



The Impact of time and mental health on service personnel who served on operation HERRICK: an oral history

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Background

Between 2010 and 2014 the 'War Story' project at the Imperial War Museum worked with the UK Ministry of Defence to document the UK's involvement in Afghanistan (operation HERRICK). Amongst the collection, sixty-five oral history interviews were conducted within weeks of the return of those deployed in the conflict. The immediacy of the interviews presented a unique research opportunity.

Aims

This project is seeking to reinterview some of those involved again to compare them to the original interviews.

The main research areas include:

- How do military personnel reflect on their experiences of conflict after a considerable distance of time?
- How do accounts differ from the original interview, and how significant is recall bias and collective memory?
- How have dominant narratives changed, and has this impacted upon the individual's recollection?
- How does mental health affect the shift in memories and perceptions of war over time?
- What is the role of identity in perceptions and how does this change?
- How has the withdrawal from Afghanistan affected them and their outlook on the conflict?

Methods

This study will utilise oral history. Oral history involves grappling with the theoretical and methodological underpinnings from the complexities of memory, to subjectivity, to ethical editing. As a practice entails putting real voices and lived experiences front and centre on the historical stage oral history is well suited to the project.



Above: 'British Forces in Afghanistan 2006-2007'
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The new set of interviews:

- To begin 2022/2023, 1-3 hours long.
- Semi structured, oral history approach.
- Follow up interviews - sample likely reduced.
- Interviews added to IWM's permanent collection.

The initial interviews:

- N= 65, 1-3 hours long.
- Semi structured, oral history approach.
- Conducted shortly after the return from Afghanistan
- Part of the IWM's permanent collection.

Analysis

Qualitative analysis will be employed using methods such as thematic analysis. Narrative segments from the interviews will be coded thematically using NVivo.

Findings

The project commenced in Oct 2021 and aims to be completed in Sept 2024.

This PhD is funded under the AHRC's Collaborative Doctoral Partnership scheme jointly supervised by Kings College London and the Imperial War Museum.

