to the way in which we talk about and perceive irregular warfare. A great amount has been written about it from a strategic, but also from an ethical and, indeed, a moral position. Modern irregular warfare can easily be tracked in an *unbroken* line from around 1870.

Our tendency has always been to confuse classic western ideas of manhood with classic Western ideas of warfare and so rush to apply moral standards to the strategy of the other side. You will remember the *dignity and the self imposed standards* of the French knights at Agincourt versus – in the moral context of the day – the sneaky, lowly behaviour of the common English soldiers who climbed under the knight's horses to stab the animal's soft, undefended underbelly.

Of course, there are cases when there is a real ethical issue, indeed, when there is even a moral issue. But we have to be careful in the way we use these moral and ethical positions. First, we have to know whether we are talking to ourselves or to others. Because if we are talking to others and there is even the slightest flaw in our own ethical or moral position, the fact of attempting to apply it to others will actually worsen our position in the eyes of non-Westerners. Secondly, in those cases when there is no clear case regarding ethics or morality, it isn't terribly helpful to apply moralizing positions that portray the other side as unmanly, sneaky, unfair, and so on. Whatever the reality, it will have to be dealt with through strategy.

In 1842, the British suffered their first great defeat in Afghanistan, losing some 13,000 soldiers during a botched retreat. The wife of one of the generals, Lady Sale, who had been taken prisoner and in that way survived, was able to watch the Afghans from near. "Until they commenced firing, not a man was known to be there. They were concealed behind rocks and stones ... They appeared to pick off the officers in particular." And they did extremely well at doing just that.

General Gambiez, a wonderful French general of the Second World War, said about the Boers fighting the British: "The Boers, not having read Clausewitz, tried all the indirect methods."

The hyper-patriotic British made moral judgements at the time about the Boers and their sneaky, ungentlemanly methods. These hardly served to cover up their own invention of the modern concentration camp and the death in those camps of large numbers of Boers – women and children – held under detention. But the real point is: The Boers had not followed Clausewitz's advice. They probably did not even know about it. And as a result, they beat the British. As for the British, they read Clausewitz and lost. That is the sort of reality we are dealing with today. Moral condemnation is not strategy. What we have to be concerned with is how we are going to deal with prolonged military uncertainty.

What is curious about our difficulty in coming face to face with the reality of irregular warfare as the mainstream of modern warfare is that this trend has been so long in the making. Le Marquis de Bourcet, in 1764, in his *Principles of Mountain Warfare*, set out very clearly the direction that we were going to be pursuing. The Comte de Guibert, in 1773, in his general essay on tactics, demonstrated how it was possible to move individual soldiers, armies and equipment much faster and in a much more flexible manner. He put into place the basics of what Basil Liddell Hart would eventually turn into flexible strategy or tank strategy during the 1930s.

In the 20th century, a long line of fascinating strategists attempted to convince the mainstream – and in

particular the headquarters staff – of the importance of dealing with irregular warfare. I remember that my father, when he was a student in the early 1950s at the Staff College in Kingston, wrote a paper on Orde Wingate, who wasn't popular then and isn't fashionable now. Nevertheless, from Orde Wingate to Mao Tse-tung, from Generals Calvert and Briggs in Malaya to General Giap in Vietnam, just to name a few, it was demonstrated that you could win wars and battles by not reading Clausewitz. This is a bit of a joke, but only a bit.

By being irregular, by being surprising, by not doing what you are supposed to do, you can embrace the strengths of irregular warfare. Some people may say that your behaviour is unprofessional. On the other hand, you are quite likely to win or succeed in your military tasks.

And we all know the history of terrorism. It did not begin three years ago. A reasonable dating of the birth of modern terrorism is either the French commune in 1870 or Russia in 1878, when a series of political assassinations began. The first success came in 1881 when Czar Alexander II was assassinated. This was followed by the rise of the anarchists in France and Germany and then throughout Europe. They managed to assassinate 20 to 25 kings, prime ministers and presidents before the First World War. All of Europe lived in anticipation of the next major public figure to be blown up or shot.

We can see by looking back to the 1870s that irregular warfare, in almost all of its manifestations, including terrorism and guerrilla warfare, is led by the sons and daughters of the middle and upper-middle classes. It almost never comes out of the peasantry or the working class or the lower-middle class. Movements led by the poorer end of society take on a different form. Irregular warfare is a strategic method that has come out of well-educated people. This tells you a lot about the strategic challenge for those under attack. On the one hand, it is consciously and intentionally low tech and even simple in its methods. On the other hand, it is led by sophisticated, well-educated people. There is nothing new or strange about that. It is not a fact that that can be identified as ethical or moral. It has always been that way. An enormous amount of writing has been done in philosophy, history and literature on this subject. Read Camus. He laid all of this out very clearly several times over in various plays and essays.

"You will have a multiplicity of skills because in an armed force of our size... we cannot afford to have people who think of themselves in a monolithic way."

There has been a great amount of talk over the last three years about the causes of terrorism. More accurately, it should be about the causes of irregular warfare. The term 'root causes' is often used. The argument is that poverty and disaffection produce terrorism. The counter argument is that the leaders are neither poor nor visibly disaffected. The concept of root causes is thus too simplistic.



John Ralston Saul in a light moment with cadets and Directing Staff during the RMC visit.

More broadly, modern irregular warfare is a 19th century, then 20th century and now 21st century reaction to industrialization, mechanization and technology. People who cannot deal with these large, mechanized technological opponents coming at them simply get out of their way. Middle class people who feel disaffected may then operate from places that are in disorder due to poverty and social collapse. They may be the middle classes of those societies. They may transfer their disaffection from one society to another. Societies that do not function to the reasonable satisfaction of their citizens become logical operating grounds for any aspect of irregular warfare.

Many countries have experienced, over a period of 150 years, internal modern terrorism. One of the countries to suffer most intensely and over the longest period of time from modern terrorism is the United States. Its own Indian wars involved a form of irregular warfare on both sides. Its own civil war had large aspects of irregular warfare attached to it. In fact, the greatest worry in the months leading up to the end of the Civil War was that it would break down entirely into irregular warfare, led by surprisingly large sections of the Confederate Army.

Then, the last days of that war brought the first assassination of an American president. Lincoln's terrorist-style death was followed by that of many other presidents and political leaders.

In the 100 years following the civil war, there were some 4000 illegal lynchings and 4000 technically legal lynchings. In other words, there were 8000 terrorist acts in 100 years of a single specific form aimed at a single group of society.

Throughout this period, Europe, and, to some extent, North America, experienced the rise of first the Bolsheviks and then the Fascists, both of whom based their military activity on principles of irregular warfare.

From the 1960s onwards, there began an unexpected wave of terrorism that has never come to an end. Some of you will have read about the Red Brigade and the Baader-Meinhof Gang. There were dozens of groups of that sort. Today, we still have organized irregular warfare conflict in the Basque area in Spain, violence that has led to 800 dead over the last few decades. The actions of the IRA and its equivalent among the Protestants have led to a few thousand dead in Ireland. In Corsica, a part of France, there are usually about 500 bombings a year. In Italy, in 1978 alone, there were 2498 terrorist attacks.

More recently, in the United States, in 1995 in Oklahoma City, 165 people died and 850 people were wounded as a result of an American terrorist bomb. You will also recall Waco. There are today armed militia groups in virtually every state.

In 2002, there were 2738 deaths from terrorism and terrorist attacks around the world. These are not my numbers and therefore I do not guarantee them. However, they are the numbers regularly used by various agencies analyzing the era of terrorism. My guess is that these numbers are ridiculously low, in part because they have not bothered to look at what is happening in, for example, Africa. My guess is that you could 'add a zero.' From 1968 until 2000, there were 14,000 terrorist attacks in the world, leading to 10,000 dead. From 1980 to 1999, inside the United States, there were 457 terrorist attacks, including 135 terrorist attacks of international origin.

That is what is happening in the world today. And you will note that in this very short and cursory listing, I have not mentioned the dozen-or-so places where the Canadian Forces are serving today in situations of irregular warfare. Nor have I mentioned dozens of other places where other armed forces are serving in situations of irregular warfare.

“This expertise is more than a specialty. It is a strategy.”

This breakdown in order was seriously exacerbated from 1961 onwards by the governments of the United States, France and Britain, followed by that of the Soviet Union, when they decided that they could cover the costs of weapons for their own armed forces by selling large amounts of weaponry internationally. So, for the first time in the history of civilization, governments actually decided to finance their armaments by selling arms abroad to people who would not be chosen because they were close allies. They might be allies or neutral players. They might, in the case of Iraq, be potential enemies. The criteria for a sale was first that they represented a commercial opportunity.

Within a very short period of time, weapons became the most important form of international industrial trade goods. And this in an era when our civilization repeatedly described itself as being at peace. The Western world and the Soviet Union flooded the world with armaments. Very quickly, other countries, such as Brazil, India and Pakistan, noticed that they could quite easily enter this market, at first at the lower end with armoured cars, rifles and land mines. And it is at the lower end that there is the greatest amount of money to be made. So they threw themselves into the international weapons business and captured the ‘gravy’ that had for so long been in the hands of Western producers. They then expanded into more complex weaponry.

At that point, control of the international arms market was lost. And even if you had believed in the 1961 delusion that real money could be made by selling weapons abroad, this peculiar economic argument became less and less realistic. The central point is that nations gradually, consciously and intentionally flooded the world with cheap weaponry. As the massive amount of weapons available grew, so the number of crises around the world grew. While we went on talking about the dangers of financial inflation, we were creating a far more dangerous inflation of weaponry. It is all very well for us to wonder to ourselves why racial or religious groups now so easily seem to fight with each other, rather than sit down and talk in what we describe as the democratic manner. We conveniently forget that we have flooded their geographic areas with weapons. If you belong to the extreme margins of any debate, it is now far easier and far cheaper for you to fight than to talk.

In the early 1960s, there were two or three wars in the world. Today, there are somewhere between 30 and 50 conflicts. The growth in wars paralleled the growth in weapon sales. The vagueness of the number relates to the definition that you apply to war. The inflation of weaponry has matched the inflation in wars.

Allow me to give you a few more ‘soft’ statistics. These have to do with the number of military casualties that occur on a daily basis in the world today. I have looked at a large range of these statistics over the years

and have tried averaging them out in order to come up with something that, although inaccurate, nevertheless gives an *ordre de grandeur*. They seem to indicate that, for the last 20 to 25 years, there have been approximately 1000 military casualties a day in the world and approximately 5000 civilian casualties a day in the world. These civilian casualties have been brought about directly or indirectly by military conflicts.

I remember writing in 1992 that we were living in a permanent wartime economy. And we still are. It has changed a little bit, but it is generalized and extremely problematic.

Now, let me come back to Canada. We have a small force. Small forces have to choose their ground. We are specialists in irregular warfare. We have enormous experience in that area. That does not mean we should not train ourselves for or not be aware of a whole range of other military options. I am not suggesting that we cut ourselves off. I am simply talking about that in which we are experienced and in which we specialize.

We are specialists in irregular warfare, and, as it happens, the principal mainstream warfare of our day is irregular warfare. We are therefore extremely well placed from the point of view of strategic approaches.

Our closest friend and ally has, at present, 355,000 soldiers abroad. I believe that the United States accounts for some 40 percent of the world’s arms budget.

So, from a purely utilitarian point of view, they do not actually need us for the few extra men and weapons we are able to offer to their situations. Our absence will not prevent them from doing what they want to do. Our presence will not cause them to alter their methods. And we will not change the world by adopting strategies that are essentially imitative of our close friend.

On the other hand, if we do what we do well and in what we specialize – in fact, what we have to some extent invented or at least to which we have invented a particular approach – then we are extremely useful to ourselves, to our neighbour, to our alliances and to the world.

What I am suggesting is that there is a great need to debate and talk about this strategy. It’s not something that can be done quietly in a headquarters somewhere or by a small number of officers, who will then present an amended military approach for Canada. This is something that needs to be seriously debated and talked about at all levels and in all places where people think about Canada’s military engagements.

Now let me repeat something I said a few moments ago, and which I also said when I spoke at the Staff College in Toronto a few months ago. On the arc of the spectrum of how irregular warfare is dealt with – and there are thirty or

so modern armies on this spectrum – at one extreme you have the Canadian method, and, at the other extreme, you have the American method. Interestingly enough, when I said this at the Staff College in Toronto, which includes a large number of exchange officers, everybody in the room nodded. The Canadian method is one which involves our military getting out of their vehicles, talking to people, trying to organize things, doing civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) projects, developing relationships. It is also an extremely intense approach that involves a far greater number of patrols, going more deeply into areas that others might think marginal, and trying to work out how to present a balance of human relationships with military preparedness. It is a very complicated approach. It is very dangerous. It requires enormous sophistication and intelligence. Intelligent toughness, if you will.

The American approach, not surprisingly, involves a great amount of equipment. This, in turn, seems to create a logic that limits where they can go and encourages them to stay within their equipment. This is not in any way intended to be a criticism. Most American military members would agree with this analysis. These are the two extremes, and in between, you have a range of countries. The British have moved closer and closer to us as a result of their experiences in Northern Ireland. The French are somewhere a little over on our side but not as far over as the British.

So we have developed a style of our own. I was horrified the other day, asking questions after we had lost a soldier and had soldiers wounded, when I heard people in Canada asking: “By going and talking to the Afghans, aren’t we unnecessarily attracting them to us? Isn’t this unnecessarily dangerous?”

Well, that is precisely what we do! That is our strategy. It is precisely not to stay in the vehicles or to be always in the most heavily armoured vehicles. It is to get out into communities and out on the land in the most irregular way possible and develop relationships. People need to trust us, both because we appear to be an effective military force, but also because we are willing to engage with them. They therefore trust us to protect them against the people who wish to bring instability.

It follows from all of this that irregular warfare should be central to the education of all RMC cadets, whatever the area of specialization. Modern strategy is still often seen as a high technology outcome of tank warfare. Tanks have a role, of course, but modern strategy is too often seen as an outcropping of Liddell Hart’s theories, which focused upon rapid deployment and flexibility.

But you know, flexibility is not always fast. Flexibility and rapidity often go together. But they can also be used quite separately, one from the other. There are

moments when speed is essential. There are moments when it actually gets in the way. Tolstoy’s *War and Peace* is one of the most important meditations on society and military strategy, but also with respect to the nature of flexibility and speed. In it, Tolstoy quotes Kutuzov, the Russian commander, who is being pushed by everybody, from the czar on down, to counter-attack, to move more quickly, to free Russia of foreign troops. He says: “They must see that we can only lose by taking the offensive. Patience and time are my two allies.”

Patience and time work very well for those who engage in irregular warfare. But they can also work for those who try to deal with irregular warfare.

We talk a great amount in Canada and in our armed forces about encouraging excellence. Excellence implies encouraging innovation. But innovation is only partly about technology. Innovation is really all about asking questions. It’s all about living with uncertainty, with doubt. It is about questioning established rules, established ways of doing things. It is about questioning every day. In a sense, it’s about getting up every day and asking questions.

Tolstoy compared Kutuzov’s methods to Napoleon’s methods, saying: “All this was a departure from the rules. As if there are any rules for killing people.” He wrote those words 150 years ago in order to talk about something that had happened another fifty years earlier.

So, technology can be a useful tool in the process of asking questions and dealing with uncertainty, but it can also be used to reinforce rules and conformity.

Let me give you a small example of this – the rise of PowerPoint presentations, which are extremely popular in military circles. They appear to provide a clear structure to any presentation. But PowerPoint presentations are designed entirely to discourage thought, questioning and doubt. They are designed to distract the audience from what the person who is speaking is actually saying. The person speaks. They point at something. The people listening can’t quite listen, and certainly not in a questioning manner, because they are being told to follow the linear path of summary points illustrated to the side of the actual speaker. So as he speaks, he directs our attention away from himself towards something that is presented ... as what? Truth? A child-like pattern to follow? PowerPoint presentations discourage thought and questioning and leave the impression that something relating to *certainty* has just been said.

I see you’re all laughing. I thought you might.

Let me add a very positive outcome of our recent military experience, one that is rarely mentioned. Perhaps because it doesn’t seem exciting enough.

“If we are not careful, the temptation of technology can cause us to become both physically and methodologically ‘top heavy.’”

From Somalia on we began developing a theory of the ideal camp to operate from in an irregular warfare theatre. Practical needs meant that we were soon developing that theatre on the ground. Camp Julien in Kabul is a fascinating example of this.

Is a camp important to military strategy? The Romans certainly thought so. Indeed, if I had to compare our camps to anything, it would be to the Roman Castrum. Why? Because the Romans operated in areas of permanent uncertainty far from home, and so developed camps that provided calm, stable safety in the middle of irregular conditions. Our approach, like theirs, is partly about the physical structure, but equally about how the camp operates, right down to the food.

I think the success of our camps is one of the reasons our forces have been able to operate so intensely over the last years.

The argument that I have made today is that we have succeeded in creating a strategy without actually admitting to ourselves that we have done this, and done so on purpose. Intentionally. However, we have not yet fully embraced our approach to irregular warfare as a strategy.

Now, let me finish with two very specific and related points. Our international strategy happens to fit perfectly with our obligation to look after our own territory. I don't mean looking after our territory in the old-fashioned sense of massed forces ready to repulse any invader. I'm talking about our ability to be effectively present on our territory and effectively able to respond to needs on our territory. The less concrete but nevertheless essential aspect of this is that both Canadians and foreigners must feel that we are effectively present on our own territory. As you may have noticed, the vast majority of our geographical territory is not in the south. It is not on the American border. Most of our territory lies to the north.

The way in which we look after that territory could be a happy marriage of high technology and low technology. We have, for example, a very interesting Marine Security Enhancement Package, which, on the page, sounds quite impressive. I'm sure that many of you know about it. But if you examine the package closely, you discover that it is really focused on the south. Canada is the country that has the longest marine coast in the world – 243,772 kilometres. It also has 250 ports, and the Marine Security Enhancement Package is aimed at the ports, few of which are in the north.

Yet, we have to be present in our north or we leave a real vacuum, both societal and geopolitical. We do have a very small part of our professional armed forces in the north. I've met most of them and they are very enthusiastic about being there. You should run to get yourself posted to the north. It's one of the most engaging places to be a young military officer. They have an exciting time and I think they actually have fun carrying out their work in the Arctic.

We also have the Canadian Rangers throughout the north. This is a reserve force made up largely, but not entirely, of Inuit and other First Peoples. They consist of 164 patrols divided into five military groups, and including a little over 4,000 Rangers. What the Rangers do is incredibly low technology. It is also incredibly low budget. We get a great deal for very little. We could get a great deal more for only a tiny bit more.

Now, let me apply this situation to you. If we are going to make sense of our country, then one of the essential steps in a young officer's career life should be at least one posting to Canada's north. I believe this should happen sometime between leaving RMC or one of the other officer corps entry points and arriving at the captain's Staff College in Fort Frontenac, or its equivalent. When I say, *an essential step in every young officer's career*, I mean for every one of you.



John Ralston Saul during the post-presentation round table discussion at RMC.

CFB Kingston Photo Unit photo KN2004-020-023 by Steven McQuaid

And I am not talking about a short, exotic detour from your career. In order for that northern experience to make a real impact on your understanding of your country, it should last a minimum of one year. It will take that long for you to even begin to sense the place, the implications of our geography and climate, and the people who live there. Why is this important? Because in order for our armed forces to be effectively present in the north and for all Canadians as well as foreigners to feel that our forces are effectively present in the north, you must understand what that strategic concept might mean: *To be effectively present. To be felt to be effectively present.* How do we do that?

My response is simple. How can you – we – possibly know how, if we aren't even there? If we aren't trying to find out? Or if we are there in such small numbers that this experience does not translate into a widely debated subject rising out of experience within our military?

I said earlier on that our role in the north is related to our *irregular* experiences abroad. Not because there is conflict in our north. It couldn't be farther removed from being conflict. But the way in which you can deal with such a difficult climate and a difficult, enormous geography containing such a small population is through an acceptance of non-classical methods, low tech equipment, the low tech use of high tech equipment and the broader use of high tech equipment as a conceptual support mechanism.

Let me add one obvious point. Unless we plan to see ourselves as a colonial presence in the north, we cannot be effectively present there unless there is a real presence inside our officer corps of northerners, including Inuit. The RCMP have woken up to this. There is now a growing percentage of First Nation and Inuit officers in the RCMP. The military should be doing the same. That is the Canadian reality. And it is a happy reality. It relates to an understanding of our geography – that is, of our strategic reality.

Now, let us get back to your future postings in the north. I want to clarify one point. The Rangers do not actually require your leadership. They know what they are doing. On the other hand, it would be very interesting to have some second lieutenants and lieutenants attached to Ranger patrols in a learning and support capacity. You might be able to help out in some way on some technological fronts. But this experience would be essentially a learning experience. It would be an astonishing opportunity to see how things are done or can be done in the largest part of the Canadian territory. It would also be an extremely uncomfortable experience and you would therefore love every minute of it.

Some of you may protest that you are engineers. Precisely. The ongoing challenge for irregular methodology is to develop appropriate equipment. I'll repeat myself again: low tech equipment, solid and flexible enough to respond to non-classical needs; high tech equipment suitable and flexible enough for use in low tech ways in irregular conditions; high tech equipment which does not impose an inappropriate direction from afar,

but can help in the conceptualization of the on-ground reality. All of this applies perfectly to the north. I could give you a long list of how even our most basic equipment – snowmobiles, for example – have not been thought about in the context of rough northern territory, as opposed to groomed snowmobile trails. Nor is the assembly of their engines conceived for a steady minus 60 degrees Celsius with no nearby garage or source of heat. Even the windscreens are wrong for northern wind chill. The same could be said about communications equipment, and even about goggles.

The second specific point I want to make is about education and thinking and how we should be integrating education and thought into strategy and reality. I've been talking about this for several years with anybody who will listen, and this is an extremely good place to repeat it. One of the most interesting things we could be doing, at no extra cost, is to send RMC professors – both military and civilian – to spend time with our armed forces on missions abroad.

I believe that in Kabul, in Bosnia, on our frigates, at all times, there should be at least one resident RMC professor. And they should come for no less than two months. My sense is that three months would be the right amount of time. Half a tour. They would have to be there long enough not to be passing through and simply passing on pearls of wisdom. They should be there long enough to understand what the normal life of a Canadian officer is and what is the central activity of the Canadian Forces.

After all, very shortly after you leave here, your reality is going to involve going to places like Kabul and dealing with all that entails. What we need to do is to help our learning institutions understand that reality. The young officers would gain a great deal from having professors on the ground with them. But the professors would gain even more – as would their subsequent approach towards teaching in this institution – by being exposed to the realities of the armed forces.

What would these professors do while they were with our military? At the most utilitarian level, they would become a wonderful on-site support for long-distance learning. Yes, it is very good that we have long-distance learning systems, but you will all discover how difficult it is to make the most of that when there is nobody around to answer questions, to advise and to encourage. Education is not simply an abstract process leading to a piece of paper. It is not primarily about utilitarian training.

In the fullest sense of education, it would be wonderful to have a brilliant professor at your elbow with whom you could speak about the work that you are doing.

From a less utilitarian point of view, these professors could set up all manner of lectures, lecture series, and irregularly organized courses. Since people are rushing in and out on patrols, they cannot follow the regular patterns of a school.

“Of course, there are cases when there is a real ethical issue, indeed, when there is even a moral issue.”

I think that by the time a professor came back here, he or she would already be thinking about rewriting a number of courses. They would be asking themselves just how their experiences could fit into their courses, whatever the subject might

be. You would suddenly find in mechanical engineering class that some problem faced in Kabul was somehow being brought into the classroom, for the simple reason that the professor had seen how the theories of the university would eventually be applied in the real world of irregular warfare. That does not mean there is not a need for basic learning and theoretical approaches. It simply means that these would be joined to the larger reality in a new and interesting way.

Perhaps most interesting, they would bring back with them an interest in a debate about the strategy of Canada and of the nation's armed forces. Suddenly, they would find themselves debating irregular warfare. They would be thinking about it as a conscious strategy. And this is certainly the first place in which that debate should be taking place. I think that it should then go on in the staff colleges. But it should begin here.

All of this would help officers and NCOs to think in a sustained way about the strategic and tactical implications of their day-to-day activities.

This more intentional, conscious approach could become an important factor in helping our armed forces keep young officers in the military. Why? Because it would allow these young officers to understand their role more clearly. It would keep them excited about military service.

You all know that we have a problem with young officers leaving the armed forces for another type of career. This seems to happen most often between the captain and major levels, just when an officer has devoted a large slice of his or her life to becoming a highly effective professional. By then, Canada has invested a great deal in that process. Suddenly, these officers are gone, and we have lost, as have they, this investment. It is therefore essential to keep young officers excited about what they are doing so that they can remain excited about staying in the armed forces. Central to that is an ongoing, intensive intellectual debate about the *intentional* strategy of our military.

I would like to finish with the self-evident. It has always been true that the key to strategy, to tactics, to the military reality is somehow to blend together a mixture of experience, intellectual rigour, intellectual flexibility and therefore operational rigour, imagination, and, I repeat, flexibility. You will forgive me for pointing it out, but history is very clear on all of this. One of the key elements in this marriage of experience, intellectual rigour and intellectual flexibility is constant reading. Reading books. Reading novels. Reading philosophy. Reading history. Reading mathematics. Reading geography. Reading is the

organized mirror that we have for the propulsion of thought. Talking and debating is essential, but it requires a constantly growing intellectual foundation. You have to have the tension or balance between talking and reading, between the oral and the written word.

However, if you give yourself to a life of PowerPoints, – that is, one driven by administrative methodology – you will find it more and more difficult to engage in a life of thought as it applies to military engagement. It is that thought about military engagement, that, when combined with experience, will give you the ability to act and to react with the flexibility – whether rapid or slow – that will be needed.

To read and to think. To read more and to think more. Your whole life as an officer will work for you, will be exciting for you, if it is accompanied by this idea of constant debate with yourself and with others, constant debate within the corps of officers, constant reading and learning for pleasure and for excitement and for doubt.

A technical education is absolutely essential. This university has remarkable technical skills and technical strengths to offer, and I know many of you are deeply engaged in pursuing them. And that is wonderful. You are going to need all of that technical learning. But there are two caveats. The officers who have been responsible for major technical breakthroughs over the last 100 years have, in general, worked within a very broad education. Liddell Hart is a good example. Second, a technical training is no more essential to a military career than strategy, history, philosophy, literature and all the social sciences. These together will allow you to deal with whatever way strategy evolves over the next few decades. And they will certainly equip you to deal with the central reality of today – irregular warfare. No other strategy is most directly an expression of societal and historical realities.

I began by saying that you will not have a job. You will be in service. You are going into a way of life and a vocation. What I have been talking to you about is how you can increasingly, over the years, make sense of this very unusual, particular life. You have chosen it. Some of you may initially have had a mixture of motivations: an inexpensive education, curiosity, uncertainly about your future. All of that is normal. We are complex people. We all have multiple motivations. But by now, that initial, partially accidental choice will have become an intentional act.

In order to succeed at what you choose, you must become more and more intentional. And central to the conscious choice that you have now made is the development of a sense of belonging, of real, long-term belonging within the remarkable community that you have chosen.

