

Land Warfare Studies Centre

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**THE ROLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY
IN A MARITIME CONCEPT OF STRATEGY**

by

Michael Evans

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|----------------|------------------------------------------------------------|
| AAAV | advanced amphibious assault vehicles |
| ABCA | American–British–Canadian–Australian Armies (Agreement) |
| ADF | Australian Defence Force |
| ADFP | Australian Defence Force Publication |
| ADFWC | Australian Defence Force Warfare Centre |
| ADHQ | Australian Defence Headquarters |
| AIF | Australian Imperial Force |
| ASP 97 | Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997 (Document) |
| AUSLANCRON ONE | First Australian Landing Craft Squadron |
| A21 | Army in the Twenty-first Century (Review) |
| BRA | Bougainville Revolutionary Army |
| CARFOR | Commander of the Combined Army Force |
| COMAST | Commander Australian Theatre |
| DAA | defeating attacks against Australia |
| DJW-N | Director of Joint Warfare in Navy Headquarters |
| DRI | defending Australia’s regional interests |
| ECF | Enhanced Combat Force |
| EUROMARFOR | European Maritime Force |
| FMFRP | Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication |
| FOB | Forward Operating Base(s) |
| GPS | Global Positioning System |
| HQAST | Headquarters Australian Theatre |
| HQNORCOM | Headquarters Northern Command |
| JAT | Joint Amphibious Team |
| JSF | Joint Strike Fighter |
| LCAC | landing craft—air-cushioned |
| LCH | landing craft—heavy |
| LCM | landing craft—mechanised |
| LHA | amphibious assault ship |
| LPA | amphibious transport |
| LPH | amphibious assault ship—helicopter |
| LSH | landing ship—heavy |
| MEU | Marine Expeditionary Units |
| NATO | North Atlantic Treaty Organization |
| ODF | Operational Deployment Force |
| OMFTS | operational manoeuvre from the sea |
| OTH | over-the-horizon |
| RAN | Royal Australian Navy |
| RAR | Royal Australian Regiment |

| | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------------|
| RTA | Restructuring the Australian Army |
| SASR | Special Air Service Regiment |
| SGI | supporting Australia's global interests |
| SPPKF | South Pacific Peacekeeping Force |
| SWC | short-warning conflict |
| UAV | unmanned aerial vehicle |
| UNITAF | Unified Task Force in Somalia |
| UNOSOM II | Second UN Operations in Somalia |
| USN | United States Navy |
| V/STOL | vertical and/or short take-off and landing |

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the role of the Australian Army in a maritime concept of strategy. It does so against the background of new trends in post-Cold War international security and, in the light of the publication in 1997 of *Australia's Strategic Policy* (ASP 97) and *Restructuring the Australian Army* (RTA). It argues that ASP 97 and the 1997 RTA plan are not optimising the Army's capabilities, force structure and doctrine for tasks which a close reading of the strategic guidance contained in ASP 97 might require. There are two reasons for this development. First, ASP 97 and the RTA are based on the conceptual opposites of navalism and continentalism; second, both documents tend to emphasise deterrence rather than warfighting. These factors have created a strategy-force mismatch which prevents consideration of a more positive role for land forces in maritime operations. A navalist interpretation of maritime strategy and a restrictive land force structure may threaten the Australian Defence Force's ability to meet the full spectrum of warfighting needs, escalation control and conflict termination in modern military conflict.

The paper suggests that the Army should seek a more proactive role by reconsidering both its concept of operations and its force structure imperatives in the context of a broader maritime concept of strategy. It argues that the Army's restructuring scheme, as outlined in the 1997 RTA plan, runs contrary to both the rise of littoral-expeditionary operations in upholding international security and the versatile force structure planning now prevalent in leading Western armies. The paper recommends that the Army should focus less on achieving self-reliance on Australian soil and concentrate more on creating freedom of action to meet a wider range of national interests. Less emphasis should be placed on creating a Total Force Army and more effort spent on devising an agile, concept-driven and capability-based regular force. A twenty-first century Army should be able to execute a strategy involving operational manoeuvre, surprise and flexibility. The paper argues that too much concentration on building continental task forces for single-scenario, low-level contingencies will be counterproductive. Instead, most of the Army's effort should be spent on organising a force structure capable of sustaining versatile land formations across a range of different theatres.

The paper concludes by recommending that Army planners pursue a positive role for land forces in a broader maritime concept of strategy. This role requires an emphasis on land force power projection in regional littoral warfare, the promotion of joint amphibious doctrine, and support for the development of credible amphibious forces. These measures would reinforce the strategic logic of joint operations, improve the development of unified warfighting objectives and contribute to the refinement of a fully integrated Australian maritime strategy.

THE ROLE OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY IN A MARITIME CONCEPT OF STRATEGY

Introduction

In 1902, the great American naval strategist, Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, wrote that Australia should base its security on its international position rather than its local geography. Mahan was writing about Australia at the beginning of a new century, in a time of growing strategic change and diplomatic uncertainty. 'Local safety', he observed, 'is not always best found in local precaution. There is a military sense, in which it is true that he who loses his life shall save it'.¹ On the edge of the twenty-first century Mahan's advice is still relevant. In the late 1990s, the imperatives of a new and unpredictable international security system are challenging current Australian concepts of strategy and defence planning. Nowhere is this more acute than in the Australian Army where, since the mid-1970s, a concentration on local or continental defence has been the predominant activity.

This paper examines the role of the Army in a maritime concept of Australian strategy. It does so against the background of two new developments. The first is the evolution of a post-Cold War security environment, in which Western ideas of warfare have become more maritime and power projection in orientation. The second new development is the recent publication of new Australian strategic policies aimed at responding to the needs of international change. Although this paper is primarily concerned with examining the role of the Australian Army in meeting these new developments, at several points analysis is expanded to encompass trends inside the Australian Defence Force (ADF) as a whole. This is necessary because a maritime concept of strategy belongs essentially to the realm of joint military operations. Only through understanding the joint nature of maritime strategy can the role of Australian land forces be fully appreciated.

¹ 'Views of Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan USN, July 1902', Document 6, Documents on Australian Maritime Strategy in David Stevens (ed.), *In Search of a Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Element in Australian Defence Planning since 1901*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 119, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1997, p. 155.

This paper owes an intellectual debt to the pioneering work on the role of Australia's land forces in the defence of Australia carried out by Stewart Woodman and David Horner at the beginning of the 1990s.² Woodman and Horner identified the maritime–continental dichotomy in Australian strategy, probed the relationship between sea–air and ground forces, and provided an important analysis of the Army's role in continental and offshore contingencies. They were the first scholars to argue that the Army needed to define its role within an overall maritime strategy.³ Although this paper reaches different conclusions on several points, it builds on some of the perspectives that were first advanced by Woodman and Horner.

Five areas are examined. First, the Australian Army's familiarity with, and experience of, a maritime-orientated strategy is briefly explored in historical perspective. It is argued that, although the Army has had considerable experience of military operations in a maritime environment, particularly during World War II, this experience has been overshadowed by the Army's tradition of continental-style land warfare. Some of the reasons for the gradual decline of the Army's corporate knowledge of amphibious operations, a key element for land forces in any maritime strategic concept, are investigated. The need for amphibious capabilities to support land forces in offshore contingencies is briefly illustrated by reference to the Army's operational experience during the 1987 Fiji crisis and, in peace operations in Bougainville and Somalia in the first half of the 1990s.

Second, intellectual and technological trends in contemporary Western maritime strategy are examined. Special attention is paid to the rise of sea-based expeditionary warfare and littoral operations in the post–Cold War era and to the role of land forces in this evolving strategic doctrine in the West. Third, the significance of contemporary maritime strategy for both the Australian Army and the ADF is assessed. The paper argues that Australia is hindered in its appreciation of modern maritime strategic

² Stewart Woodman and David Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia', in David Horner (ed.), *Reshaping the Australian Army: Challenges for the 1990s*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 77, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, pp. 5–130.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–30; 114.

concepts by the dominance of strategic ideas which continue to uphold the primacy of sea control and by a continental defence imperative which has come to dominate the Army's approach to force structure policy.

The paper analyses two major Australian strategic documents published in 1997: *Australia's Strategic Policy* (ASP 97), which outlines current strategic guidance, and *Restructuring the Australian Army* (RTA), which lays down a force structure scheme for the twenty-first century Army.⁴ It seeks to demonstrate how the conceptual opposites of navalism and continentalism present in these two documents represent a strategy–force mismatch, which risks preventing the evolution of a balanced Australian maritime concept of strategy. In ASP 97 there is a strong focus on defending the maritime approaches to Australia with naval and air assets—a focus that has elevated sea control supported by land-based aircraft to prominence. This posture, it is argued, reflects a naval rather than a joint-service interpretation of maritime strategic doctrine. The naval orientation of ASP 97 has had the practical effect of confining the Army to a strategic rearguard role on mainland Australia. The 1997 RTA plan exacerbates this effect by advocating a force structure that is mainly suitable for continental defence. This combination of navalism and continentalism, it is suggested, may ultimately forfeit the main advantages of employing a land force in maritime operations, namely strategic mobility, concentration, surprise and flexibility.⁵

Fourth, the paper argues that, for a properly balanced Australian maritime concept of strategy to emerge, there must be a more positive and proactive role for land forces. It suggests that the naval–continental divide in current Australian strategic thinking is hindering the formulation of an integrated maritime strategy which embraces all three services. This problem is, in turn, creating a lack of clarity in Australian warfighting needs and contributing to the neglect of important political factors such as proportional response, escalation control and conflict termination.

⁴ Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications, Canberra, 1997; Australian Army, *Restructuring the Australian Army*, Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications, Canberra, 1997.

⁵ Navalism is defined here as 'a strategic emphasis on using naval forces supported by land-based aircraft' and continentalism as 'a strategic emphasis on using land forces for the defence of mainland Australia'.

Fifth, the paper argues that the Army should seek a positive maritime role for itself by reconsidering both its concept of operations and its force structure to meet the requirements of post–Cold War conflict. The Army needs to present a strong intellectual case that a maritime-style strategy that excludes a proactive role for land forces will be inadequate to meet Australia’s future security requirements. Service planners need to emphasise land warfare’s manoeuvre potential, and promote the formulation of joint maritime doctrine along with the development of credible amphibious forces. The paper concludes by suggesting that, despite difficult problems of resources, the ADF needs an agile Army which can contribute to joint operations across a spectrum of conflict—from the unlikely prospect of fighting on home soil to the more likely scenario of participating in regional security commitments and international coalition operations.

A Maritime Concept of Strategy and the Australian Army: An Historical Perspective

Although the Australian Army has responded to the challenge of war in the twentieth century by forming overseas expeditionary forces, its combat experience has tended to reflect the organisational characteristics of large-formation land warfare. As Woodman and Horner observe, ‘it is a curious fact of Australian history that, although the country is an island, land forces have always figured prominently in its defence plans, and have played the largest and most influential role in the wars in which it has been involved’.⁶ They characterise the Army as possessing ‘a continental strategy ethos’ for much of its history.⁷ In a continental strategy the ultimate objective of military operations is the destruction of the enemy’s armed forces and his will to fight.⁸ In the world wars, both the First and Second Australian Imperial Forces (AIF) were committed to large-scale land warfare in Europe and the Middle East, while in the Cold War era, Army units and task forces were deployed to fight in smaller land campaigns in parts of Asia.

⁶ Woodman and Horner, ‘Land Forces in the Defence of Australia’, p. 8. See also Horner, ‘The Continental School of Strategic Thought’, *Defence Force Journal*, May/June 1990, No. 82, pp. 35–46.

⁷ Woodman and Horner, ‘Land Forces in the Defence of Australia’, p. 20.

⁸ J.C. Wylie, *Military Strategy: A General Theory of Power Control*, Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1967, p. 51.

However, the Australian Army has also participated in both the maritime defence of continental Australia and in a maritime strategy of warfare in the Pacific.⁹ What is meant by maritime strategy in this paper is best described by the American historian, Clark G. Reynolds. In Reynolds' view, 'maritime strategy is not naval strategy. Naval strategy may be defined as the employment of Navy forces to a specific end. Maritime strategy has a much broader scope: the combined use of all arms—Army, Navy, and Air Forces—in seaborne operations'.¹⁰

Using this definition, the Australian Army has clearly conducted maritime warfare operations—in Rabaul and at Gallipoli during World War I, and in New Guinea and Borneo during World War II. The Army has therefore something of a dual military tradition, which embraces both large-formation continental operations and joint maritime operations.¹¹ During the Cold War era, however, the Army's experience of maritime warfare declined in favour of continental-style commitments. For example, the strategy of forward defence developed in the 1950s was not seen by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) as being a maritime warfare concept. As Vice Admiral M.W. Hudson, a former Chief of Naval Staff, has observed, forward defence was a 'continental concept, applicable to fighting land battles on someone else's territory rather than one's own'.¹²

Since the end of the Vietnam War, the Army has gradually moved away from the heavy-formation force structure associated with the exercise of traditional land power and has restructured itself as a smaller, more flexible and mobile force. This has, however, been done primarily in the context of enabling the service to project combat power over Australia's vast continental frontage.¹³ The current Army force structure has not been

⁹ For a good discussion of the role of the Army in maritime defence see David Horner, 'The Army's Role in the Maritime Defence of Australia', in David Stevens (ed.), *In Search of A Maritime Strategy: The Maritime Element in Australian Defence Planning since 1901*, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 1997, pp. 19–42.

¹⁰ Clark G. Reynolds, 'Douglas MacArthur as Maritime Strategist', in Clark G. Reynolds, *History and the Sea: Essays on Maritime Strategies*, University of South Carolina Press, Columbia, South Carolina, 1989, p. 167.

¹¹ Woodman and Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia', pp. 19–21; 114.

¹² 'The Importance of Alliances: An Interview with Vice Admiral Mike Hudson, Chief of the Australian Naval Staff, *Naval Forces*, January 1988, p. 17.

¹³ For a recent analysis of the Army's force structure, see Major General John C. Hartley, 'An Australian Army for the Twenty First Century', in J. Mohan

designed for engagement in the type of offshore and amphibious operations associated with the pursuit of maritime strategy. In 1994, Lieutenant General John Grey, the Chief of the General Staff, noted that amphibious warfare has an 'ambiguous place in Australian military history and in current Australian military doctrine. On the one hand Australia does not have a strong tradition in amphibious warfare, but on the other hand Australia has had considerable experience in amphibious operations'.¹⁴

The Army in a Maritime Strategy: Amphibious Operations in World War II

The Australian Army's experience of amphibious warfare was gained mainly during World War II in the South-West Pacific. Australia participated in General Douglas MacArthur's 'island hopping' campaign from New Guinea to the Philippines. As David Horner has pointed out, MacArthur's approach was essentially a maritime-style strategy which used land-based air power to bludgeon the Japanese island garrisons and land forces to seize the necessary forward island air bases.¹⁵ Within this strategic framework, the employment of troops in amphibious warfare was an important feature.¹⁶ For amphibious warfare, this paper employs the British definition that 'an amphibious operation can be described as the

Malik (ed.), *The Future Battlefield*, Deakin University Press, Deakin, 1997, Chapter 12.

¹⁴ Lieutenant General John Grey, 'Opening Address by the Chief of the General Staff', in Lieutenant Colonel Glenn Wahlert (ed.), *Australian Army Amphibious Operations in the South West Pacific, 1942–45*, Army Doctrine Centre, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, 1994, p. 2.

¹⁵ David Horner, 'The Military Strategy and Command Aspects of the Australian Army's Amphibious Operations in the South-West Pacific Area', in Wahlert, *Amphibious Operations*, p. 33.

¹⁶ David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*, Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series One: Army, vol. VI, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1961; and Gavin Long, *The Final Offensives*, Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series One: Army, Volume VII, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1963.

delivery of a force of all arms, tactically grouped for combat ashore; landed independently of ports and airfields, and in a hostile or potentially hostile situation'.¹⁷

In 1943, Australian troops participated in the Lae and Finschhafen landings and then, between May and July 1945, in the *Oboe* landings in Borneo at Tarakan, Brunei, Labuan and Balikpapan. As the official historian, Gavin Long, has written, the *Oboe* operations were 'the most complex amphibious assaults carried out by Australian forces in the war—planning involved weeks of work by commanders and staffs . . . it demanded exact and detailed coordination between not only the arms and services . . . of the army but also between the army, navy and air force'.¹⁸ Through the experience of the *Oboe* operations, Australian military planning staffs developed considerable expertise in joint warfare at the tactical level.¹⁹

It is important to recognise that the Australian Army's experience of maritime warfare in World War II took place in coalition conditions and in the context of overwhelming American materiel power. Australian forces enjoyed air superiority, massive fire support from ship-to-shore bombardment and the benefit of excellent intelligence.²⁰ If the South-West Pacific campaign conveys any enduring lesson, it is that in time of crisis, if Australia is threatened with hostilities from the northern sea approaches, land forces will probably be required to help control parts of the island screen stretching from Java to Fiji. As one Army amphibious specialist, Major R.E. Moyses, has observed:

¹⁷ Michael Evans, *Amphibious Operations: The Projection of Sea Power Ashore* (Brassey's, London, 1990), p. 9. This is based on the NATO definition in *Doctrine for Amphibious Operations* ATP 8.

¹⁸ Long, *The Final Campaigns*, p. 261.

¹⁹ Horner, 'The Military Strategy and Command Aspects of the Australian Army's Amphibious Operations in the South-West Pacific Area' and Peter Stanley, 'An OBOE Concerto: Reflections on the Borneo Landings, 1945', in Wahlert, *Amphibious Operations*, p. 43; pp. 127–44. See also Peter Stanley, *Tarakan: An Australian Tragedy*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1997, chapters 3–4.

²⁰ Horner, 'Military Strategy and Command Aspects of the Australian Army's Amphibious Operations in the South-West Pacific Area', pp. 27–43. See also Alan Stephens, 'The Royal Australian Air Force and Amphibious Operations in the South-West Pacific Area' and David Stevens, 'Maritime Aspects of Australian Amphibious Operations', in Wahlert, *Amphibious Operations*, pp. 51–70; 103–24.

The so-called sea–air gap to our North is in fact a *sea–air–land gap* and an enemy wishing to attack Australia would be hard pushed to do so without a land base . . . It is unlikely that an Australian Government would allow a hostile power to occupy any Papua New Guinean or Indonesian possessions to our North without expecting the ADF to assist PNG or Indonesian forces to remove them. World War II proved the importance of amphibious mobility in archipelagic areas with poor land communications and, in that respect, nothing has changed.²¹

The Decline of Australia’s Amphibious Capabilities in the Cold War Era

In the Cold War era, the hard-earned amphibious experience of the Australian Army was allowed to decline gradually. The reasons seem to lie in a combination of three factors. First, until recently there has been a culture of deep-seated, single-service parochialism which has often been inimical to the kind of joint planning required to support the Army in maritime operations. Second, constant scarcity of resources has hampered the idea of developing a joint maritime warfare capability. Third, the nature of strategic guidance has not favoured the development of seaborne ground forces in recent years.²² It is instructive to highlight some examples from these three areas.

²¹ Major R.E. Moyses, ‘The Future of Amphibious Warfare in the ADF—Cognitive Dissonance or “Catch 22?”’, *Australian Defence Force Journal*, March/April 1996, No. 117, p. 28. Emphasis added.

²² Professional writings on the amphibious capability of the post-1945 Australian military are scarce. See Major D.M. Butler, ‘An Australian Task Force’, *Australian Army Journal*, February 1960, No. 129, pp. 13–21; Lieutenant Colonel L.D. Johnson, ‘The Need for an Australian Amphibious Force’, *Army Journal*, February 1974, No. 297, pp. 3–21; Commander P.J.M. Shevlin, ‘A New Amphibious Capability for the Australian Services’, *Defence Force Journal*, November/December 1976, No. 1, pp. 19–24; ‘An Operational Concept for the Australian Amphibious Force’, *Defence Force Journal*, September/October 1978, No. 12, pp. 6–11 and ‘Blind Spot in Current Defence Planning’, *Pacific Defence Reporter*, August 1987, XIV, ii, pp. 17–19; Lieutenant R.M. Smith, ‘The Formation of a RAN Amphibious Battalion’, *Defence Force Journal*, January/February 1978, No. 8, pp. 59–61; Lieutenant Commander A.W. Regan, ‘Australia’s Amphibious Incapability?’, *Defence Force Journal*, January/February 1984, No. 44, pp. 37–43; Major P.H. Quinlan, ‘Mobility and Small Scale Amphibious Operations: The FOB Concept’, *Australian Defence Force Journal*, March/April 1987, No. 63, pp. 44–7; Moyses, ‘The Future of Amphibious Warfare in the ADF—Cognitive Dissonance or “Catch 22?”’, pp. 25–9; Lieutenant Commander John P. Robinson, ‘Manoeuvre from the Sea—The Forgotten Force

Single-service Parochialism

Traditionally, neither the Army nor the Navy has tended to see amphibious operations as a core capability. Between 1971 and 1976, three separate Defence Central working groups studied what was called ‘Military Movement and Support’.

Commander P.J.M. Shevlin, Director of Joint Warfare in Navy Headquarters (DJW-N) from 1969 to 1975, and perhaps the leading amphibious expert in the post-1945 Defence Force, has observed that each working group agreed that the Army should have experience of amphibious training and maritime operations. Such capabilities were required to enable the land force to defend offshore territories and to alleviate the weakness in flexibility and force projection that an increasingly air–land operations trained Army was perceived to be developing.²³

For a short period between 1981 and 1986, the Navy and the Army succeeded in developing a limited amphibious capability for maritime operations. In 1981, the Navy formed the First Australian Landing Craft Squadron (AUSLANCRON ONE), situated at HMAS *Moreton* in Brisbane and adjacent to the Army’s 6th Brigade at Enoggera Barracks. The squadron—comprising the amphibious heavy lift (LSH) over-the-beach roll-on roll-off ship HMAS *Tobruk* and six 500-tonne landing craft heavy (LCH)—tried, in close conjunction with the 6th Brigade, to develop an Australian concept of amphibious operations.²⁴ This concept was based on extending the operational capabilities of land forces in ship-to-shore movement, even though HMAS *Tobruk* possessed only limited helicopter-operating and support capabilities.²⁵

Multiplier’, *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, August/October 1996, XXII, iii, pp. 23–30.

²³ Shevlin, ‘Blind Spot in Current Defence Planning’, pp. 17–18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19; Robinson, ‘Manoeuvre from the Sea: The Forgotten Force Multiplier’, p. 27.

²⁵ For the specifications of HMAS *Tobruk*, see Commander P.J.M. Shevlin, ‘New Amphibious Ship for RAN’, *Navy Quarterly*, Spring 1975, IX, v, pp. 5–6.

The amphibious squadron was not a success partly due to the reluctance of the single services to support it. In 1987 Commander Shevlin complained bitterly that amphibious capability had become the ADF's 'national blind spot'. He stated:

Joint service planners have experienced both disinterest and opposition to the defence force conducting useful, progressive, tactical amphibious training. Australian doctrine, aimed at compatibility with American and British doctrine, but with a distinct orientation to Australia's environment, has been challenged; and efforts have been made to have the word 'amphibious' removed from Australian publications.²⁶

Matters have hardly improved over the last decade. In 1995 Land Headquarters attempted to develop an Army concept for amphibious operations without sufficient liaison with the Navy.²⁷ One Army officer associated with the ADF Warfare Centre (ADFWC) has argued recently that the Australian view of amphibious warfare lacks a modern perspective. He observed, 'across the ADF it is clear that many people's perceptions of amphibious warfare owe more to 1945 than 1995'.²⁸

Scarcity of Resources

Funding has been an additional problem. The scarcity of resources to fund adequate forces has contributed to the decline of a credible Australian amphibious capability. In the 1950s and 1960s, amphibious ships were regularly sold off or used mainly for logistic movement. Specialist units such as the Amphibious Observation Regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery were eventually disbanded.²⁹ The lack of resources also ensured that discussion of using land forces in maritime operations would receive little official encouragement.

In early 1974, Lieutenant Colonel L.D. Johnson, an RAR officer and a graduate of the United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College at Quantico, produced a thoughtful paper on designing an amphibious force for maritime operations. Johnson argued:

A land-based, land-trained army will be unable to deploy quickly enough along the inadequate communications inside 'Fortress Australia' to fill all the needs of defence of the mainland, and certainly cannot cope

²⁶ Shevlin, 'Blind Spot in Current Defence Planning', p. 19.

²⁷ Author's observation while serving in Land Headquarters, May–August 1995.

²⁸ Moyse, 'The Future of Amphibious Warfare in the ADF', p. 27.

²⁹ Shevlin, 'Blind Spot in Current Defence Planning', pp. 17–19.

adequately with the special techniques required for operations along the island chain or the island territories . . . A defence force that could cope with the special geographic problems is one that is structured around an amphibious organisation. These have a freedom unknown to land-based armies . . . are essentially mobile, arranged for immediate response and free to steam unhindered by geographical obstacles around Australia's home waters.³⁰

Accordingly, Johnson proposed that the Army create a floating amphibious battalion group supported by a brigade ashore. To support these troops, he called for the acquisition by the Navy of a modern amphibious carrier equipped with ten Harrier AV8 vertical, short take-off and landing (V/STOL) aircraft, the purchase of several new American-built amphibious assault ships (LHAs) and the adoption of a through-deck cruiser—possibly based on the Royal Navy's HMS *Invincible*—for use in a carrier support role. In 1974 Johnson estimated the cost of this new amphibious force at \$282 million, 'a great amount of money, but when taken in the context of a three-service contribution from the defence vote, it is not an unacceptable amount . . .'. He suggested that the financial resources required should be phased in over several defence budgets.³¹ In the 1970s, however, Johnson's ideas had little influence in either the Army or the ADF.

In the course of the 1980s, resources for amphibious operations were reduced rapidly within the Army and Navy. By 1982 HMAS *Melbourne*, the Navy's last carrier was decommissioned, effectively ending the fixed-wing Fleet Air Arm, while in 1986 budgetary considerations were a major factor in the disbandment of the amphibious squadron. In the 1990s, scarcity of resources continues to remain a threat to the development of amphibious assets. This problem militates against the argument that such assets have an inherent force multiplication benefit and should be judged according to their 'proportionate cost effectiveness'.³²

The Evolution and Nature of Strategic Guidance

Australia's post-1945 strategic guidance has evolved gradually, changing from forward defence (often perceived as a land force concept) to Defence of Australia (a concept for the defence of the continental land

³⁰ Johnson, 'The Need for an Australian Amphibious Force', p. 12.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19–20.

³² See Moyse, 'The Future of Amphibious Warfare in the ADF', p. 28; and Robinson, 'Manoeuvre from the Sea—The Forgotten Force Multiplier', pp. 26–30.

mass, albeit one that concentrates on denying the maritime approaches). In this process, notions of maritime operations by land forces have gradually been pushed into the planning background.³³ Beyond the use of tactical lodgments on Australian soil, amphibious capabilities have had little appeal to contemporary defence planners. The latter have been absorbed by the problems of providing adequate resources for 'defence-in-depth' and its layers through the sea-air gap and across the vast frontage of northern Australia.³⁴

As a result, strategic thinkers who have favoured a stronger sea-land element in Australian strategy such as Moyses, Johnson and Shevlin have been constantly disappointed. Commenting on the 1987 White Paper, Commander Shevlin observed harshly:

Though amphibious forces comprise essential elements of maritime warfare capability, of strategic transport, of coastal tactical mobility and of logistic support, Australia's amphibious assets are entirely overlooked in examination of all these aspects of defence force capability ... *In a defence force without marines, an amphibious capability requires elements of all three services to plan and operate together as a closely knit force.*³⁵

In 1990, Defence Minister, Kim Beazley, explained that both a carrier capability and amphibious troop lift had been respectively phased out and scaled down because, 'we [the Government] have concluded that their essentially offensive nature makes them inappropriate for our force structure'.³⁶ Beazley's statement reflected the official position on these capabilities which had developed during the 1980s. As Lieutenant Commander John P. Robinson has put it, by the 1990s, amphibious operations had become 'the Ugly Duckling within the inventory of ADF Military options'.³⁷

³³ See Stewart Woodman, 'Defending the Moat: Maritime Strategy and Self-Reliance', in Stevens, *In Search of a Maritime Strategy*, pp. 130–3.

³⁴ For the rationale see the Hon. Kim C. Beazley MP, Minister for Defence, 'Thinking Defence: Key Concepts in Australian Defence Planning', Roy Milne Memorial Lecture, Perth, 6 November 1987.

³⁵ Shevlin, 'Blind Spot in Current Defence Planning', pp. 17–18. Emphasis added.

³⁶ 'Response by Kim Beazley, Minister for Defence, on Australia's defensive posture, 1990', Document 60, Documents on Australian Maritime Strategy in Stevens, *In Search of a Maritime Strategy*, pp. 218–19.

³⁷ Lieutenant Commander John P. Robinson, 'Development of JP 2048: Amphibious Thoughts', Paper, Directorate of Submarine Policy and Warfare,

Land Forces in Recent Maritime Operations: The Cases of Fiji, Bougainville and Somalia

Despite the decline in Australian amphibious capabilities since World War II, in the late 1980s and first half of the 1990s there were several contingencies in the South Pacific that highlighted the need for improved maritime power projection using land forces.³⁸ During the Fiji crisis of May 1987, codenamed Operation *Morrisdance*, a contingent of Australian troops from the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) was embarked, but not landed, for service on Fijian soil. The mission exposed some of the problems a land force could expect to experience in offshore operations in the light of an emerging Defence of Australia force structure.

The first problem experienced was the lack of dedicated amphibious training in the 120-strong 1 RAR Rifle Company Group of the Operational Deployment Force (ODF) from the 3rd Brigade based in Townsville. This force had been deployed at sea to assist in a possible evacuation of up to 5000 Australian nationals from Fiji.³⁹ The ODF Company Group's lack of experience in seaborne operations was demonstrated by its lack of familiarity with the configuration of HMAS *Tobruk*.⁴⁰ The contingent commander, Major G.J. Stone, admitted later that Operation *Morrisdance* represented 'a mission I had never considered in training, let alone practised'.⁴¹ Troops had to unpack and store weapons and ammunition

October 1995; and 'Manoeuvre from the Sea—The Forgotten Force Multiplier', p. 26.

³⁸ Stephen Henningham and Stewart Woodman, 'An Achilles Heel? Australian and New Zealand Capabilities for Pacific Island Contingencies', *The Pacific Review*, 1993, VI, ii, pp. 127–43.

³⁹ For accounts of the ADF's reaction to the Fiji crisis, see Matthew Gubb, *The Australian Military Response to the Fiji Coup: An Assessment*, Working Paper No. 171, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1988; Colonel A.S. D'Hage, 'Operation Morrisdance', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, January/February 1990, No. 80, pp. 4–13; Michael O'Connor, 'Operation Morrisdance', *Defender: The National Journal of the Australian Defence Association*, Autumn 1990, VII, I, pp. 23–8; and David Horner, 'Ready Reaction and Specialisation: Australia, 1980–1990', in David Horner (ed.), *Duty First: The Royal Australian Regiment in War and Peace*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990, pp. 305–8.

⁴⁰ Lieutenant Colonel R.J. Breen and Lieutenant Colonel G.J. Stone, 'Problems of an Expeditionary Force—1 RAR 1965 and 1987', *Combat Arms: A Combined Arms Journal for Australian Armour, Artillery, Infantry and Aviation*, 1988, Issue 2, p. 48; O'Connor, 'Operation Morrisdance', p. 26.

⁴¹ Breen and Stone, 'Problems of an Expeditionary Force—1 RAR 1965 and 1987', p. 42.

in the dark on an unfamiliar ship, while naval crew were equally unfamiliar with Army operational techniques.

The second problem was the lack of adequate helicopter support for the ODF Company Group. The operating limitations of the UH-1B helicopter led to a slow transfer of troops from shore to ship. Thirty-three lifts were required to transfer the company group from its staging base at Norfolk Island to HMAS *Tobruk*.⁴² In a subsequent transfer of three platoons from HMAS *Tobruk* to the support vessels HMAS *Success*, *Sydney* and *Parramatta*, out of a force of five helicopters (two Wessex, two UH-1B and a Squirrel), four became unserviceable. An additional 25 lifts were required to move 22 tonnes of Army equipment from Norfolk Island to HMAS *Tobruk*. However, heavy equipment, even land rovers, were not transportable to support the infantry force because the helicopters could not handle their weight.⁴³ Had the Army had to disembark in Fiji under combat conditions, it is possible that it would have lacked the firepower and mobility to cover key points in a services-protected evacuation.⁴⁴

Further helicopter mobility problems were experienced in October 1994 during Operation *Lagoon* in Bougainville. HMAS *Tobruk* embarked over 600 troops of the South Pacific Peacekeeping Force (SPPKF), including 200 Australians, at Honiara to support the Bougainville peace conference between the Papua New Guinea Government and the Bougainville Revolutionary Army (BRA).⁴⁵ Troops were landed to secure the conference area near Arawa with HMAS *Tobruk* acting as a command and control platform. Like the Fiji operation, the land force found itself critically short of airlift capacity being dependent on two Sea King naval helicopters. A close observer noted that, with only two naval helicopters,

⁴² D'Hage, 'Operation Morrisdance', p. 10.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Breen and Stone, 'Problems of an Expeditionary Force—1 RAR 1965 and 1987', p. 46.

⁴⁵ Lieutenant Commander Michael Miko, 'We Gave Peace a Chance: Operation Lagoon, Bougainville 1994', *Naval Supply Newsletter: Journal of the Royal Australian Navy Supply Support Organisation*, June 1995, V, vi, pp. 43–6.

three air crews and 2 LCM 8 mechanised landing craft, the mission was ‘altogether a tall order considering there was only scant knowledge about the scope of the operation’.⁴⁶

Operations such as *Morrisdance* and *Lagoon* revealed a need for capabilities in terms of amphibious-trained troops and helicopter carriers for maritime force projection which did not fit easily into a Defence of Australia force structure. The ADF did examine the problem in the early 1990s. In 1989 and 1991, in two documents, *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s* and the *Force Structure Review*, what was styled as Responses to Regional Requests was recognised as an operational commitment—although it was emphasised that it could not be a force structure determinant.⁴⁷ Furthermore, in 1993, again in recognition of the need for more offshore flexibility, the ADF acquired two American *Newport*-class landing platform—helicopter (LPH) ships for conversion into amphibious transport—personnel (LPA) ships with logistics-over-the-shore and assault landing craft.

Once modernised and upgraded during 1998 the LPAs, in the form of the recommissioned HMAS *Kanimbla* and HMAS *Manoora* supported by HMAS *Tobruk*, should be able to carry and deploy, in unison, a battalion group supported by Blackhawk, Sea King and possibly Chinook helicopters.⁴⁸ Under current Australian amphibious doctrine, an indicative landing force would comprise about 1000 personnel including a 750-strong infantry battalion equipped with 150 vehicles, a forward battery of six 105mm guns and an aviation element of six Blackhawks.⁴⁹

In the late 1990s, the ADF has thus improved its technical capability for land force operations from the sea. Nevertheless, long years of neglect, lack of single-service interest and frequent cost-cutting have all ensured that expertise in amphibious warfare remains dispersed and poorly

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁷ Department of Defence, *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 27 November 1989, pp. 34–6; *Force Structure Review 1991*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1991, p. 28.

⁴⁸ A/Commander David White, ‘The Navy’s New Ships—HMAS *Kanimbla* and *Manoora*’, in Royal Australian Navy, *Australia’s Navy 1995*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra 1995, pp. 47–51.

⁴⁹ Australian Defence Force Warfare Centre, Operations Series, *ADFP 12—Amphibious Operations*, Canberra, Defence Centre, 1995, ‘Indicative Grouping of a Landing Force’, Annex B to Chapter 2.

coordinated in both the Army and the Navy. The Army's amphibious training remains limited to the conduct of occasional set-piece amphibious tactical lodgments during major joint exercises such as the Kangaroo series. The Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) and the commandos have been the only units to maintain any dedicated amphibious expertise, but this has been restricted to mainly troop or platoon landings.⁵⁰

Institutional neglect of amphibious operations has, however, led to a degree of doctrinal confusion in both the Army and the ADF as a whole. Although the 1995 edition of *ADFP 12—Amphibious Operations* insists that amphibious operations are combat operations and should not be mistaken for military sea transport operations, in practice this distinction has not always been recognised.⁵¹ Since the disbandment of the amphibious squadron, the difference between seaborne combat operations and military transport operations has become blurred. A good example is Operation *Solace*, the deployment of 1 RAR Battalion Group to Somalia in early 1993, as part of United Nations operations in Somalia.⁵² A number of ADF officers have since described this deployment as an amphibious operation.⁵³ In fact, it was a military sea transport operation. Troops and equipment were either flown in to Somalia or, like A Company 1 RAR, were ferried from Townsville directly to Mogadishu by HMAS *Jervis Bay* and disembarked at the harbour.⁵⁴ The confusion

⁵⁰ Robinson, 'Manoeuvre from the Sea—the Forgotten Force Multiplier', pp. 25–6.

⁵¹ *ADFP 12—Amphibious Operations*, Paragraph 103 states that amphibious operations are 'operations in which land forces are landed and supported from the sea'. They are combat operations and should not be confused with military sea-transport operations that would entail administrative instead of tactical loading of amphibious ships. Amphibious and military transport operations do have similar logistic phases.

⁵² From 19 January to 14 May 1993, the RAR battalion group operated as part of the Unified Task Force in Somalia (UNITAF). For a further 10 days in May, the battalion group was part of the Second UN Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM II). See Lieutenant Colonel N.F. James, 'A Brief History of Australian Peacekeeping', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, January/February 1994, No. 104, pp. 13–14.

⁵³ Author's personal observations. In addition, an October 1997 ADF Headquarters minute signed by two senior officers refers to the RAR's deployment to Somalia as an amphibious operation. Copy in author's possession.

⁵⁴ See Bob Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, chapter 2; Lieutenant Colonel D.J. Hurley, 'Operation *Solace*' and Lieutenant A.J. Morrice, 'The Mogadishu Express: HMAS *Jervis*

over the nature of the Somalia operation reflects a fading amphibious corporate memory inside the ADF. With the exception of the ADFWC, and more recently amphibious operations courses at Headquarters Australian Theatre (HQAST), there is no institutional repository for the systematic development of Australian amphibious doctrine and concepts.⁵⁵

Yet, in 1994, even as the essentials of Defence of Australia were being reconfirmed in a new White Paper, the global strategic environment was changing in a way that suggested that joint maritime operations were becoming more and more relevant to the future of warfare.⁵⁶ Before considering the potential role the Australian Army might play in future maritime operations, it is necessary to review briefly the changing nature of Western maritime strategy in the post–Cold War era.

‘The End of Naval Strategy’: Seaborne Manoeuvre Doctrine and the Changing Nature of Western Maritime Strategy

The contours of the debate on the changing nature of maritime strategy can only be summarised in this paper. During the Cold War, Western theorists of sea power were attracted mainly to blue-water strategy and underseas warfare. To these blue-water theorists or navalists, amphibious forces were never central to the culture of sea power.⁵⁷ Amphibious operations tended to conjure up sanguinary images of Dieppe and Tarawa rather than the successes of Normandy and Inchon. In the 1970s, the growing lethality of precision munitions seemed to underline how vulnerable surface shipping had become to new conventional weapons

Bay’s Contribution to Operation Solace’, Australian Defence Force Journal, January/February 1994, No. 104, pp. 29–34; 87–91; Lieutenant Commander Chris Siegmann and Sub-Lieutenant Liz Boyle, ‘Rats to the Rescue: HMAS Tobruk’s Logistic Involvement in Operation Solace’, Naval Supply Newsletter: Journal of the Royal Australian Navy Supply Support Organisation, December 1993, V, iii, pp. 25–31.

⁵⁵ Moyse, ‘The Future of Amphibious Warfare in the ADF’, pp. 27–9.

⁵⁶ Commonwealth of Australia, *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994.

⁵⁷ Lieutenant General Bernard E. Trainor, ‘Foreword’ in Joseph H. Alexander and Merrill L. Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers in the Cold War: Amphibious Warfare, 1945–1991*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 1995, pp. ix–x; xi. See also Jan S. Breemer, ‘The End of Naval Strategy: Revolutionary Change and the Future of American Naval Power’, *Strategic Review*, Spring 1994, XXII, ii, p. 49.

technology. Advances in battle electronics raised serious questions about the future of amphibious warfare in the age of the stand-off missile.⁵⁸

In 1976 two leading American military analysts, Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, suggested that the amphibious mission of the US Marine Corps belonged to a bygone era in warfare. 'The golden age of amphibious warfare', they wrote, 'is now the domain of historians and the Marine Corps no longer needs a unique mission to justify its existence'.⁵⁹ Binkin and Record seem to have been influenced by the Vietnam War. In Vietnam, the US Marines became operationally divorced from both the United States Navy (USN) and core amphibious doctrine. The Marine Corps was not even employed in a riverine warfare role in the Mekong Delta, but instead became involved in jungle counter-insurgency operations.⁶⁰

The Anglo–Argentine Falklands War of 1982 marked a turning point in the fortunes of late twentieth century amphibious warfare. Despite a cost of US\$1.9 billion to the Royal Navy, the reclaiming of the Falkland Islands demonstrated the value of amphibious assault capabilities.⁶¹ For Western amphibians, especially inside the US Marine Corps and the British Royal Marines, the Falklands experience validated the need for a land force assault capability in the exercise of maritime strategy. Amphibious warfare advocates quoted the words of the great British maritime strategist, Sir Julian Corbett, to the effect that 'the importance of maritime power was its influence on military operations on land'.⁶² They also pointed to the views of the Soviet sea power theorist, Admiral Sergei Gorshkov, that, the use of sea power always rested on its ability to resolve 'a direct *territorial* task'.⁶³

⁵⁸ Alexander and Merrill, *Sea Soldiers*, p. 67.

⁵⁹ Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?*, Brookings Institute, Washington DC, 1976, p. 37.

⁶⁰ Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, Macmillan, New York, 1980, pp. 559–606.

⁶¹ Alexander and Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers*, pp. 116–17; 122.

⁶² Sir Julian Corbett, *The Successors of Drake*, Longmans, Green, London, 1900, p. vii.

⁶³ Admiral S.G. Gorshkov, *The Sea Power of the State*, Pergamon edition, Oxford, 1979, p. 214. Emphasis in original.

After the Falklands War, events continued to favour the revival of Western amphibious operations. Three factors are worth noting. First, in the 1980s under the Maritime Strategy adopted by the US Navy, Marine Corps amphibious capabilities were reorganised and upgraded.⁶⁴ The aim was to use a rejuvenated Marine Corps to ‘wrest important coastal land areas and chokepoints to our [American] control’.⁶⁵ Second, the emergence of new conventional weaponry helped to develop the concept of operational manoeuvre from the sea (OMFTS) within the US Marine Corps. William S. Lind’s influential *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*, written for the Marine Corps in 1985, argued that the main features of amphibious operations—surprise, initiative and mobility—were compatible with the major tenets of land-based manoeuvre warfare.⁶⁶

Third, following the end of the Cold War, there was the development of a new United States National Security Strategy. This strategy shifted thinking away from Mahanian ideas of blue-water navies and command of the sea towards Corbettian ideas of maritime force projection—a shift that clearly favoured amphibious operations.⁶⁷ In September 1992, a Navy and Marine Corps White Paper entitled *From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century* called for ‘a fundamental shift away from open-ocean warfighting on the sea toward joint operations conducted from the sea’.⁶⁸ Joseph H. Alexander and Merrill L. Bartlett have summed up the significance of this document as follows:

⁶⁴ John B. Hattendorf, ‘The Evolution of the Maritime Strategy: 1977 to 1987’, *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1988, XLI, iii, pp. 7–28; Breemer, ‘The End of Naval Strategy’, pp. 3–4.

⁶⁵ Alexander and Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers*, p. 126.

⁶⁶ William S. Lind, *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*, Westview Press, Boulder, Colorado, 1985.

⁶⁷ This thinking was first articulated on 2 August 1990 by President George Bush in an address at the Aspen Institute. This was followed in April 1991 by Department of the Navy, ‘Integrated Amphibious Operations and Marine Corps Air Support Requirements Study’.

⁶⁸ Department of the Navy, *From the Sea: Preparing the Naval Service for the 21st Century*, Washington DC, Department of the Navy, September 1992, p. 1. Emphasis in original. For an analysis of this document, see the Honorable Sean C. O’Keefe, Secretary of the Navy, Admiral Frank Kelso II, USN, Chief of Naval Operations and General Carl E. Mundy, Jr., USMC, Commandant of the Marine Corps, ‘. . . From the Sea: A New Direction for the Naval Services’, *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1992, LXXVI, xi, pp. 8–22.

It [the 1992 Navy and Marine Corps White Paper] was as revolutionary a document as has ever been produced by the sea services . . . The emphasis shifted to regional, expeditionary, littoral warfare. In changing operational art from blue water independence to green water ‘battlespace dominance of the seaward littoral’, the US Navy seemed to be reverting to the Soviet or Napoleonic models, where navies existed primarily to support objectives of the land campaign. Emphasis on jointness resulted in a forced modification of the Army/Air Force ‘Air–Land’ doctrine into an expanded ‘Sea–Air–Land’ concept.⁶⁹

In many respects, the 1992 White Paper seems to inaugurate the transoceanic, post-Mahanian doctrinal naval revolution that the American strategic thinker, Samuel P. Huntington, wrote about as early as 1954.⁷⁰ Huntington argued that the Cold War represented a classic confrontation between a maritime state, the United States, and a continental power, the Soviet Union. Because the Soviet Union possessed a minuscule fleet, the US Navy needed to abandon a Mahanian concept of sea control. Huntington suggested that the true role of the US Navy ‘is not to acquire command of the sea but rather *to utilise its command of the sea to achieve supremacy on land* . . . It is to apply naval power to that decisive strip of littoral encircling the Eurasian continent. This means a real revolution in naval thought and operations . . .’⁷¹ The American naval analyst, Jan S. Breemer, has argued that the publication *From the Sea* marks a fundamental change in US strategic thinking along the lines of Huntington’s prescription.⁷² The 1992 White Paper represents ‘the end of classic naval strategy [and] reinforces the strategic logic of jointness’.⁷³ In the next century, the US Navy will be reshaped into an instrument for the exercise of joint crisis-management to support marines and troops on the landward side of the littoral.⁷⁴

Similarly, in Britain by the mid-1990s, Royal Navy doctrine was emphasising maritime rather than naval power and joint rather than single-

⁶⁹ Alexander and Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers*, p. 176.

⁷⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, ‘National Policy and the Transoceanic Navy’, *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, May 1954, LXXX, pp. 83–93. Huntington did not foresee the development of a ‘blue water’ Soviet Navy beginning in the 1960s—a development which persuaded the United States to adopt a Mahanian-style Maritime Strategy in the 1980s.

⁷¹ *Ibid.* Emphasis added.

⁷² Breemer, ‘The End of Naval Strategy’, p. 43.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁷⁴ Geoffrey Till, ‘Maritime Power and the 21st Century’, in Geoffrey Till (ed.), *Seapower: Theory and Practice*, Frank Cass, Ilford, Essex, 1994, pp. 76–99.

service operations. A leading British naval analyst, Admiral Sir James Eberle, has declared that ‘joint warfare is now an over-riding necessity for military success; not just a desirable aim’.⁷⁵ In 1995, the Royal Navy explained the rationale behind its new doctrinal manual in the following terms:

This document is specifically concerned *with the application of maritime as opposed to naval power*. The difference is significant. Maritime power is inherently joint in nature. It emanates from forces drawn from all three Services, both sea and land based, supported by national and commercial resources, exercising influence over sea, land and air environments. Such influence has been greatly expanded with the advent of sea-based aircraft and missiles, the increased range of land-based aircraft and modern techniques for amphibious warfare.⁷⁶

In the 1990s, amphibious force has been reaffirmed as a core warfighting capability for the British armed forces. The Royal Navy’s Amphibious Squadron, which was disbanded in 1966, has been revived. A Joint Rapid Deployment Force comprising a Royal Marine commando brigade supported by HMS *Ocean*, an LPH with Apache attack helicopters and two new landing platform docks (LPDs) is expected to be fully operational by 2003.⁷⁷ Other Western nations such as France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands have also embarked on improving their expeditionary warfare capabilities. The European Maritime Force (EUROMARFOR), an on-call maritime joint task force operating within the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), was inaugurated in 1995.⁷⁸

In an era of unquestioned Western naval supremacy, the operational emphasis in the 1990s has moved towards the use of expeditionary forces

⁷⁵ Admiral Sir James Eberle, ‘Jointery in an Expeditionary Era—Implications for the Royal Navy’, *The Naval Review*, October 1997, LXXXV, iv, p. 314.

⁷⁶ Royal Navy, *The Fundamentals of British Maritime Doctrine: BR 1806*, Her Majesty’s Stationery Office, London, 1995, pp. 3–14. Emphasis in original. See also Vice Admiral Sir Geoffrey Biggs, Deputy Commander, Fleet, ‘The Utility of Amphibious Forces in Conventional Deterrence’, *RUSI Journal*, April 1993, CXXXVIII, ii, pp. 40–5.

⁷⁷ For recent British developments, see Stewart Fraser, *Littoral Warfare and Joint Maritime Operations: UK Approaches and Capabilities*, Bailrigg Memorandum 32, Centre for Defence and International Security Studies, Lancaster University, Lancaster, 1997.

⁷⁸ Vincent Grimes, Richard Scott and Michael Wells, ‘Amphibious Advancement’, *Jane’s Navy International*, September 1997, CII, vii, pp. 7–33; Paolo Valpolini, ‘Mediterranean Partnership for NATO Amphibious Forces’, *Jane’s International Defense Review*, July 1998, XXXI, pp. 28–35.

employing land warfare techniques supported from the sea. In contemporary US, British and Western European operational doctrine, the land control function of maritime force projection is seen to be crucial in gaining an advantage from which military pressure can be applied in the pursuit of political goals.⁷⁹

In the context of power projection, American amphibious specialists have emphasised the nexus between precision air–sea firepower and the combat manoeuvre principles drawn from land warfare.⁸⁰ In March 1991, the US Marine Corps published FMFRP 14-7, *Over-the-Horizon (OTH) Amphibious Operations Operational Concept*, a paper based on the manoeuvre warfare tenets of momentum, velocity and tempo.⁸¹ This paper was seen by some observers to be the most significant produced by the Marine Corps since the 1934 *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*, a document that provided the model for US Marine operations in the Pacific in World War II.⁸² FMFRP 14-7 outlined a new seaborne assault doctrine for the twenty-first century. This doctrine is based on ideas of over-the-horizon attack involving the integration of ship-to-shore mobility and command and control capabilities with long-range fire support to apply manoeuvre in an amphibious context.⁸³

By the early years of the twenty-first century, the US Marine Corps hopes to have revolutionised ship-to-shore troop movement and to have rendered obsolete the traditional practice of human-wave amphibious assaults in seizing a beachhead. Beaches will, it is argued, serve only as points of

⁷⁹ Breemer, 'The End of Naval Strategy', pp. 46–9.

⁸⁰ John J. Kelly, Rear Admiral John B. La Plante, USN and Major General Harry W. Jenkins, Jr., USMC, 'Amphibious Warfare: A Roundtable Discussion', *Marine Corps Gazette*, August 1992, LXXII, viii, pp. 36–8; Lieutenant Commander William J. Toti, 'Sea-Air-Land Battle Doctrine', *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, September 1992, CXVIII, pp. 70–4.

⁸¹ Marine Corps Combat Development Command, FMFRP 14-7, *Over-the-Horizon (OTH) Amphibious Operations Operational Concept*, Quantico, Virginia, 1991.

⁸² For a discussion, see Alexander and Bartlett, *Sea Soldiers*, p. 158.

⁸³ FMFRP 14-7; Lieutenant Colonel Jerome F Bierly and Major Thomas E. Seal, 'Over-the-Horizon Amphibious Operations', *Marine Corps Gazette*, July 1991, LXXV, vii, pp. 41–2.

entry and control measures for landing forces. The current US Marine Corps Commandant, General Charles C. Krulak observed in May 1996:

Already, we have begun to replace the amphibious doctrine of World War II with the concept of ‘operational manoeuvre from the sea’ in which landing forces are launched from shipping well over the horizon and are directed against objectives of operational and strategic importance deep inland. This reflects an immense change in the speed and distance factors normally associated with amphibious operations.⁸⁴

The US Marine Corps is, in effect, moving towards a concept of expeditionary warfare in which amphibious forces are part of force projection missions.⁸⁵ The aim is to get air-ground task forces ashore and to drive rapidly into the enemy’s flanks and rear.⁸⁶ In the next century, in theory at least, OMFTS by combined arms will be facilitated by a high-technology triad based on tilt-rotor aircraft such as the MV-22 Osprey, advanced amphibious assault vehicles (AAAVs) and air-cushioned landing craft (LCACs). This triad will be guided by information warfare systems using unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and the NavStar Global Positioning System (GPS), and will be backed by long-range precision strike and by close air support from an advanced stealth Joint Strike Fighter (JSF) and various S/TOVL aircraft for counterair missions.⁸⁷ The combination of such an array of powerful combat systems will, it is believed, overcome the traditional vulnerability of amphibious assets to

⁸⁴ General Charles C. Krulak, ‘The United States Marine Corps in the Twenty First Century’, *RUSI Journal*, August 1996, CXLI, ii, p. 25.

⁸⁵ Theo Farrell, ‘United States Marine Corps Operations in Somalia: A Model for the Future’ in Geoffrey Till, Theo Farrell and Mark J. Grove, *Amphibious Operations: A Collection of Papers*, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, The Occasional No. 31, Camberley, November 1997, pp. 43–56. Farrell points out that *Operation Restore Hope* in Somalia was an expeditionary mission for the US Marine Corps, not an amphibious one.

⁸⁶ Bierly and Seal, *op. cit.*, p. 42.

⁸⁷ General Charles C. Krulak, ‘Operational Maneuver From the Sea: A Concept for the Projection of Naval Power Ashore’, *Surface Warfare*, July/August 1996, XXI, iv, pp. 7–13 and ‘Operational Maneuver From the Sea’, *United States Naval Institute Proceedings*, January 1997, CXXIII, pp. 27–31; Andrew F. Krepinevich Jr., ‘Competing for the Future: Searching for Major Ellis’, *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1996, LXXX, ix, pp. 28–37.

mines and enemy missiles. The aim is to 'dominate battlespace' by producing the ability to fight in a littoral environment using the simultaneous application of force.⁸⁸

These major changes in Western military thinking about the role of land and amphibious forces in a maritime strategy are relevant to Australia on two counts. First, Australia is an island continent and must observe closely any new trends in international maritime security. Second, Australia is an ally of the United States and may, in the future, have to deploy the ADF to operate in a coalition with American units which would probably include the US Marine Corps.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, these new trends in Western maritime strategy challenge several tenets of recent Australian strategic thinking. The latter appears to be more explicitly internationalist, with Ian McLachlan, the current Minister for Defence, declaring that 'the ability to operate our forces beyond our shoreline, if necessary, is an essential objective for our national defence policy. We are seeking security in and with Asia, not against the countries of our region'. It is, however, important to note the restrictive nature of Australia's maritime strategy.⁹⁰ Australia's interpretation of a maritime concept of strategy continues to uphold sea control rather than expeditionary and littoral operations—a distinctly naval-aerospace approach as opposed to a joint services view. The Australian Army has, on the other hand, been set on a course of force restructuring by Australian Defence Headquarters (ADHQ) since 1995 which emphasises the continental rather than the expeditionary role of land forces. This combination of an overly navalist interpretation in strategic guidance and narrow Army force structure remodelling is not conducive to land force participation in a maritime strategy.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ See p. 43 below.

⁹⁰ Ian McLachlan, AO, MP, Minister for Defence, 'Defending Australia's Interests: Challenges for a New Strategic Era', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, September 1997, XVIII, p. 1; and Ian McLachlan, AO, MP, Minister for Defence, 'Keynote Address', in Hugh Smith (ed.), *Preparing Future Leaders: Officer Education and Training for the Twenty-First Century*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1998, pp. ix–x.

Navalist and Continentalist Strands in Contemporary Australian Strategic Thinking

Contemporary Australian strategic thought is presently divided between notions of navalism and continentalism. Two key documents, the Liberal–National Government’s 1997 defence review *Australian Strategic Policy* and the Army’s 1997 official blueprint for change *Restructuring the Australian Army*, reflect this intellectual division. Although both documents are situated in the broad framework of a maritime concept of strategy, they tend to reflect strategic opposites. ASP 97 favours a navalist interpretation of maritime strategy, a trend in Australian defence thinking that can be traced back to Alfred Deakin and Andrew Fisher in the early years of Federation.⁹¹ The Army restructuring plan, on the other hand, expresses a continental defence strand in Australian strategic thinking which can be traced back to the introduction of national militia planning before World War I.⁹² The intellectual collision of these opposing postures creates a strategy–force mismatch. Such a collision risks fracturing the evolution of a balanced Australian maritime strategy as well as distorting the force structure necessary to support it.

Navalism and the 1997 Strategic Review

ASP 97 is a strategic document that favours naval forces supported by air superiority at the expense of deployable land forces. To understand how this navalist orientation distorts current Australian strategy, it is necessary to analyse the content of ASP 97. The document outlines three basic tasks for the ADF: defeating attacks against Australia (DAA), defending Australia’s regional interests (DRI) and supporting Australia’s global interests (SGI).⁹³ Defeating attacks against Australia is defined as the ‘*core force structure priority . . . the focus of all our defence activities*’.⁹⁴ While it is the least likely contingency, it is the most important one and remains the template for all decisions about capability development in the ADF.⁹⁵

⁹¹ For a background, see Michael Evans, ‘From Defence to Security: Continuity and Change in Australian Strategic Planning in the Twentieth Century’, in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *Serving Vital Interests: Australia’s Strategic Planning in Peace and War*, University of New South Wales, Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra, 1996, pp. 116–40.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Australia’s Strategic Policy*, p. 29.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29. Emphasis in original.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

The concept of warning time links the three tasks of the ADF. The review advances two subsets of warning time: *capability warning* and *crisis warning*. The former is connected to longer-term defence requirements; the latter to unpredictable situations ‘in which Australian interests may require a response using armed forces’.⁹⁶ The management of this dichotomy between a force shaped by longer-term capability warning considerations but able to deploy units for short-notice crisis warning is described as ‘one of the key challenges to Australian defence planning’.⁹⁷ The review admits that ADF military operations are ‘more likely to flow from a global or regional security situation than from any attack directly on Australia’.⁹⁸ Consequently, unlike capability, preparedness and posture are determined more by the requirements of regional operations and deployments in support of global interests than by the needs of defeating attacks on Australia.⁹⁹ These are contingencies that would clearly require land forces, yet they are not afforded sufficient attention in Australia’s concept of a maritime strategy.

The major flaw in ASP 97 is its navalist interpretation of a maritime concept of strategy for Australia. Because Australia’s strategic geography is fundamentally maritime, emphasis is placed on deploying naval units supported by land-based aircraft to defeat aggressors in the maritime approaches.¹⁰⁰ In outlining a maritime concept of defence, the strategic review states: ‘combat aircraft, submarines and surface combatants, supported by well-developed intelligence, surveillance and command and control systems, would be our first line of defence and are our highest priority’.¹⁰¹

Such an approach does not necessarily equate to a modern maritime concept of strategy which, as seen, is essentially a joint-services concept. In ASP 97, there is little consideration of land force deployment for use in littoral operations in the archipelago or of the need to develop a broader notion of operations in the maritime approaches. Echoing Major Moyses’s

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 39.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 44.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

views on Australia's northern approaches representing a 'sea-air-land gap', one critic of ASP 97, Michael O'Connor, of the Australian Defence Association, observes:

Geographically, Australia is protected not merely by the sea but also by that chain of island nations extending from peninsular Malaysia through Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and so on to New Zealand. They represent our strategic shield . . . We need to recognise that many of those countries lie within the sea-air gap and any attempt to pass the gap will automatically involve those countries on our side or our adversary's. *This clearly implies the need for Land Force operations in those countries to support them.*¹⁰²

In ASP 97, however, the role of land forces is largely confined to that of a strategic rearguard on Australian soil. There is no notion of land force exploitation of the protective manoeuvre space of the sea-air-land gap. Instead the review states:

Our land forces would play a crucial role in protecting command, communications and intelligence facilities and the air fields and naval bases in northern Australia from which we would need to operate. We also clearly need the capability to react to incursions onto Australian territory.¹⁰³

The hierarchy of capability priorities listed in the review also tends to reinforce the navalist orientation of Australian strategy. An integrated surveillance system, the provision of land-based air cover with air-to-air refuelling, the deployment of naval platforms with anti-shipping missile defence and strategic strike are considered to be much more important than the provision of mobile land forces.¹⁰⁴ Few would deny the primary importance of surveillance and sea-air forces in securing the maritime approaches to Australia, but land force capabilities are also critical. Such capabilities are not integrated into a maritime concept of strategy for use in the archipelago. Army priorities are confined to continental Australia in the form of land surveillance and the development of mobile task forces for the defence of northern Australia.

¹⁰² Michael O'Connor, 'The Emperor's New Clothes: Restructuring the Australian Army', *Defender: The National Journal of the Australian Defence Association*, Spring 1997, XIV, iii, p. 25. Emphasis added.

¹⁰³ *Australia's Strategic Policy*, p. 44.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 57–60; 62–3.

The review does mention, albeit in somewhat vague and contradictory terms, the need to develop ‘a limited amphibious capability’ along with the provision of a brigade group at a high level of readiness for use in short-notice operations overseas.¹⁰⁵ The difficulty with both these propositions is that the Army has, since 1995, been committed to a restructuring scheme that is overwhelmingly concerned with continental defence. For instance, while Army restructuring does envisage improved amphibious lift for land forces, it does so mainly in the context of coastal areas in continental defence operations.¹⁰⁶ If ASP 97 is weighted in favour of the navalist component in a maritime strategic concept, the 1997 RTA plan is equally far too continental in its strategic outlook. In the interests of strategic clarity and force structure planning, there needs to be a satisfactory reconciliation of these conceptual opposites.

Continentalism and Restructuring the Army

Attempts to give the Army improved agility through an amphibious capability and a brigade group run counter to the main principles of *Restructuring the Australian Army*. The RTA plan draws on the Army in the Twenty-first Century (A21) Review which was recommended by the Chiefs of Staff Committee in July 1994 and subsequently announced in the November 1994 White Paper, *Defending Australia*.¹⁰⁷ The Review’s aim was ‘the defining of an appropriate force structure to satisfy the demands of the defence of Australia in short-warning conflict’.¹⁰⁸ The basis of the Army’s restructuring methodology is the geographical defence of mainland Australia. The RTA plan reaffirms the Army’s ‘continental ethos’ at the expense of its maritime tradition. Restructuring has been built around several assumptions, including strengthening the Army by expanding the Reserve and creating a Total Force, maintaining the principal operational focus on northern Australia and developing notional adversary capabilities derived from a defence-in-depth posture.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 65–6.

¹⁰⁶ *Restructuring the Australian Army*, p. 48.

¹⁰⁷ Hartley, ‘An Australian Army for the Twenty First Century’, pp. 210–11; *Defending Australia*, para 7.19, p. 77.

¹⁰⁸ *Restructuring the Australian Army*, p. 11.

¹⁰⁹ The review used a variant of the RAND Corporation’s assumption-based planning methodology drawn from J.A. Dewar et al, *Assumption-Based Planning: A Planning Tool for Very Uncertain Times*, Santa Monica, California, RAND Corporation, 1993.

The difficulty with this approach to restructuring is that it risks tying the Army to a single scenario: the defence of Australian soil rather than producing an agile force which can exploit the ‘manoeuvre space’ of the maritime approaches. The conceptual focus in the RTA is firmly on northern Australia and low-level operations. Restructuring concentrates its energies on building short-warning task forces to secure northern geographic regions of strategic defence including Cape York, the Top End, Kimberley and the Pilbara.¹¹⁰ To execute concurrent missions over the vast distances of the north, an Enhanced Combat Force composed of seven integrated task forces with a mix of full-time and part-time elements, and embedded armour and artillery capabilities, is seen as the best force structure. The plan confirms *detection*, *protection* and *response* on mainland Australia—requiring a strong focus on reconnaissance, surveillance and firepower—as the Army’s concept of operations into the twenty-first century.¹¹¹

Although the 1997 RTA plan contains some positive features—notably the efforts to integrate wide-area surveillance capability with improved command, control and intelligence and the emphasis on Special Forces recovery tasks—these are outweighed by its weaknesses.¹¹² First, in fielding independent task forces, the Army is shifting away from a proven and flexible divisional organisation.¹¹³ The proposed task forces are not specialised for a wider range of possible conflicts. Second, the principle of using embedded units with combined arms assets may have the effect of reducing the Army’s ability to mass its combat power by concentrating multiple tactical formations. Third, movement away from a concentrated organisational system also seems to afford a lower priority to interoperability and standardisation with allied armies. In October 1997, the Chief of Army, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, stated: ‘although the Australian Army must have the capability to fight alongside allies on any future battlefield, *the key defence priority* remains the development of military forces sufficient to defeat any attack against Australia, particularly

¹¹⁰ *Restructuring the Australian Army*, p. 15.

¹¹¹ Hartley, ‘An Australian Army for the Twenty First Century’, p. 215. The final force structure for the Enhanced Combat Force of the early twenty-first century will consist of seven modern (but not necessarily similar) task forces, a special forces group and training, logistics, and command and control components.

¹¹² *Restructuring the Australian Army*, pp. 40–1; 43–4; 48–50.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

along our northern approaches'.¹¹⁴ This view reflects the key assumption of the RTA that 'the most likely adversary scenario, which the Land Force would be required to deal with, would be concurrent operations by a number of Special Forces teams across northern Australia, possibly supported by terrorist actions in other areas'.¹¹⁵ The RTA scheme concedes the need for the land force to be capable of conducting offshore operations, 'either unilaterally or as part of a coalition'.¹¹⁶ These operations are to be drawn from existing forces on Australian territory, or from additional forces generated.¹¹⁷

There must be considerable doubt as to whether the 1997 RTA plan in its public version will produce an Australian Army that is capable of fulfilling the range of the nation's twenty-first century security needs. By proposing an Army structure designed to protect primarily against intruders, the RTA plan largely forfeits any land force contribution to the defence of Australia's strategic manoeuvre space in the archipelago. The Army risks becoming expert in the least likely of its future tasks: the defence of northern Australia in short-warning conflict.

The 1997 RTA plan also tends to run contrary to trends in allied armies. For instance, both the British Army's BA 2000 plan and the US Army's Force XXI scheme emphasise the creation of agile and versatile land forces capable of fulfilling a range of tasks. BA 2000 argues that force structure will have to become flexible in order to accommodate the needs of contemporary warfare. At one level the British Army needs to meet the requirements of larger-unit expeditionary warfare involving corps and divisions and, on another level, it must be capable of mounting unconventional operations at the brigade level.¹¹⁸ 'What is needed for the range of likely future tasks', observes one senior British officer, 'is a

¹¹⁴ Australian Army, *An Australian Army for the Twenty First Century*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, October 1996, p. 5. Emphasis added. It should be noted that, in an address to the Army History Conference on 23 September 1997, Lieutenant General Sanderson referred to the need for task forces to be flexible enough to operate anywhere the Government might direct. This may have been a reference to the second phase of the RTA trials in 1999 which are focused on adaptability and versatility. See pp. 34–5 below.

¹¹⁵ *Restructuring the Australian Army*, p. 16.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

¹¹⁸ Brigadier Andrew Pringle, 'BA 2000—Towards an Army of the 21st Century', in Malik, *The Future Battlefield*, p. 190.

structure that is cadreised in discreet, coherent elements of readiness and capability, optimised for different roles'.¹¹⁹ Under Force XXI, the United States Army has an even stronger focus on preparing for 'a variety of missions across the full spectrum of operational environments'.¹²⁰ In the next century, the US Army is to become a strategically deployable force able to fight anywhere in the world at short notice either alone or in a coalition. The emphasis is on executing full-dimensional operations based on doctrinal flexibility, strategic mobility and organisational versatility, although force structure experimentation remains concentrated on the heavy division.¹²¹

These British and American visions of multiple land-force roles in the future differ considerably from the continental vision enshrined in the public version of the Australian Army's RTA plan. To date, the restructuring plan has not been subject to much rigorous open debate in Army or ADF publications.¹²² One published report that does illuminate several of the problems the Army is facing if it pursues a restructuring plan designed around one overarching scenario is the 1997 American, British, Canadian, Australian Armies (ABCA) document entitled *ABCA Exercise Cascade Peak 96: Post Exercise Report*.¹²³ Exercise *Cascade Peak* was a 1996 corps-level warfighting exercise conducted at Fort Lewis in the United States, in which the Australian Army's 1st Brigade participated. Significantly, the 1st Brigade is the formation currently charged with conducting the RTA trials.

It is clear from the exercise report of the Commander 1st Brigade, Brigadier Jim Molan, that the RTA plan has the potential to endanger the Australian Army's ability to participate in future coalition operations. Brigadier Molan's report highlights the fact that the US Army did not see embedded structures or dispersion by task forces as particularly innovative.¹²⁴ Brigadier Molan comments, 'a characteristic of the entire exercise was the centralised control of artillery, engineers and logistics. There was no view expressed that a higher level of battlefield effect would

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

¹²⁰ Major General Edward G. Anderson III, 'Force XXI—America's Army of the 21st Century', in Malik, *The Future Battlefield*, p. 168.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 168; 177.

¹²² There has, however, been a vigorous internal debate inside the officer corps.

¹²³ American, British, Canadian, Australian Armies, *ABCA Exercise Cascade Peak 96: Post Exercise Report*, ABCA Primary Standardisation Office, Washington DC, 20 January 1997.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, para b, p. 18.

ever be achieved if these capabilities were distributed to lower levels'.¹²⁵
In an arresting passage, he goes on to note:

If the probability of engaging in coalition warfare is more likely than a Defence of the North scenario, as must be the case in any reasoned appreciation, then the type of structures encountered by 1 Bde during Ex Cascade Mist/Peak must be used to inform the process of force structure about to be embarked on by the Australian Army. To restructure that part of the Army that is likely to be sent to conduct coalition warfare so that units are optimised for a specific level of warfare in a specific geographical location, would be to strike at the very heart of interoperability and credibility. I cannot overstate this observation as a conclusion from Ex Cascade Peak.¹²⁶

According to Brigadier Molan, the Australian Army required a full light airmobile formation and a heavy armoured formation manned by deployable regular soldiers. He remarked, '[this] was the expectation of every US officer I discussed this with—and [it] was incomprehensible that we would not have such formations out of a Regular Army of 24,000'.¹²⁷ He observed that the 'in vogue' Australian Army belief that a divisional headquarters was now redundant was not shared by the other ABCA armies. The Brigadier stated, 'a number of most significant problems were experienced by this Bde in working directly to a Corps HQ, particularly the ability of the Corps HQ to track the battle in detail over such a wide front'.¹²⁸ In a telling paragraph, the report warned:

The success experienced by 1 Bde as part of this coalition was only achieved after a concerted two year effort to develop the Bde, its HQ staff, their procedures and the units into a single 'Brigade as a Fighting System'. This was not achieved at the expense of the ability to conduct 'Defence of the North' scenarios as was illustrated by our SWC [short-warning conflict] exercises actually conducted throughout 1996. Each complements the other and both are able to be achieved in one training cycle. *However, the converse does not apply. Had 1 Bde concentrated only on SWC for the last two years, as it had for many years prior to 1995, it would have been incapable of performing at anything like the standard required in this important activity, and the credibility of the Army as a whole would have been in question.*¹²⁹

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, para c, p. 18.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, para e, pp. 18–19.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, para j, p. 19.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, para g, p. 19.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, para i, p. 19. Emphasis added.

Brigadier Molan also commented on American views on another of the key assumptions in the RTA plan: the creation of a Total Force composed of part-time and full-time troops. He pointed out that many senior officers in the US Army held a strong view that there should be no manoeuvre units amongst its National Guard formations because the latter were not suited to critical combat readiness tasks and ‘the level of tactical ability needed for a manoeuvre commander could not be developed by part time soldiers’.¹³⁰ Brigadier Molan’s report, and the conclusions it reaches, raises serious doubts as to whether force modelling based on continental defence is the best structure for an Australian Army of the future. It is possible that restructuring along current lines will hinder the ability of the Australian Army to perform as a significant international and interoperable force. The Army needs to be equipped and trained to operate across a broad spectrum of conflict, ranging from direct defence of Australia to coalition operations with major allies.

Outside the Army, perhaps the most vociferous critic of the RTA plan has been Michael O’Connor. He has argued for an Australian Army trained to execute a maritime-style strategy as a priority. To O’Connor, the restructuring plan is too continental in focus and denies the reality that the Army has never fought anywhere but overseas throughout its history.¹³¹ He believes that the RTA ‘proposes an army that is eerily reminiscent of the 1940–42 Militia, albeit on a much smaller scale, one which had to be progressively reorganised under the worst possible conditions to meet the real requirements of the war we were fighting’.¹³² The Army’s ‘inflexible territorial imperative’ should be replaced by a strategy that places the security of South-East Asia and the South Pacific and commitment to the US alliance at the apex of land force priorities.¹³³ O’Connor perceives a clear contradiction between Australia’s evolving regional security strategy of ‘security in and with Asia’, and the lack of land forces to support

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, para k, p. 19. Brigadier Molan also noted that the removal of manoeuvre units in the National Guard was proving difficult.

¹³¹ Michael O’Connor, “‘If All Else Fails’”: How Not to Defend Australia’, *Quadrant*, June 1997, p. 21.

¹³² Michael O’Connor, ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes: Restructuring the Australian Army’, p. 26.

¹³³ Michael O’Connor, ‘Australia Defending Asia: Challenge for the 21st Century’, *United Service*, November 1997, L, iii, pp. 15–17, and *The Implications of a Regional Security Strategy*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Working Paper No. 45, Canberra, 1996.

regional allies. For this reason he has suggested that Australia has ‘a strategy without an army and an army without a strategy’. In his view:

The whole focus of Army 21 and on the [RTA] reorganisation . . . is on an ability to operate in Australia . . . That organisational focus is simply wrong. Because the potential for future conflicts involving Australian interests is so extensive, so narrow a concept of operations for the Army possesses within itself the seeds of future crisis . . . Who could confidently say, for example, that the Australian Army will never again be required perhaps at short notice, for combat in Papua New Guinea?¹³⁴

To correct this strategy–force mismatch, O’Connor advocates remodelling elements of the Australian Army along similar lines to US Marine Corps expeditionary units. This type of force structure, with heavy weapons at sea, would meet the needs of deployability, mobility, firepower, protection, sustainability and evacuation.¹³⁵ ‘Our priorities for developing military capabilities and strategies’, concludes O’Connor, ‘should be the defence of the region first and that of Australia last’.¹³⁶

There is, however, scope for the Army to move away from the narrow continental focus of the RTA scheme through the guidance provided by the Trials Master Plan issued on 6 June 1998.¹³⁷ Three phases of trials of RTA concepts and organisation are to be held between 1998 and 2000 to yield provisional doctrine and to validate the restructuring program into the next century.¹³⁸ This sequence of trials affords an opportunity for the Army to align its restructuring scheme with the parameters of a broader maritime strategy. Phase 1 of the trials during 1998 concentrates on the conduct of onshore operations to Defeat Attacks against Australia. This phase uses an onshore Army 21–style generic task force as a baseline for modelling force structure.¹³⁹ In 1999, Phase 2 of the trials is aimed at assessing the adaptability and versatility of the generic task force to offshore operations. In 2000, Phase 3 is intended ‘to evaluate the

¹³⁴ O’Connor, ‘Australia Defending Asia: Challenge for the 21st Century’, p. 17.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–17; O’Connor, ‘The Emperor’s New Clothes: Restructuring the Australian Army’, p. 26.

¹³⁶ Michael O’Connor, ‘Under the Microscope: The 1997 Strategic Review’, *Defender: The National Journal of the Australian Defence Association*, Autumn 1998, XV, 1, pp. 6–10.

¹³⁷ Australian Army, Office of the Chief of the Army, ‘Restructuring of the Army Trials Master Plan’, 6 June 1998. Minute signed by Lieutenant General John Sanderson. Copy in author’s possession.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–7.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1 and 5.

outcomes of Phases 1 and 2 and develop recommendations for the structure, doctrine and range of capabilities required in the ECF in order to inform force structure decisions'.¹⁴⁰ This may be an indication that the continental defence aspect of restructuring will not be allowed to constrain broader force development in the future.

It is significant that the Trials Master Plan mentions the need for 'wider studies', despite stating that its work will be based on the concepts for land force operations contained in the A21 study. Such studies are required to determine the capability mix of the ECF.¹⁴¹ A key issue will be whether the analytical methodology of the generic, or 'Phase 1 TF', is capable of optimising the Army's performance in offshore operations. Given Brigadier Molan's report, this seems an unlikely outcome. It is much more likely that, in the final report due in 2000, 'a migration path' will identify a broader range of capabilities needed in the ECF force structure 'to enable Army to perform the full range of tasks identified in extant Strategic Guidance'.¹⁴²

This view is reinforced when Phase 2 tasks of the RTA trials are analysed. Indicative Phase 2 tasks in the trials encompass four offshore operational tasks, embracing several scenarios.¹⁴³ The first task involves land forces seizing and holding an airfield as a Forward Operating Base (FOB) as part of an ADF joint force. Scenarios range from mounting services-protected evacuations for up to 28 days in Papua New Guinea or Cambodia to engaging in sustained operations in both countries as part of a coalition force for up to a year. Another scenario advanced is the possibility of engaging in reactive operations to recapture Australian territory—for example, Christmas Island—for use as a forward base.¹⁴⁴ In the second task, an ADF joint task force is envisaged to conduct operations in support of legitimate governments against internal opposition in Fiji, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea for up to six months duration.¹⁴⁵ The third task outlines scenarios involving an ADF joint force operating within an international coalition in mid-to-high-intensity warfare in Korea, the Middle East or South-East Asia for a period of up to 12 months.¹⁴⁶ The fourth task encompasses humanitarian and disaster relief

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, p.18.

¹⁴³ Annex D to 'Restructuring the Army Trials Master Plan', pp. D-1-D-3.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. D-1-D-2.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. D-2.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. D-2-D-3.

operations for between three and 12 months in Papua New Guinea and various other Pacific Island countries.¹⁴⁷ Collectively, these Phase 2 tasks represent a realistic assessment of the kinds of operations the Army is likely to encounter in the next century.

The Place of the Army in an Integrated Maritime Strategy

The ADF's neglect of the Army's role in maritime strategy is confronted by a new international security environment which is placing increasing emphasis on a capability to execute littoral operations. It is therefore essential that Australia develop a balanced and integrated maritime strategy which maximises the full potential of the Army. The conceptual opposites, and the strategy–force mismatch contained in ASP 97 and the 1997 RTA plan, work against this being achieved. Australia's current maritime concept, as outlined in ASP 97, is too navalist in orientation and affords too little importance to the role of land forces. On the other hand, under the published RTA scheme, Australia's land force strategy is too continental in approach and dilutes the Army's offshore warfighting capacity.

The result is a lack of clarity in determining the capabilities required for littoral warfighting. Given geography, Australian strategy must be maritime in orientation, but the concept must be a broad one in which land forces are seen to have a crucial and clearly defined role. 'A maritime approach', writes the American strategic analyst, Frank E. Jordan III, 'emphasises surprise, mobility, and *selective land campaigns*'.¹⁴⁸ If, in the future, the Army concentrates largely on the continental defence of northern Australia, it will neglect its pivotal role in a maritime concept of strategy. Jordan warns, 'continental strategy forfeits strategic mobility and its corollary benefits of concentration, surprise, and flexibility'.¹⁴⁹

Under its current maritime concept, the ADF has no *integrated* warfighting focus; it has a focus on employing sea–air assets which are deterrent in nature. If deterrence fails, however, the Australian Government may be left with only the single option of applying maritime counterforce by means of sea–air strike—colloquially termed the 'go ugly early' school—simply because it lacks sufficient land forces for effective

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. D-4.

¹⁴⁸ Frank E. Jordan III, 'Maritime–Continental Debate: A Strategic Approach', in Thomas Gill (ed.), *Essays on Strategy V*, National Defense University Press, Washington DC, 1988, p. 211. Emphasis added.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

offshore deployment. Such a ‘go ugly early’ strategic approach compromises important political considerations including proportional response, flexible warfighting options, escalation control, and conflict termination. A balanced maritime strategy must advance an explicitly warfighting approach—even if deterrence is a first, and preferred, military objective. The first military step must attempt to foreshadow the last military step—or else conflict risks undirected momentum.¹⁵⁰

Australia’s current maritime concept emphasises a restrictive and navalist-orientated division of strategic labour: the air and sea forces will be primary; the land force will be secondary. This is more of a ‘Mahan versus Mackinder’ naval–continental model of strategy than one which Sir Julian Corbett, the great maritime strategist, would have recognised.¹⁵¹ As one historian has observed, ‘Corbett drew a clear distinction between maritime strategy and naval strategy. By maritime strategy he meant the principles governing a war in which the sea is a substantial factor. *Naval strategy was what determined the movement of the fleet after maritime strategy had determined what part the fleet should play in relation to land forces*’.¹⁵² ASP 97 pays insufficient attention to the reality that major land campaigns are usually integral to maritime strategies.¹⁵³

In Australia’s circumstances, a proportional response might require using a tailored land force against an island base—which might be the centre of gravity in the inner arc of the archipelago. It is worth remembering that, when Darwin was first attacked in February 1942, the second wave of air strikes included land-based Japanese aircraft operating from Kendari and Ambon.¹⁵⁴ Under ASP 97’s maritime concept, escalation control and war termination aims are not able to be considered with sufficient clarity. This is because the review consigns land forces mainly to operations in northern Australia and eschews an effective offshore land engagement. Yet to realise a political goal in military operations requires the capacity to

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 214.

¹⁵¹ For an outline of the Mahan–Mackinder debate, see Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery*, 3rd edn, Fontana Press, London, 1991, chapter seven.

¹⁵² John Gooch, ‘Maritime Command: Mahan and Corbett’, in Colin S. Gray and Roger W. Barnett (eds), *Seapower and Strategy*, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland, 1989, p. 39. Emphasis added.

¹⁵³ Jordan, ‘Maritime–Continental Debate’, p. 212.

¹⁵⁴ Gavin Long, *The Six Years War: A Concise History of Australia in the 1939–45 War*, Australian War Memorial and Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1973, pp. 164–5.

pick one's means of fighting and to modulate and control the course of a conflict. One needs a dynamic set of warfighting concepts and appropriate termination objectives, while the application of force must always be proportional to policy.¹⁵⁵

As was the case in World War II, Australia has to be able to mount a joint campaign employing land forces in the archipelagic islands. The Army's prime warfighting aim should be to secure the glaxis of the island archipelago, not to await incursions into northern Australia by seeing the sea–air gap as a kind of antipodean Maginot Line. Australia must seek to harmonise the elements of its limited military power by shaping the kind of operations it might be compelled to mount. As Clausewitz wrote, 'the first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish . . . the kind of war on which they are embarking: neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive'.¹⁵⁶ In the light of this, the appropriate Australian strategy is an *integrated maritime concept* which balances air and sea capabilities with mobile land units. Without a broader approach to maritime strategy, Australia risks navalism and continentalism acting as centrifugal forces in its strategic calculations.

Some ADF strategists clearly prefer to equate a maritime strategy with sea control rather than viewing naval forces as having an equally important role in projecting combat power ashore. They have forgotten Sir Edward Grey's dictum: sea power and land power are interdependent and an army is 'a projectile to be fired by the navy'.¹⁵⁷ For these strategists, a maritime concept of strategy is based on naval strategic warfare and counterair operations. A recent prize-winning essay on Australian maritime strategy at the Royal Australian Naval Staff College illustrates this tendency. It states that an Australian maritime strategy 'needs to focus on the methods of establishing and exploiting sea control in the support of national security policies and interests'.¹⁵⁸ It concludes by suggesting that 'the

¹⁵⁵ Jordan, 'Maritime–Continental Debate', pp. 216–19.

¹⁵⁶ Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1976, Book One, Chapter One, pp. 88–9.

¹⁵⁷ Quoted in Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

¹⁵⁸ Lieutenant Commander G.J. Sammut, 'An Essay on the Direction of Australia's Maritime Strategy', *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, July/September 1997, XXIV, iii, p. 35. This essay was awarded the ANI Silver Medallion.

need to develop the expensive power projection capability required to protect any interests far from Australian shores remains unwarranted'.¹⁵⁹ Yet, as one American analyst has pointed out, 'there is no *naval* strategic warfare. A maritime strategy . . . is carried out in joint operations. A maritime campaign by a maritime nation aims at sea control as the means not the end, because strategy prescribes wartime goals and missions governed by purposes on the land'.¹⁶⁰ Without a properly defined role for land forces, Australia possesses a maritime strategy that is navalist rather than joint in orientation. Such a strategy will fail just as surely as the Singapore strategy failed before it.

Australia's maritime strategy must have complementary capabilities because strategy is about the *way* force is used, not about the *kinds* of force used. Although ASP 97 employs the term 'maritime', it largely equates the term with sea and air forces. It does so in spite of the reality that Australia is quickest reached from the littoral and not from the blue water of the sea-air gap. The Indonesian and Philippines archipelagos precede the sea-air gap. Bases within this archipelagic region may have to be occupied, and such operations will almost certainly involve using land forces. The ADF needs to put prime intellectual effort into broadening the parameters of the current maritime concept of strategy. The Army needs to examine the use of land forces in contemporary conflict; it needs to emphasise its manoeuvre potential across the full spectrum of likely operations; and it needs to define carefully its force structure priorities to transform itself into an agile, concept-driven force.

Towards a Broader Concept of Maritime Strategy: The Use of Land Forces in Contemporary Conflict

The Australian Army of the future needs to place more emphasis on the offshore strategic contingencies identified as possible scenarios in Phase 2 of the RTA Trials Master Plan. Here the weight of the past is important. The experiences of World War II, of the forward defence era in the 1950s and 1960s, of periodic alerts in the South Pacific in the 1980s and, more recently, the apparent suddenness of crises in Papua New Guinea and Indonesia suggest that, in most conceivable contingencies, Australian land forces are most likely to operate forward of Darwin in joint operations.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

¹⁶⁰ Captain Wayne P. Hughes, Jr., 'Naval Maneuver Warfare', *Naval War College Review*, Summer 1997, L, iii, pp. 36–7. Emphasis in original. See also Colin S. Gray, 'Seapower and Western Defense', in Gray and Barnett, *op. cit.*, p. 291.

Like the US and British armies, the Australian Army must move towards a more serious consideration of littoral warfare, expeditionary operations and amphibious forces as part of power projection missions. The Australian Army of the twenty-first century must become capable of executing 'out-of-area' roles which are distinct from its late Cold War central mission of Defence of Australia.

The ADF needs to reassess its force structure against the three functions of post-Cold War military power as identified by the leading British historian, Sir Michael Howard, namely *deterrence*, *compellance* and *reassurance*.¹⁶¹ The first function, deterrence, means possessing sufficient military strength to prevent, or retaliate against, the threat of the use of physical force against one's national territory. Deterrence was a defining feature of the Cold War era, but it is of less importance in the disorderly world of the 1990s than the concepts of compellance and reassurance. This is because the basic idea behind deterrence is the prevention of conflict. Contemporary deterrence is essentially a negative exercise of power which concentrates on avoiding clearly undesirable outcomes such as global war. Deterrence is 'most applicable in high-stakes conflicts where the use of extreme violence is possible' such as during the superpower nuclear confrontation of the Cold War.¹⁶²

Compellance, on the other hand, is a more positive use of military strength which aims at forcing an adversary into submission.¹⁶³ As Howard puts it, compellance is 'the actual use of armed force to make people do things'.¹⁶⁴ In the 1990s, compellance has been used by the West against Iraq in Kuwait and against the Serbs in Bosnia; it is likely that in the future it may be employed again. The third function, reassurance, is the pursuit of general security for the preservation of international stability. In Howard's view, in the post-Cold War era, reassurance is underwritten by American military power. It has become more important than both deterrence and compellance because it determines the entire environment within which international relations are conducted. 'Reassurance', he

¹⁶¹ Sir Michael Howard, 'Lessons of the Cold War', *Survival*, Winter 1994–95, XXXVI, iv, pp. 161–6.

¹⁶² For a discussion, see John M. Rothgeb Jr., *Defining Power: Influence and Force in the Contemporary International System*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1993, Chapter 5.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 138. See also Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1963, p. 195.

¹⁶⁴ Howard, 'Lessons of the Cold War', p. 165.

writes, ‘provides a general sense of security that is not specific to any particular threat or scenario’.¹⁶⁵

Howard’s conflict matrix has particular resonance for the Australian Army. The Army’s present concept of operations for defeating attacks against Australia—which is based on detection, protection and response—is relevant only to Howard’s first function: that of deterrence. Deterrence fulfils the need for the physical defence of continental Australia but, because it is configured around a single scenario, it cannot produce the type of warfighting land force structure to meet situations that may require compellance and reassurance. In an Australian context, compellance may be defined as the defence of Australian interests involving the use of armed force, and reassurance as the participation by Australian military forces in international security operations, including peace support operations. It might be argued that compellance and reassurance correspond in some measure to the concepts of Defence of Regional Interests and Securing Global Interests, as advanced in ASP 97. If so, then the need for agile land forces becomes even more pronounced.

The Army’s force structure must become capable of executing deterrence, compellance and reassurance operations across three potential theatres: continental, offshore and regional–international. In the continental theatre, the land force must be able to fulfil deterrence operations and operate as a geographical manoeuvre force. In the offshore theatre role, Army units must be able to deploy effectively in compellance operations ranging from anti-terrorism to the defence of vital interests in the Asia-Pacific. These would include the security of isolated or distant South Pacific island territories and the creation of FOBs in the island archipelago. Finally, in the wider regional and international theatres, the Army must be capable of responding with reassurance to operations by participating in international peace support and humanitarian missions, or in coalition combat operations. The need to execute such diverse missions means that the Australian Army must attempt to balance Phases 1 and 2 in its Trials Master Plan and, where necessary, give priority to Phase 2 tasks in the final ECF structure.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

The Army needs to recognise that its manoeuvre capability is perhaps its most important contribution to an Australian maritime concept of strategy. Such a contribution will be constrained by an overemphasis on low-level, short-warning operations on continental Australia. The 1997 RTA scheme represents a force structure vision that has failed to take account of the diverse nature of post-Cold War conflict: it is clearly inadequate for compellance and reassurance operations. In a new age of littoral warfare, international and alliance commitments should play a much stronger role in determining land force structure. Warning time, operational posture and preparedness need to be integrated to maximise not the Army's self-reliance on Australian soil but its freedom of action in upholding Australia's interests.

The new conflict environment which has emerged requires an approach to Army force structuring that envisages a clear capability for offshore operations. This does not mean that the Regular Army should be transformed into a US Marine Corps. In World War II in the South-West Pacific, the Australian Army produced 'the best infantry in the Pacific'.¹⁶⁶

Indeed, the 2nd AIF was a force similar to the US Marines in spirit and fighting style, but superior in structure and experience.¹⁶⁷ There is no reason to believe that the Australian Army will not perform with similar distinction in future offshore operations—provided it has an appropriate force structure and sufficient equipment.

To become more capable of supporting deterrence, compellance and reassurance operations, the Army should re-examine the idea of the Total Force Army as a force structure determinant. A modernised two-tier organisation that optimises the full potential of both the Regular Army and the Reserve is required rather than an integrated full-time and part-time Army.¹⁶⁸ The Regular Army needs to become an agile, concept-driven and capability-based force whose attention is focused on warfighting in crisis-warning and on the full spectrum of possible combat operations. This is not possible under the RTA plan as it is presently conceived.

¹⁶⁶ Eric Bergerud, *Touched With Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific*, Penguin Books, New York, 1996, p. 235.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 236.

¹⁶⁸ The 'Restructuring of the Army Trials Master Plan', p. 1, states: 'The concept underpinning the RTA Vision is that of an integrated full-time and part-time Army consisting of modern, highly mobile task forces and units capable of effective autonomous operations of a widely dispersed and dynamic nature in both joint and combined environments'.

Ideally, the two existing regular brigade formations of mechanised and light infantry should be modernised and upgraded to become deployable for the full range of deterrence, compellance and reassurance missions. Indeed, at least one defence analyst has argued that, in the future, the Army will need three deployable brigade-size task forces for sustained operations: one to deploy, one to follow on, and one in reserve.¹⁶⁹

At the moment, given current resources and planning, the Army would only be capable of fielding a single regular brigade group. Land forces for low-level operations on continental Australia—the prime focus of the 1997 RTA—should be drawn mainly from the Reserve. For continental defence, no more than three task forces—rather than the seven presently envisaged—should be formed. These task forces should be supported by Special Forces and strike assets, and possibly placed under the permanent operational command of Headquarters Northern Command (HQNORCOM). The ‘defeating attacks against Australia’ role should be seen as a deterrent task for the Army, and the force structure required should be designed on a capability-warning basis.

Having suggested that the land force needs to become an agile force capable of operating over three theatres, it is necessary to specify how the Regular Army would fit into a broader maritime concept of strategy. In a land force concept of operations in a maritime environment, Army planners need to take special notice of the manoeuvre potential of both expeditionary and amphibious forces. As Liddell Hart pointed out nearly forty years ago, ‘amphibious flexibility is the greatest strategic asset that a sea-based Power possesses’.¹⁷⁰ As outlined earlier, in the future, new technology will give amphibious and air-mobile troops the speed, agility and navigational skills to conduct surprise landings in darkness along very narrow axes of advance—a capability with applicability to operations in both the archipelago and in northern Australia. The ADF’s participation in the 1997 *Tandem Thrust* exercise with United States amphibious forces, including Marine Expeditionary Units (MEUs) in the Shoalwater Bay training area in northern Queensland, is one example of the kind of operations Australian land forces may need to concentrate on in the future.¹⁷¹ The Commander of the Combined Army Force (CARFOR) during *Tandem Thrust*, Brigadier Peter Leahy, commented recently: ‘if the

¹⁶⁹ Lieutenant Colonel Martin Hamilton-Smith, ‘Worthy aims, scant resources’, *The Australian: Defence 97 Supplement*, 20 June 1997.

¹⁷⁰ Captain B.H. Liddell Hart, ‘The Value of Amphibious Flexibility and Forces’, *RUSI Journal*, November 1960, CV, No. 620, p. 492.

¹⁷¹ ‘Tandem Thrust’, *Army*, June 1997.

US Marines are to be the American 911 force of response in the Pacific, then the Australian Army must be interoperable with them . . . Further development will be achieved through more exercises and exchanges'.¹⁷²

A land force capable of executing seaborne manoeuvre warfare within a broad maritime concept of strategy confers agility across a range of continental, offshore and regional–international theatres. The leading British naval analyst, Eric Grove, has pointed out, 'amphibious warfare has probably never had a greater potential than it does today. The hovercraft now and the tilt-rotor in the future offer a capacity for landing forces suddenly and surprisingly from the sea that will be relevant in almost all potential conflict situations'.¹⁷³ With respect to the defence of continental Australia, manoeuvre from the sea would permit the exploitation of the seaward flank in continental defence operations and would alleviate some of the acute logistical difficulties of moving land forces around northern Australia. Operational manoeuvre based on seaborne mobility would allow coverage of 600 kilometres in any direction within 24 hours.¹⁷⁴ In regional and international operations, possessing amphibious-trained land forces would be a force multiplier for the ADF for tasks ranging from counter-terrorism, services-protected evacuations, forcible entry, and coalition operations.

Army planners need therefore to encourage the intellectual expansion of Australia's concept of maritime operations, especially in the area of amphibious operations. The Army ought to support the notion of 'decisive manoeuvre in littoral warfare' which has recently begun to evolve inside the Australian Defence Force's Strategic Policy and Plans Division. The refinement of this concept would help to expand the present narrow naval-orientation of Australia's maritime strategy into a broader construct requiring the participation of land forces operating from the sea. ADHQ's Capability Development Division has begun to focus on redeveloping an amphibious capacity to the order of some \$248m, and an amphibious

¹⁷² Brigadier Peter Leahy, 'ANZUS: A View from the Trenches', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Autumn/Winter 1997–98, p. 88. See also Brigadier Leahy's remarks in the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia: *ANZUS After 45 Years—Seminar Proceedings*, The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Defence Sub-Committee, Canberra, September 1997, pp. 102–9.

¹⁷³ Eric Grove, 'Navies in Future Conflicts', in Hugh Smith and Anthony Bergin (eds), *Naval Power in the Pacific: Toward the Year 2000*, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, Colorado, 1993, p. 168.

¹⁷⁴ Moyses, 'The Future of Amphibious Warfare in the ADF', p. 26.

operation is planned in the Army restructuring trials. Studies of ship habitability, command and control suites, sustainment and self-protection capability are being carried out on the converted amphibious ships HMAS *Kanimbla* and HMAS *Manoora*.¹⁷⁵

A 1997 draft edition of ADFP 12—Amphibious Operations has an improved warfighting emphasis, declaring that ‘an amphibious operation is an operation launched from the sea by a joint task force against a hostile or potentially hostile shore’.¹⁷⁶ The document goes on to note that modern improvements in ship-to-shore mobility and airmobile operations have expanded options for the tactical landing of forces from surface vessels from a few thousand yards to a distance of over 25 nautical miles offshore.¹⁷⁷ The document also affirms joint doctrine and American ideas of littoral and over-the-horizon warfare, including the use of amphibious operations to execute uninterrupted manoeuvre through a coastal penetration point. For example, the concept of Amphibious Assault Beyond Visual and Radar Range is outlined as ‘a technique that employs manoeuvre warfare concepts . . . to achieve a tactical advantage over the enemy that can be decisively exploited while minimising risk to assault shipping.’¹⁷⁸

The above developments are encouraging for the Army’s role in a maritime strategy. However, much work remains to be done in devising a land force concept of operations which would permit a quick and effective joint response to any potential contingency that might arise within the Asia-Pacific region. The Army needs to put its official weight behind the creation of a permanent Joint Amphibious Team (JAT) as a ‘centre of excellence’ under the aegis of ADHQ, but working directly to Commander Australian Theatre (COMAST). This development would integrate service capabilities and eliminate the ad hoc and single-service approach which has traditionally characterised amphibious developments inside the ADF.

A JAT should work according to a modern Composite Warfare Concept. The latter would help centralise contemporary knowledge of the

¹⁷⁵ These impressions are drawn from the author’s participation in a Capability Development Seminar entitled, ‘Future Amphibious Directions for the ADF’ at the Australian Defence Force Academy, 26 November 1997.

¹⁷⁶ Australian Defence Force Warfare Centre, Operations Series, ADFP 12—Amphibious Operations, Canberra, Defence Centre, Issued Draft, 27 November 1997, para 322.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, para 102.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, para 322.

conceptual and technological developments in amphibious warfare. A JAT would supply the expertise needed to ensure unity of command between naval and land force commanders and the close coordination of joint forces in the critical areas of training, interoperability and familiarisation. A JAT would be able to examine such important issues as the use of the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (formerly Headquarters 1st Division), sea lift resources for Army units, missile defence, countermine warfare and phased-array radar requirements in maritime operations. Such an organisation could also grapple with the vital issue of ensuring land-based air superiority and helicopter mobility in the absence of an Australian helicopter carrier capable of carrying strike aircraft.¹⁷⁹

Finally, by providing a cadre of specialists, a joint amphibious team would help meet the Army's requirement that a realistic maritime concept of strategy should be broad and balanced. A JAT would give intellectual weight to doctrine and capabilities for joint operations from the sea. Such an organisation, especially if permanently staffed, would be able to address the full range of conceptual and force structure problems in a maritime concept of strategy. In performing these tasks, a joint organisation would expose the need for a more positive role for flexible land forces as the major weakness in Australia's maritime posture.

Conclusion

The greatest of all maritime strategists, Sir Julian Corbett, stated in 1911: 'since men live upon land and not upon the sea, great issues between nations at war have always been decided—except in the rarest cases—by what your army can do against your enemy's territory and national life or else by the fear of what the fleet makes it possible for your army to do'.¹⁸⁰ This reality is not reflected in ASP 97 or in the 1997 RTA plan—to the detriment of Australia's present maritime concept of strategy. In the next century, it is likely that the execution of maritime strategy will be more multidimensional than Corbett could ever have imagined. The pivotal role of land forces in modern maritime operations will remain and may grow in

¹⁷⁹ Range and local conditions permitting, land-based aircraft can be used effectively as the Battle of the Bismarck Sea demonstrated in March 1943. See Alan Stephens, 'The Defence of Australia', in Alan Stephens (ed.), *Defending the Air/Sea Gap: Exploiting Advanced Technology and Disproportionate Response to Defend Australia*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1992, p. 16.

¹⁸⁰ Sir Julian S. Corbett, *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy*, Conway Maritime Press, London, 1972 edition, p. 14.

importance. It was, after all, the development of manoeuvre warfare by marine and land forces that provided the stimulus for the development of the doctrine of operational manoeuvre from the sea in contemporary Western military thinking.

This paper has sought to place the role of the Australian Army in a maritime concept of strategy into both historical and contemporary perspective. Since the 1950s, the Army's and the ADF's expertise in, and knowledge of, joint maritime operations have both been systematically weakened. Since the mid-1980s there has been no specialised centre or organised cadre of officers within the ADF to harness knowledge of amphibious operations. Yet in the post-Cold War 1990s, Australia is confronted by the emergence of a new transoceanic era which reinforces the strategic logic of joint operations, force projection and expeditionary warfare. Maritime strategy is now based more on power projection from the sea and less on sea control. This is a concept of maritime strategy in which doctrinal refinements and new technology seem to give amphibious and airmobile operations greater strategic potential than ever before in the history of arms.

Given geography, Australia's concept of strategy must be a maritime one, but it must be a concept in which land forces play a more precisely defined role. Between the contending imperatives of ASP 97 and the 1997 RTA plan there is a strategy-force mismatch. There is an imbalance between strategic ends and means, and an emphasis on deterrence at the expense of warfighting. A sea-air planning matrix in the northern approaches fails to take into account proportionality in response and the possibility of having to deal with a land-based centre of gravity. By failing to envisage a full spectrum of options, this planning matrix neglects the types of military conflicts Australia is likely to face in the future.

Escalation control, in particular, is threatened by the artificial division between maritime sea-air assets and land-based forces. In modern conflict, the achievement of a political goal requires the capacity to modulate the course of a conflict by employing a unified set of warfighting concepts. Because Australia's current maritime concept of strategy is not fully integrated, it is questionable whether such a synergy between military means and political ends can be achieved. Under ASP 97, a naval interpretation of maritime strategy without available land forces courts possible disaster; under the 1997 RTA, a continental strategy based largely on land forces courts probable irrelevance.

In the light of these deficiencies, the Australian Army's force structure needs to be carefully considered. Given the requirements of a maritime concept of strategy, the Army needs to become more of a 'Phase 2' force rather than a 'Phase 1' force. The single-function force structure vision enshrined in the original RTA plan is obsolete given the expeditionary and littoral nature of post-Cold War conflict. As demonstrated by the 1st Brigade's experience, the Army will need to be more than short-warning trained. It must be interoperable with allies, strategically mobile, amphibious-trained, and equipped for higher-level operations. In the twenty-first century, the Army must move towards a more agile force structure based on the multifunctional needs of a 'three theatre' role. It must develop a warfighting capacity to mount deterrence, compellance and reassurance missions across Australia's potential continental, offshore and international theatres.

A warfighting Army is essential if the ADF is to be capable of agility in response, versatility in roles, and poise in political leverage. These are crucial advantages that a middle power like Australia dare not overlook in its future strategic calculations. It is important to heed the timeless words contained in the *Report on the Military Defence of Australia*, chaired by Lieutenant General Sir Harry Chauvel in February 1920, which observed, in part, that 'the advantages, moral and material, of fighting in the enemy's country are so enormous that it is folly to await an enemy's attack on our own soil . . . All preparations for the defence of Australia, thorough and complete as they may be, may break down absolutely if, at a final and decisive moment, the weapon of defence cannot be transferred beyond our territorial waters'.¹⁸¹

Chauvel's view is not far removed from Mahan's 1902 warning mentioned at the beginning of this paper that, as an island continent, Australia could not find its security through local defence measures alone. In the 1990s, Australia's security interests can best be maintained through an approach to strategic planning which permits the Army to manoeuvre from the sea as well as on land. The willingness of Australia to 'risk life in order to save life'—by fighting offshore and in overseas expeditions—remains as relevant to the Army on the eve of the twenty-first century as it seemed to Captain Mahan in the early years of the twentieth century.

¹⁸¹ 'Report by a Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces on the Military Defence of Australia, Melbourne, 6 February 1920', Document 24, Documents in Australian Maritime Strategy, in Stevens, *In Search of a Maritime Strategy*, pp. 170–1.

