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The 2000 Defence White Paper, *Our Future Defence Force*, represented the considered response of the Australian Government to deficiencies in the capabilities of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), identified during Operation *Stabilise*, which commenced in September 1999. The ADF, and the Army in particular, were justifiably proud of their efforts during the deployment of INTERFET and its United Nations successor missions.

However, the success of operations in East Timor did not fuel complacency. In the aftermath of that crisis, serious shortcomings in the readiness, sustainability, and strategic agility of the Army were evident to senior planners within the ADF. The underlying hypothesis of *Defence 2000* was: ‘If we are required to do an East Timor–style operation again, how can we do it better?’

The writers of the White Paper responded to that hypothetical inquiry by authorising a significant enhancement of the Army directed at simultaneous deployment of a brigade for sustained operations in the immediate region as well as a battalion group to deal with a lesser contingency elsewhere. This strategic guidance constituted a radical departure from that which had shaped Army throughout most of the two decades following the Vietnam War.

In particular, *Defence 2000* was an acknowledgment of the prescience of the former Chief of the Army, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, who had sponsored significant intellectual ferment within the Army. This process ultimately yielded concepts such as Maneouvre Operations in the Littoral Environment (MOLE).
EDITORIAL

His pioneering work, which was initially viewed with scepticism by civilian force planners, was vindicated by real world events. It ensured that Army had already begun to develop an expeditionary mindset before 1999, without which it would have lacked the intellectual and doctrinal rigour to integrate into its force development plans either the lessons of East Timor or the enhancements provided by the Government.

Recent simultaneous crises in Solomon Islands and East Timor have further validated the development path for the Army as laid down in the 2000 White Paper. In addition to its presence in the Middle East, the ADF has been required to rapidly deploy significant forces within our increasingly unstable immediate neighbourhood. This has imposed considerable pressure on the ADF, which is already operating at a high tempo.

That both deployments have been conducted with such success most creditably reflects on the men and women of the ADF, particularly the Army, which has appropriately provided the bulk of these forces. Under Brigadier Mick Slater, JTF 631 has performed splendidly in the type of complex and ambiguous environment that Army predicts will typify future conflict. Australian troops have displayed the professionalism, resilience and compassion for which they have become famous. In this, they have been magnificently supported by the RAN and RAAF elements within JTF 631.

The opening Point Blank interview with Brigadier Slater reflects on these issues and sheds a favourable light on the abilities of the ADF to conduct short-notice offshore joint operations. This force has restored a degree of stability in a volatile and dangerous situation without resort to lethal force. As our Future Land Operating Concept Complex Warfighting envisages, this will increasingly become the hallmark of a successful military intervention.

The ultimate test of a modern sophisticated army remains its ability to conduct conventional combined arms warfighting in a joint setting. Only our Special Forces have been called on to do this in recent years. Nonetheless, the excellent performance of our deployed forces in all theatres demonstrates real progress since 1999. For those who recall the difficulty of deploying a single rifle company in response to the Fiji coup in 1987, the ability of the ADF to rapidly project significant combat power within our region is tangible evidence of an adaptable force that takes heed of lessons learned.

This corroboration of much of Army’s conceptual development over the past decade is gratifying. We are reaping the benefits of a high operational tempo. However, this imposes two burdens. We must constantly examine our performance in a spirit of fearless inquiry, and we must avoid hubris. Much of our success has been in operations that have not involved conventional warfighting.
by joint formations of the ADF. With this in mind, in the second Point Blank article the Deputy Chief of Army, Major General Ian Gordon, makes clear what the Army and the soldier of the future will need to succeed in complex and uncertain environments.

The *Australian Army Journal* aspires to provide a forum for the men and women of the Army to reflect on the lessons of operations and to debate their implications. We are encouraged by the steady flow of proposed articles from the Army, especially from junior officers. Two of these comprise the Tactics section in this edition, and another two form the backbone of Insights. Given the number of our troops on current operations, we expect that this healthy trend will continue. Our success on operations is a direct result of the intellectual health of the Army, of which a vibrant professional journal is a powerful symbol. Do not hesitate to submit articles to your journal. Neither rank nor seniority has a monopoly on insight.

This is the first edition of the revived *AAJ* to be published without the oversight of Dr Michael Evans. His drive, energy and intellect have been essential ingredients in the success of the *AAJ* since its renewal in 2003. The *Australian Army Journal* is but the most visible testimony to Mike’s unique and valuable work to the intellectual renaissance of the Army over the past decade. He has been a central figure in the process that began Army’s transition to a modern expeditionary force. We trust this edition builds on his seminal work and wish him well for the future.
On 25 May 2006, the Australian Defence Force commenced a highly complex stabilisation operation in the Democratic Republic of Timor Leste in response to an urgent request from that nation’s government. An outbreak of violence had culminated in a breakdown in the security forces of Timor Leste. In the ensuing security vacuum, sectarian and criminal violence created a humanitarian emergency.

At very short notice an Australian Defence Force Joint Task Force (JTF 631) was deployed to Timor Leste. The task confronting the JTF was both dangerous and extremely complex. The performance of JTF 631 exemplified the significant improvements in ADF joint capability that have been achieved since the INTERFET mission in 1999, as well as providing an insight into the evolving nature of 21st century military interventions in complex urban environments. The Commander of JTF 631, Brigadier Mick Slater, agreed to share his perspectives with the *Australian Army Journal*. 
Australian Army Journal (AAJ): You deployed with the initial entry force in September 1999; what are some of the similarities and differences between the two operations that you have noticed?

Brigadier Slater: Firstly, I want to emphasise that I believe that the situation that we faced in the first 5 days here this time was, in some significant ways, more complex and uncertain than the situation we faced in 1999. It needs to be remembered that we essentially conducted a permissive entry in 1999, and while there was a degree of uncertainty, the vital cooperation of TNI ensured that we were able to achieve a rapid build-up of forces without serious incident.

This time, there was no cohesive force on the ground that could guarantee security while we attempted to get a firm foot in place, and there was far more actual violence within Dili. In other words, we had to assume that our lodgement could be contested and our plan reflected that.

Secondly, the range of actors with arms of varying types—from military assault weapons through to melee weapons such as swords, machetes, and even darts fired from slingshots—was quite bewildering. It was a very demanding environment, and the complexity was increased because many of the instruments of the state had collapsed. We had few reliable, legitimate sources of information about the range of actors rampaging through Dili when we arrived.

AAJ: How did the JTF deal with that?

Brigadier Slater: We very quickly sought to dominate the environment through aggressive patrolling. Our operations were aimed at immediately expanding from our points of entry into the suburbs of Dili. This enabled us to reassure the population and establish psychological ascendancy over the gangs and criminal elements which had begun to operate with impunity. But even more importantly, we urgently began to raise our situational awareness through intelligence-led operations. We moved to establish a rapport with the local population, most of who were victims in this crisis. We moved rapidly to identify criminal gangs and violent ethnic groups with the support of the local population.

AAJ: What improvements have you noticed in the ADF’s ability to conduct these types of operation since your service here as CO 2 RAR?

Brigadier Slater: I believe that we have made enormous strides in the areas of joint, multi-agency and coalition operations since 1999. While it would be a stretch to say that we have achieved seamless jointery, I believe that we have reaped the benefits of the high operational tempo of the past few years. Within 3 Brigade, from which the
bulk of the land component is drawn, we have a lot of people with recent experience on operations, especially in the Solomon Islands and previously in East Timor. That experience has been invaluable. I think Army is becoming very adept at joint and multi-agency operations. We need more work on standardising tactics, techniques and procedures with the police, which we already knew from our Solomon Islands experience [Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)]. But I hasten to add that has not impeded very effective collaboration with the Australian Federal Police here. They, like us, are starting to develop a real culture of deployability and operations in complex environments.

I also believe that we have created a genuine whole-of-government approach to our strategic level planning for operations such as these. This is reflected right through to the composition of my headquarters, where I have a former ambassador to Timor Leste attached to my staff. I think we need to expand our training at the operational level to include more cooperation from civilian organisations, especially non-government organisations. I had exposure to this during my year at the US Army War College, and it has assisted me greatly here.

In purely military terms, as everyone knows, Army is very dependent on the RAN [Royal Australian Navy] and RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force]. We need them to get to the theatre, to sustain ourselves there, and to get ourselves home. I want to pay tribute to our sister services for their effort during Operation ASTUTE. They have provided terrific support. We worked the RAAF very hard during our build up of forces and they have delivered superbly. And I speak for every soldier in the JTF when I pay tribute to the RAN component, especially the crew of HMAS KANIMBLA. In the first couple of weeks they provided an indispensable support to us. Not only did they assist with fresh meals and hotel services for the troops, but they hooked-in and provided security elements for foot patrols at the SPOD [Sea Point of Disembarkation]. The troops really appreciated them. Again, having a major fleet unit alongside creates a significant effect in its own right. It is a very potent symbol of national resolve.

All of that leads me to conclude that we have largely solved the deployable logistics problem since 1999. Since INTERFET, we have poured resources into rectifying the problems we had in getting water, POL [petrol, oil and lubricants] and key war stores into theatre and sustaining ourselves away from our Australian bases. I think we have cracked it. We have put around 2500 people into this theatre, and sustained them superbly. It has gone very well. A very satisfying statistic is the negligible rate
of non-battle casualties. That is a key indicator that the soldier on the ground at the business-end is well fed, has plenty of water and excellent preventative health support. We are a more robust and agile organisation as a result of the enhancements that the various iterations of the Defence Capability Plan have provided since the 2000 Defence White Paper. It is a very good story.

**AAJ: How has the coalition arrangement worked?**

**Brigadier Slater:** Again, we learnt from our experience in 1999. We have been very fortunate to have our Kiwi and Malaysian friends alongside us in Timor Leste. I would like to pay tribute to their national component commanders, Colonel Ishmet and Lieutenant Colonel Harker. They have been very collegial and our forces have become comfortable with one another through our exchange programmes and joint exercises. We have differences in style and mind-set, but at the operational level we have developed excellent relationships. I immediately deployed liaison officers to each of these contingents and they have ensured that we are all on the same page at all times. This coalition has been very harmonious. The only real issue was the Bledisloe Cup result.

The arrangements with the Portuguese GNR—their gendarmerie—were more challenging. However, we have achieved very good coordination by embedding liaison officers with them. While they are not under operational control, this has not prevented a very good degree of synchronisation of effects. And they bring a different set of capabilities to this operation, which have been very valuable.

**AAJ: You emphasised the complexity of the operation. How do conditions here equate to the complex environment described in the Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC) Complex Warfighting?**

**Brigadier Slater:** When the Chief of Army visited us in June he said words to the effect of “Well, when I talked about the complex environment this is what I meant. You are doing it!”

There are layers of complexity. We came into a society on the brink of civil war. Although the ethnic divisions were very emotive to the local population there was no visible distinction between them in our eyes. So we had very complex human terrain, with gangs, ethnic groups, mutinous soldiers and police alongside those who considered themselves loyal to the government. Overlaying all that, we had a potential humanitarian disaster with large numbers of people seeking refuge in temporary camps. And of course every incident had the footloose global media on hand to scrutinise our handling of it. While we did not have a lethal conventional
enemy in that mix, there was a period when it was conceivable that we could face formed bodies of police or soldiers in complex urban terrain. So, it was pretty close to what the US Marine Corps would classify as the ‘Three Block War’.

We had to bring security and calm to the streets of Dili, ideally without applying lethal force. We managed to do that, and just as the concept envisages, we did it through the superb skills and qualities of our soldiers and junior leaders. Our people had to exercise a lot of mature judgement in a very demanding environment in the face of a lot of provocation. As we are seeing on all of our deployments, our troops embody the Aussie sense of a ‘fair go’. They deal compassionately with people who are doing it tough. I think that the rapport with the Timorese that we established over the past seven years really stood us in good stead this time.

At the strategic level, I have needed to maintain close liaison with senior ministers and the President of Timor Leste. I have been scrupulous in avoiding entanglement in local politics. The best case study of that is that we provided security for some very large street demonstrations by both major political groupings here. On the ground our troops behaved splendidly, while we negotiated firmly but fairly with their leaders. Both sides were very complimentary about the treatment that they received from us at a time when tensions ran pretty high. The sensitivity required to assist senior members of a foreign government on a day-to-day basis, while continuing to uphold Australia’s vital national interests, has been the most complex aspect of the job and every single serviceman and woman in the JTF has a responsibility in that regard.

**AAJ:** Have there been any war-stoppers, or problems, that you were not prepared for?

**Brigadier Slater:** There have been literally hundreds of unexpected events—incidents that you would not encounter in your wildest dreams. That is when we all fall back on training and adaptability. But the great thing about the ADF, and Army in particular is that we don't have war-stoppers because of the adaptability and common sense of our people. They can generally improvise some sort of a solution. But seriously, we have been very well prepared for this contingency. The axis of advance for Army, particularly 3 Brigade, over the past decade has been to deploy rapidly to deal with these types of complex contingencies within our immediate neighbourhood. We are now equipped, trained and prepared for this.

One thing we need to look at is some form of personnel tracking arrangement. We could always have used more Tetun linguists. It was not a war-stopper but we had to husband a few individuals very carefully to achieve what we needed. As the Chief [of Army] has pointed out, we are going to need people with high levels of cultural and language skill to succeed in the complex environment. The British
General Sir Rupert Smith has claimed that war—and military interventions of all types—will be conducted ‘amongst the people’. If that is so, then we need to able to communicate very effectively with the local population. The fundamental decency of our people gets us there, but we need more linguists. They are a force multiplier and they are invaluable in helping us to avoid recourse to force.

We have a reservoir of people with Tetun skills and experience in East Timor, but the personnel system cannot identify them in a hurry when we are deploying. That needs attention. I will obviously conduct a detailed ‘Lessons Learned’ exercise upon our return to Australia, and we have already had a Theatre Evaluation Team up here dissecting all of this. But that is one deficiency that I think we could have avoided.

**BRIGADIER MICK SLATER, DSC, CSC**

Mick Slater joined the Australian Army in 1978 and completed his officer training at the Officer Cadet School, Portsea. He undertook a variety of infantry regimental and instructional postings, including 8/9 RAR, 1 RAR, 2/4 RAR, the Infantry School Singleton and at the Canadian Forces Combined Arms School. He has also served overseas on the United States 3rd Army Headquarters and is a graduate of the US Army War College. Brigadier Slater commanded 2 RAR in East Timor during the initial days of INTERFET, and his senior staff appointments have included Army's Director of Officer Career Management and Director General Personnel. Promoted to Brigadier in August 2004, he served as the Director General Intelligence Capability and Support to Operations in the Defence Intelligence Organisation until assuming command of 3 Brigade in December 2004.
FUTURE ARMY, FUTURE SOLDIER

WHAT IS THE ‘SOLDIER OF THE 21ST CENTURY’?

MAJOR GENERAL IAN GORDON

ABSTRACT

New information technologies are challenging the way we organise and operate, and our soldiers are facing greater ambiguity and scrutiny. This article examines the way we intend to help prepare ourselves for these two major challenges.

The extraordinary improvements in information technologies are affecting almost every part of our lives. In particular, connections between individuals, groups and societies are intensifying. The ability of new machines to collect, store and move information around means that traditional organisational structures are less relevant.

More often than not we are not making best use of the new technology. For example, the speed at which information moves up and down our formal chains of command usually comes a poor second to the speed that is achieved by the media, by the informal networks used by our own people, and sometimes even by the enemy. This is because networking is as much a social thing as it is technological.
Some of our traditional lock-step processes that we use for handling information are inhibiting us. We need new processes and innovative people who can exploit the power of these new technologies.

At the same time our people are facing more ambiguity and greater scrutiny. More often than not our enemies do not look like combatants and they blend into local populations. In a time of crisis, our soldiers’ smallest moves are intensely scrutinised by the media. Moreover, possibly because of the technology they possess, some commentators assume that our soldiers also have perfect situational awareness. We need to equip our people to deal with these situations. We still have soldiers who are unprepared for close combat. We still have soldiers who are not ready for the physical and mental demands that will be placed on them.

Our people have been tested during recent crises in Iraq, Afghanistan and East Timor. They have responded well. We now need to build on those successes because the difficulty of our work will keep growing. Our successes in the future will come as much from our people’s capacity for inventiveness and problem solving as from technology alone.

For a long time we’ve talked about need to be able to reorganise quickly. We’ve talked about and written about the need to move away from the idea of infantry battalion groups to be able to form combined arms battlegroups and task-organised units. Our recent deployments to the Middle East and the near region have shown that we can do this well. However, we are still having trouble keeping the information flowing around our organisations at the speed we need.

We expect Australian soldiers to be adaptive, competent, confident, self-aware, resilient and innovative. We expect our soldiers to act out our values of courage, initiative and teamwork. We don’t get these characteristics by writing papers and giving lectures. We will get them by creating habits of behaviour in our people; habits that through long practice and frequent use will serve them well in difficult times. And we must teach and reward the behaviour we expect.

We have defined nine types of behaviour that, when well-established across our Army, will create the culture we need:

- **Every soldier is an expert in close combat.** The confused battlefield and the array of threats that our soldiers will face means that there are no secure areas. Every soldier needs to be able to fight in close combat.
- **Every soldier is a leader.** In day-to-day activities and on operations, soldiers will need to take charge of themselves and lead their peers.
- **Every soldier is physically tough.** The physical demands of operations and daily life require resilience and endurance.
- **Every soldier is mentally prepared.** The intellectual and emotional demands of operations and daily life demand psychological endurance.
Every soldier is committed to continuous learning and self-development. From the day they join the Army, soldiers will have to be encouraged to take up opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills.

Every soldier is courageous. The combination of intrinsic values and shared ethos ensures that soldiers have the courage to face uncertainty and make the hard decisions required by complex warfighting. This includes the moral courage to do what is right.

Every soldier takes the initiative. Our small teams operations and the complex terrain we will work in demand that soldiers be able to act independently and without prompting. Soldiers need to remain aware of the plan at the higher level in order to exploit fleeting opportunities and assist flanking teams in achieving success.

Every soldier works for the team. Each soldier shares responsibility for his or her team and for the achievement of the team’s mission. Soldiers understand that they do not face danger alone. They must rely on the team just as the team relies on them.

Every soldier demonstrates compassion. Soldiers will need to show compassion and empathy both in barracks and when deployed on operations. Just as a professional sportsman or musician needs to study and practice constantly, so do we. Our skills are perishable. Knowledge is coarse and life is subtle and we must be able to deal with the world as we find it. We must remain committed to constant development and preparation, which is the essence of professionalism.

We must master the nine behaviours. The six-time winner of the Tour de France, Lance Armstrong, was right when he wrote that: ‘You aren’t born a professional. You have to turn yourself into one’.

Our education provides a foil for rigid adherence to routine procedure and doctrine. The ability of our people to account for differences in perspective and to communicate effectively across specialist backgrounds will be critical to our future. We have shown great willingness to develop empathy with people from all cultures. At all levels our people will need continuing education to remain skilful in current practice but also to be aware of orthodoxy’s limits.

As things are now, common training and education does much for the relationships across the three Services. Joint education, joint exercises and operational deployments are building cohesion and trust. But the future demands an even broader social horizon for our people. We now need to work as closely with other parts of our Government, with private contractors and with non-government organisations. We must consider how to include industry and other government agencies in our preparation, training and education. The ‘typical’ operation, if it exists, will include a mix of people that, organisationally and individually, we need to be ready to work with. We need to know them and they need to know us.
In the future, our Nation will demand a great deal of the Army. Technology will deliver wonderful opportunities, but disappointment awaits unless we combine the technology with the skills and creativity of our people. Our true capability advantage is in areas that others cannot readily copy—our culture and our people. Understanding who we are, what we stand for, and what we can do is the wellspring of morale, cohesion, resilience and success on the battlefield. This is our fundamental source of competitive military advantage. This will be the essence of the campaign that we are calling the ‘Soldier of the 21st Century’.

The questions we ask ourselves will shape our plans for the future. At a time when we are busy with operational commitments it is natural to focus on the immediate problems. But to realise the full promise of the Hardened and Networked Army we have to keep asking the difficult long-term questions about our people, our organisations and ourselves. Our future will not be realised through a single initiative or major shift in our approach to training, education or employment. It will be a journey of small deliberate steps—a journey we have already begun. Combined, these small changes will have far-reaching effects on the Army and our people.

ENDNOTES


THE AUTHOR

Major General Ian Gordon, AO, graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1973, undertaking a range of regimental and technical staff appointments, including the Royal Military College of Science at Shrivenham, UK. He served as Commandant of the Army Command and Staff College; as Director General Personnel – Army; as Deputy Commander, United Nations Transitional Authority in East Timor (UNTAET); and as Commander, Training Command – Army. He assumed his current appointment as Deputy Chief of the Army in May 2004. For his distinguished service to the Australian Defence Force in senior command and staff appointments he was awarded the AO in the 2006 Queens Birthday Honours List.
Ideas and Issues

The Medium-Weight Force

Lessons Learned and Future Contributions to Coalition Operations

Lieutenant General Peter Leahy

Abstract

This article is based on an address by the Chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy AO, to the Royal United Services Institute of the United Kingdom at the Royal Palace of Whitehall on 8 June 2006. Lieutenant General Leahy outlines why the Australian Army is seeking a significant increase in combat weight when most Western armies are lightening their forces. He argues that Australian military history is the backdrop against which this apparent anomaly can be resolved.

This discussion of the medium-weight force in coalition operations will focus on those aspects that are unique to the Australian Army. From the outset I should emphasise that certain crucial aspects of our Australian strategic circumstances, culture and history are unique. Furthermore, they have exercised a decisive effect on the structure of the Australian Army. The past is prologue and the move to a medium-weight force represents a significant transformation of the Australian Army. We are engaged in this process of transformation right now;
the end-state for the achievement of the medium-weight force is what we refer to as the ‘Hardened and Networked Army’. As I will illustrate, this transformation is best understood in the context of the Australian Army’s formative history.

I would like to focus first on commonalities. I am encouraged by the degree of unanimity among the advanced armies of the West regarding the increasingly lethal and complex nature of the battlespace, and the implications of this for our force structures and the capabilities required by our land forces. Of course we may all be wrong, but I believe that recent operational experience and the most likely future environment have vindicated our approach.

It seems to me that all of us have concluded that there is likely to be a diminution in state-on-state, force-on-force, conventional warfighting. However, the ability to conduct such operations, especially through the mastery of sustained close combat employing the combined arms team, remains the core contribution of an army to national power. The Australian Army remains firmly committed to professional mastery of warfighting at medium to high intensity levels as the best guarantee of success in other missions across the spectrum.

While conventional warfighting must be the ultimate benchmark and cannot prudently be ruled out, it seems likely that most of our armies are likely to be confronted by hybrid wars and non-state enemies, whether militias, terrorist groups or transnational criminals. While once this would have had no implications for our force structures, the impact of globalisation has been such that small teams of irregular enemies can now deliver the lethal kinetic effects that were previously the exclusive province of conventional armed forces. Our adversaries have exploited the general increase in individual lethality that is characteristic of the information age.

Moreover, today’s adversary is networked through the proliferation of cheap secure communications. To survive and prevail in the complex environment constituted by this threat we need to be better protected, agile, flexible and adaptable and thus able to devolve into semi-autonomous small, combined arms teams. While the current insurgency in Iraq epitomises this trend, in fact, we have been on notice since the Battle of Mogadishu in 1993 and the various wars in Chechnya over the past decade.
The Australian Army has drawn the obvious conclusions from all of this and has embarked on a development trajectory to become a Hardened and Networked Army—what is commonly referred to as the HNA. It is at this point that I digress from our shared assumptions and common forecasts about the future. Whereas most Western armies are lightening their forces to respond to the complex environment I have just described, in Australia, the transformation to the HNA represents a significant increase in combat weight to afford the Australian Army greater protection and firepower. We are moving up while other armies are rebalancing or moving down. Even with these shifts, as a small army, we will not meet our contemporaries in the middle. We will remain quantifiably and qualitatively below the levels of capability of many of the advanced Western armies.

How did this come to be? In answering that question, I must provide a potted history of the Australian way of war which, through the interplay of a range of cultural, geographic and historical factors, is unique—despite falling within the broad classification of the ‘Western Way of War’.

The Australian Army was one of the first forces to grasp the lessons of the Western Front in 1916–17. It was among the first to introduce what the eminent American strategic thinker, Stephen Biddle, described as the ‘modern system’ of force employment constituted by mutually supporting combined arms teams in response to the ‘metal storm’ that was the feature of the industrial-age battlefield. At the battle of Hamel on 3–4 July 1918, as part of a British, French and US coalition, Australian troops demonstrated their mastery of this new way of war. Their success at Hamel was achieved through the sophisticated orchestration of effects including the use of aircraft for observation of fires and battlefield illumination, as well as close cooperation between infantry, tanks, engineers and artillery.

During the Second World War, Australian forces performed creditably in the Middle East in coalition with the British. The Australian 9th Division, in particular, distinguished itself at El Alamein. In coalition with our US allies we defeated the forces of Imperial Japan in New Guinea, where our land forces again demonstrated their ability to master modern warfare.

That conflict in New Guinea was our only war of national survival. Throughout most of our history our land forces have been deployed offshore in an expeditionary mode, in support of our national interests and values as part of coalitions of like-minded nations. This reflects our status as a relatively small nation, populated largely by European migrants, which has ultimately developed liberal democratic institutions and a free market economy.
Since our inception as a nation we have attempted to ensure that a global equilibrium favourable to nations of this disposition has prevailed. In order to achieve this we have committed forces to coalitions led by whichever friendly dominant power has sought to enforce such a global order. Successive Australian governments have acted thus, regardless of occasional outbreaks of isolationist sentiment. It is a rational response to our unique status in our region and the constraints of our small population and traditionally low levels of military expenditure.

A glance at Australian battle honours—from the Sudan in the 1880s, through South Africa, both World Wars, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan as well as both the wars against Iraq—reveals an expeditionary military culture that in turn supports a grand strategy built on an alliance with the dominant liberal democratic power de jour.

To date, this grand strategy has succeeded in achieving Australian national security and prosperity. However, it has not exercised a uniformly beneficial effect on land forces structures or doctrine at the operational level of war. Let me explain. The last time our conventional forces were engaged in sustained close combat was during the Vietnam War. Our land forces operated in a complex and ambiguous environment in which they often simultaneously conducted combined arms conventional operations against a very capable foe; counterinsurgency operations against guerrillas; civil affairs and nation-building tasks; while also raising and training indigenous forces. Again, our forces displayed exemplary professionalism and readily adapted to the exigencies of modern warfighting.

We also matured as a coalition partner through participating in joint warfighting supported by US naval and air forces.

However, Australia acquired its own Vietnam syndrome, albeit different to that of the US. In the 1970s, as a nation, we concluded that the safest way to avoid entanglements in Asia was to restructure the Australian Defence Force (ADF) almost exclusively for the defence of continental Australia. This represented a profound discontinuity in our grand strategy and over time it seriously eroded the warfighting capabilities of our land forces.

Essentially the new grand strategy sought refuge in Australia’s apparently unsailable geography. The bulk of ADF funds were allocated to forces that could deny an invader entry to the continental air and sea approaches. Inevitably, this led to our air and naval forces being maintained at high levels of readiness, while the Army languished as a second-tier force. The Australian Army was deemed to be a mere strategic goal-keeper, required to mop up small groups of enemy who had managed to cross the sea-air gap around the continent.

The last time our conventional forces were engaged in sustained close combat was during the Vietnam War.
If it were not a fanciful view of warfare then, it most certainly is now, when
globalisation has so severely compressed time and space, and when the likelihood
of an invasion of Australia appears minimal. Over time, the effect on the Army of
these official strategic assumptions has been quite pernicious.

We hollowed our units, based on assurances from planners that we would have
significant lead-time to mobilise, not unlike a nineteenth-century force. Moreover, we
steadily disbanded most of our vital expeditionary capabilities, particularly deployable
logistics, on the assumption that, while operating exclusively on Australian soil, we could rely on our
home infrastructure and contractor base.

What this meant in practice was that our
Special Forces became the only land element
capable of operating effectively with our coali-
tion partners. This, paradoxically, had occurred
while we invoked the rhetoric of self-reliance.
By the early 1990s we had almost lost the ability
to field credible combined arms teams in a coalici-
tion setting. It was becoming risky to deploy our conventional forces in even a low
intensity environment. This was confirmed by the deployment of a light infantry
battalion group to Somalia in 1992, when their organic vehicles were vulnerable to
militia mounted in 'technicals' with heavy machine-guns.

Ultimately, it was another coalition expeditionary operation that sounded the
alarm bells about this parlous state of affairs. In 1999— with very little lead-time—
Australia was required to lead a multinational stabilisation force into East Timor.
Even this modest commitment imposed an enor-
mous strain on our small land forces. Our soldiers
and junior leaders performed splendidly. However,
we were fortunate that we were accorded permis-
sive entry and encountered no credible opposition
with more than small arms.

The Australian Government heeded the
message from this deployment. A Defence White
Paper released in 2000 directed that the Army be
expanded and that it develop the capacity to deploy
a brigade and a battalion group simultaneously
on expeditionary operations. While refraining
from authorising the development of heavy armoured forces, the White Paper did
provide the flexibility for the Army to enhance its combat weight in response to
changes in the threat environment and to ensure that our forces could survive
without undue risk.
While the US Army—having absorbed the lessons of Desert Storm—was attempting to lighten combat forces designed to defend the Fulda Gap, the Australian Army recognised that it had to enhance its combat weight in order to bolster its strategic mobility as a prerequisite for deployment outside Australia. This was not aimed at any particular scale or type of operation, but was simply a case of being equipped to survive on the more lethal modern battlefield.

In this way our development path and that of our likely coalition partners once again converged. Australia recognises that its responsibilities as a coalition partner may involve leading a coalition rather than merely contributing niche forces. That is especially likely to be the case in our immediate region where we are a capable military power. Our regional geography does not serve to inoculate us against the transformation in warfare that has occurred since the end of the Cold War.

Since the turn of this century it has become abundantly clear that the diffusion of the means of violence and the increase in lethality available to individuals and non-state actors has forever severed the nexus between so-called low intensity conflict and irregular warfare. This is also the case in our region where conventional wisdom has long held that light infantry will dominate any conflict.

We in Australia now assume that regardless of the classification of the mission—whether it be delivery of humanitarian support, peace enforcement, counterinsurgency or warfighting—it is likely that our troops will face potent threats in the form of man-portable anti-armoured weapons or improvised explosive devices.

We must enhance our combat weight and ability to survive short-range engagements in complex—most probably urban—terrain. This is where we believe the overarching trends in globalisation and demography are taking warfare. To the US Marine Corps concept of the three-block war we must add British General Rupert Smith’s clear insight that war will be fought ‘amongst the people’. Our task is more often likely to be protecting, supporting and persuading rather than killing and destroying.

The Australian Army’s Hardening and Networking initiative has two broad aims: first, to be harder to hit; second, to be able to hit harder.
aerial vehicles. Our purpose throughout is to maximise our ability to conduct close combat using combined arms teams. This represents a significant move from a light, leg infantry force towards a medium-weight force.

Finally, a word about ‘networking’—the other element of the HNA. The threat environment that I have described demands more than greater protection and firepower to ensure that our forces will prevail. We will need pervasive situational awareness, seamless access to joint effects and the ability to match the agility of our irregular foes through the creation of small, tailored combined arms teams. This will also permit us to be more discriminate in the application of effects.

Within the complex, ambiguous battlespace, hitting civilians or culturally sensitive infrastructure under the gaze of the global media undermines our centre of gravity, namely our moral authority. Network-enabled operations are vital to providing the solution to this dilemma—the strategic private. The HNA will seamlessly link sensors and shooters to our joint and coalition partners. The individual soldier will become a node in this network and share a common operational picture with his commander two and three up. Our focus will be on the soldier or the ‘networker’ rather than the technical aspects of the network.

At this point in time, much of this is aspirational. However, the HNA provides the axis of advance toward this end-state. Of course it also carries significant implications for future coalition operations. In the world of failing and distressed states it is probable that the armies of wealthy advanced nations will increasingly be required to conduct intervention and stabilisation operations.

A description of our current operational deployments illustrates this. We are operating in conjunction with the British in southern Iraq and are about to deploy a Provincial Reconstruction Team to Afghanistan in concert with Dutch and NATO forces. This team will be additional to our Special Forces and CH 47 helicopters currently operating as a national contingent as part of the multinational force in Afghanistan.

Closer to home, we are the lead nation in the multi-agency Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands (RAMSI), and have just completed a short-notice, multinational deployment to that nation to stabilise a deteriorating situation. Over the past two weeks we have also rapidly deployed a very capable Joint Task Force to East Timor in response to a request from its government, following a period of lawlessness and political instability there. We are joined in this endeavour by forces from Malaysia, New Zealand and Portugal.
We live in an era in which political sensitivities and issues of legitimacy ensure even the most powerful nations will refrain from the unilateral use of force, preferring to seek partners with similar capabilities and interests for the pursuit of military objectives.

Whether we are operating with our traditional allies or under the auspices of the United Nations, the Australian Army will need the combat weight and communications to collaborate with other sophisticated land forces. Moreover, our need for combat weight, networking, and seamless joint and multi-agency capabilities will be even greater if we are required to be the lead nation.

Until our deployments to Bougainville and East Timor, the lead nation role in a coalition was unfamiliar to us. In recent years, however, our immediate region has earned the title ‘arc of instability’. As the most capable military power adjacent to Micronesia and Polynesia, Australia carries the expectations of the United Nations and our traditional allies to provide the bulk of the forces required for contingencies in this area. But we must also be prepared to make a meaningful contribution wherever our national interests are challenged.

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Ideas and Issues

The Anzus Case

Alliance Interests, Costs and Benefits in a 9/11 Context*

William T. Tow

Abstract

Alliances require each party to constantly assess the benefits of maintaining the relationship. As the United States re-frames its defence posture and strategy to accommodate the new strategic environment, the utility of the ANZUS alliance, with its distinctly Cold War orientation, is under increasing scrutiny. Similarly, public opinion polls in Australia suggest that the ANZUS alliance, and US foreign policy generally, is viewed negatively. This article examines the several aspects of the Australia–US relationship, including: military and coalition operations, the rise of regional powers, the spread of weapons of mass destruction, and the increasingly interdependent economies of the Asia-Pacific region.

* This article was prepared for the annual International Studies Association Convention Panel on ‘The Other Special Relationship: US–Australian Cooperation Since September 11, 2001’, San Diego, California, 25 March 2006.
In 1962, at the height of the Cold War, John F. Kennedy observed that Australians were 'very satisfactory friends in peace, and the best of friends in war.' More than four decades later, not much has changed. Australia, along with the United Kingdom (UK), remain the most loyal members of a United States (US)-led coalition. Australian Prime Minister John Howard remains steadfast in his support for the increasingly beleaguered administration of President George W. Bush. Although fifty-seven per cent of Australians polled for a recent Lowy Institute survey declared they were 'very worried' or 'fairly worried' about US foreign policy, well over seventy per cent still supported the US alliance as ‘important’ or ‘fairly important’ to their own country and seventy-two per cent evinced a 'fair' or 'great deal' of trust that the United States would defend Australia if the latter were threatened with invasion. No commensurate polling has recently been undertaken in the United States specifically on the Australian alliance. However, Australia consistently ranks at the top or near the top in the Gallup organisation's annual survey of how Americans view foreign countries. It is thus hardly surprising that US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld was able to observe on the eve of the 20th Australian–US Ministerial Meeting (AUSMIN) that ‘our two countries could not be closer … ’

Yet platitudes about alliance unity cannot overcome lingering and obvious difficulties with US national security policy. Put simply, the United States is once more at odds with itself over what type of strategic commitments it can afford and can sustain at a time when it cannot meet recruitment goals for its armed forces, is unable to achieve decisive military victories in those limited conflicts in which it has engaged and has alienated many of its European allies. The value of future alliances will be measured by Washington, even more than previously, based on the level of defence burden-sharing they generate. This is particularly true at a time when America’s geopolitical posture shifts from one dominated by unilateralism to one in which the prospects of meeting threats through coalition warfare are relatively high. The executive summary of the March 2005 US National Defense Strategy clearly sets out Washington’s expectations: ‘We will help partners increase their capacity to defend themselves and collectively meet challenges to our common interests.’ Some observers might find historical parallels between the deterioration of the US strategic position in South-East Asia during the late 1960s and current trends in Iraq. In reality, the geopolitical stakes in Iraq are far greater for Washington than the Vietnam War, with growing consequences for fundamental global security in the energy sector and, by default, in the international counter-terrorism campaign.
Critics are now questioning the relevance of ANZUS at a time when American security planners are struggling to reconstitute a manageable global strategic posture. While still representing a minority view in the United States, Douglas Bandow of the CATO Institute has specifically targeted the Australian–American alliance and questions its ongoing utility to US national security. He predicates his argument on three key points: (1) that the defence capabilities of traditional US allies (including Australia) are sufficiently strong to warrant their increased defence self-reliance in a mostly ‘no threat’ Asia-Pacific regional security environment; (2) that the United States should move towards an ‘offshore balancing’ posture in the region, thereby ensuring that any future US military intervention there will be discriminate and short-term; and (3) that Australia and other traditional US regional allies might continue lower key defence ties with Washington without the United States formally underwriting their security by applying a China containment strategy or other approach that would commit US military power and forward deployed forces to the region indefinitely. Edward Olsen, a widely respected American analyst of Asian security politics, has also called for the termination of ANZUS, characterising that security agreement as ‘an irresolute alliance of marginal utility’ that would hardly be missed in regional security politics.

In Australia, there has been a long-standing and visible opposition to the alliance, notwithstanding its general public support. Opponents to the US’ extended nuclear deterrence posture were highly vocal during Gough Whitlam’s Labor Government in the mid-1970s and again a decade later when the US nuclear policy dispute with New Zealand led to that country’s expulsion from the alliance. The Australian Labor Party’s (ALP’s) former leader, Mark Latham, has recently disclosed his own covert opposition to ANZUS during the Australian federal election in October 2004. Although his view has since been rejected by the current ALP leadership, a recent Australian National University/Queensland University of Technology poll has revealed that thirty-one per cent of ALP candidates in that election believed the United States would not come to Australia’s defence and a remarkable ninety-one per cent disliked President Bush (sixty-one per cent disliked him strongly). These percentages must be disturbing to alliance supporters, given that the ALP is one of two major political parties in a country that the United States views as one of its most stalwart allies.

Shifting US global strategy in what the Bush Administration has termed the era of ‘the long war’ must be factored into the ANZUS equation. The Bush Administration’s implementation of the US Global Posture Review means that the significance of alliance dissent cannot be completely discounted. Those in the United...
States advocating continued alliance cooperation with Australia need to work harder to justify why ANZUS substantially contributes to US national security interests relative to more obvious American priorities: energy security in the Middle East and Central Asia, dealing with China as a rising power, and (re-) building obviously strained strategic relations with Europe and Russia. Washington’s failure to so justify plays into the hands of the persistent alliance critics in Australia who accuse it of taking their country for granted. It will also provide hard-liners in the United States a basis for demanding even more of Australia or reducing the alliance to a perfunctory entity. It will be argued here that alliance utility can be validly assessed from the US perspective by evaluating three basic criteria: (a) interests (allied contributions to US and Australian military objectives and capabilities); (b) influence (the use of an ally’s geopolitical position and standing by the other; and (c) legitimacy (the extent to which ANZUS engenders alliance credibility and consensus) versus risks and costs (the politico-strategic price the ANZUS allies pay for sustaining their alliance affiliation). All these provide a framework for measuring the continued value of the Australian–American alliance. The following subsections examine the benefits and costs of ANZUS.

**ALLIANCE INTERESTS**

ANZUS was formed during the middle of an Asian ground war (Korea) and justified on the basis of common ideological principles defined by the United Nations Charter. However, the treaty was largely predicated on a convergence of diverse interests. The United States needed its wartime allies to ratify a peace treaty with Japan. Australia and New Zealand wanted, as a quid pro quo for their signatures on any such document, entrée into the West’s innermost global strategic planning circles. From the outset of the postwar era, Australian policy planners recognised the need to strike a balance between regional and global strategies to ensure their country’s survival. Their American counterparts were slower to realise the full value of ANZUS to Washington’s own international security.
interests. However, they more than compensated for this once the US’ global containment posture against the Soviet Union matured and Australia became a key geographic and technological component of US extended deterrence strategy in the Pacific.\textsuperscript{14}

More than fifty years after the founding of ANZUS, the importance of Australia as a regional economic and security player is clear. Although its population numbers just over twenty million people, it sustains the world’s thirteenth-largest economy and the fourth-largest economy in the Asia-Pacific region. It is a major commodities exporter within the international community, ranking first in the world as an exporter of coal, wool, aluminum, and lead, and either second or third-biggest in iron ore, nickel, gold, meat, sugar and cotton.\textsuperscript{15} It has a formidable skills base and advanced research and development capabilities in such key areas as telecommunications, financial services and medical sciences. This allows Australia to provide valuable contributions within the context of joint defence burden-sharing, especially in intelligence collaboration, defence science and, to a more limited extent, weapons technology development. Its geographic location provides it with a substantial defence-in-depth, reinforced by a formidable air-sea gap between itself and its northern Asian neighbours. In terms of evolving US global strategic postures, Australia represents a friendly bastion: a ‘secure south’ for South-East Asia and a ‘secure west’ for the South Pacific.\textsuperscript{16} Its economic and technological infrastructure, along with its strategic geography, enhance Australia’s value to the United States as a strategic ally.

Strategic geography has been exploited by the creation and maintenance of critical joint intelligence installations in Australia. Special intelligence arrangements between these two ANZUS powers and US facilities in Australia have been monitoring global stability since the Cold War and constitute the heart of the alliance.\textsuperscript{17} More recently they have been solidified by such initiatives as the ‘Technical Cooperation Program’ (which also includes research and development cooperation with Canada, New Zealand and the United Kingdom) and pending Australian access to the US Global Information Grid that will provide superiority for US and allied network-centric warfare operations.\textsuperscript{18} With its

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**The Anzus Case**

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... the importance of Australia as a regional economic and security player is clear.

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**Its economic and technological infrastructure, along with its strategic geography, enhance Australia’s value to the United States as a strategic ally.**
privileged access to US technology, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) retains a sufficiently formidable technological edge over the military capabilities of its South-East Asian neighbours so that Canberra can claim with credibility ‘defence self-reliance’ for its substantial landmass, large coastline and adjacent sea lanes of communication. This makes Australia an ideal US ally—fulfilling US burden-sharing expectations and ably supporting US coalition warfare operations in distant locales while maximising its linkage with US military technology.\textsuperscript{19} As the US Ambassador to Australia observed in testimony before Australia’s parliament in June 2004: ‘No-one could have foreseen [at the outset of ANZUS in 1951] that we would share the kind of intelligence we do today. Together we have a window to the world that would not exist if we were apart.’\textsuperscript{20}

Against these strengths, however, some critical Australian weaknesses must be noted. Australia’s economic position in Asia is fragile over the longer term as modernising East Asian economies posit increasingly significant low-wage competitive challenges to its established medium technology industries. The clear exception is its continued ability to export minerals and commodities critical to the industrial modernisation of China, India and other regional powers. Australia’s choice to align itself with the United States so closely over the past ten years has also been resented by various ASEAN member-states, although this trend has recently softened.

This is particularly true with respect to Australia’s bilateral ties with the People’s Republic of China—a power with which Australia is intensifying economic and politico-diplomatic ties but which is potentially the US’ major geopolitical rival in the region. Australia is concerned over what it views as an excessively ideological American view regarding Taiwan and prefers to maintain a highly ‘pragmatic’ approach to China’s long-term strategic intentions.\textsuperscript{21} Conversely, Australian policy-makers are well aware that if Australia were seen to be caving in to Chinese pressure on the Taiwan issue, apprehensions entertained by some US observers over Australia’s becoming a ‘soft ally’ would be confirmed.\textsuperscript{22} In a visit to Beijing in August 2004, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer speculated that: ‘ANZUS obligations could be invoked only in the event of a direct attack on the United States or Australia. So some other activity elsewhere in the world … doesn’t invoke it.’\textsuperscript{23} American officials immediately and forcefully rebuked Downer, noting that Articles IV and V of the ANZUS Treaty called for immediate response if either US or Australian forces were attacked anywhere in the Pacific.
In a Taiwan contingency, they insisted, a ‘straightforward’ interpretation of the Treaty commitment would mandate Australian military assistance. Prime Minister Howard publicly supported the American interpretation and Downer retreated to stipulating that a future Taiwan crisis would have to be treated ‘on the merits of the case’.  

The obvious Australian geopolitical interest is to balance its security relations with Washington with its growing economic ties with China. John Howard supported this policy approach in a definitive address to the Lowy Institute in early 2005:

Clearly, a large part of the burden of such restraint is borne by the relationship between China and the United States. It would in my strong view be a mistake to embrace an overly pessimistic view of this relationship, pointing to unavoidable conflict. Australia does not believe that there is anything inevitable about escalating strategic competition between China and the United States … We see ourselves as having a role in continually identifying, and advocating to each, the shared strategic interests these great powers have in regional peace and prosperity.  

To what extent this posture can and will diverge from future US agenda in the East China Sea will be one of the central tests for the future of ANZUS.

Closer to home, Australia confronts an ‘arc of crisis’ of poverty-ridden and politically corrupt South Pacific states that will consume an increasing proportion of its strategic attention in the coming years. While Australia’s willingness to deal with these weak states alleviates what might otherwise be an additional security burden for US forces, the security assets it allocates to the South Pacific will vie with those earmarked for future US-led ‘coalitions of the willing’ further afield. In this context, Australia’s small military is arguably limited to ‘niche capability’ situations in which US resources can be supplemented: air refuelling tankers, Special Forces, conventional submarines and various types of maritime and tactical surveillance. An issue could arise over what constitutes the ‘fine line’ between Australia’s judicious exploitation of access to advanced American military technology and outright technological dependency. Australia’s latest Defence White Paper, released in 2000, anticipated this potential intra-alliance policy dichotomy: ‘a healthy alliance should not be a relationship of dependency but of mutual help … [Australian] dependency would weaken the alliance in the eyes of Australians and in the eyes of Americans …’
Perhaps the most significant concern related to the ‘interest factor’ in future alliance relations is the danger that Australia’s legacy of relying on ‘great and powerful friends’, if not carefully managed, could result in future alliance division. Perceptions are already held among many in Australia that their country is excessively dependent on the United States (a recent poll by the Lowy Institute indicated that sixty-eight per cent of Australians questioned believed their country ‘took too much notice’ of US foreign policy). Equally risky are prospects that the Americans will expect unqualified alliance loyalty from Australia and overreact if differences emerge. As Paul Dibb has observed, current alliance relations are ‘heavily underpinned’ by close personal ties between Prime Minister John Howard and President George W. Bush. ‘Maintaining [future] support for the alliance is contingent upon Washington’s future success in convincing the Australian public of both the necessity and legitimacy of its policies.’

A major challenge for sustaining mutual alliance interests will be how relevant Australia proves to be in the ongoing US Global Posture Review (GPR). The GPR is the most far-reaching reconstitution of US strategic planning since the onset of the Cold War. It is predicated on several key assumptions. First, today’s emerging adversaries are less ‘deterrable’ than was the USSR. Threats include international terrorists who are characterised by a willingness to die for their cause in the process of carrying out devastating attacks against US and allied targets. Increased force flexibility to pre-empt rapidly evolving or uncertain contingencies is thus required. Second, such force flexibility will need to be deployed in rapid and lethal ways to ensure threat neutralisation. Third, force capabilities other than manpower are increasingly central. Finally, allied force capabilities will be increasingly central to US strategic success in different regions; in particular, allied force modernisation and interoperability must be achieved in an Asia-Pacific environment where forward deployed US forces will be reduced as allied polities become more sensitive to their presence.

Increased force flexibility to pre-empt rapidly evolving or uncertain contingencies is thus required.
a ‘more global’ American posture strengthens opportunities for Australia to attach value-added dimensions to its defence relationship with the United States while simultaneously improving ‘the US capability to contribute to international efforts to defeat global threats such as terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction’. His American counterparts have likewise anticipated a more critical Australian role under the revised strategy: ‘As the US begins to alter its military “footprint” in Asia, and as we seek to become more agile and deployable from home to confront today’s less predictable threats … we will continue to rely on Australia’s advice—and abilities—in this region and beyond.’

These factors were certainly in the minds of US and Australian defence officials when they convened AUSMIN in Adelaide during late 2005. Several key Australian alliance niches had already been identified and implemented, including the upgrading of cooperative science and technology experimentation (2002); substantially upgrading the operational tempo of joint military exercises involving US and ADF SAS force elements (2002–2003); entering into more extensive joint development of missile defence technology (2003); and upgrading Australia’s defence intelligence access to US intelligence data to a level commensurate with that of Great Britain (2004–2005).

AUSMIN 2005 incorporated and expanded these precedents. A strategic bomber training program was announced whereby US B-52, B-1 and B-2 aircraft stationed in the US and/or Guam would conduct combined training with ADF air units at the Delamere Air Weapons Range in Australia’s Northern Territory. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was also signed to further upgrade facilities at the Joint Combined Training Centre at Shoalwater Bay, Queensland, in preparation for extensive joint military exercises to be conducted throughout 2007. Discussions also focused on the future organisation of joint peacekeeping and peace-building operations in the Asia-Pacific region. The transformation of the US–Japan defence alliance into one in which Japan’s military would play an increased role was acknowledged and praised, while China and Taiwan were urged to settle their outstanding differences peacefully. All of these initiatives represented concrete steps for merging Australian–American defence cooperation initiatives into the larger US global posture framework.

Barring unexpected miscalculations, overall prospects for continued interest compatibility in Australian–American security relations remain strong. To the extent that any issue generates bipartisanship in the Australian body politic, the American...
alliance commands such support. Kim Beazley, leader of Australia’s major opposition party, is a robust advocate of US defence ties and most of the Labor Party’s key political figures also accept it as a cardinal axiom for Australian foreign policy. It is unlikely that any single issue, including Washington’s requesting Australian support for a US military intervention against a Chinese attack on Taiwan, would greatly alter the extent of alliance support in Australia, although such a development would cause short-term strains.

Fundamentally, there is no real viable alternative for Australia to ally outside the US-led ‘Anglophile’ family of states. Notwithstanding Australia’s understandable desire to cultivate it as an economic partner, China cannot provide the commensurate level of cultural affinity, technological assistance or geopolitical weight that currently allows Australia to play an important regional and international politico-security role with American political support and under US security guarantees. Some South-East Asians remain reluctant to accept Australia’s regional identity and credentials. By contrast, successive US governments have been consistently clear about the premium value they assign to Australia’s strategic contributions to US security objectives. One of the most recent confirmations of this was submitted by the US Government to the Australian Parliament’s Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade:

… For the United States, Australia is a durable and effective partner in the Asia-Pacific region, whose deep knowledge and influential role within the region, and the priority it attaches to its relations with the countries of the region, are of immense value to us. It is also, however, a global partner of the United States … Australia’s contributions include tireless efforts to combat the spread of weapons of mass destruction, its strong support for multilateral measures to defeat terrorists … and active diplomacy and assistance programs to advance human development and dignity … Thus, our pledge to defend Australia in the context of the ANZUS Treaty is not only a solemn commitment, but also an integral part of the defense of our own vital interests, both regional and global.
ALLIANCE INFLUENCE

Alliance critics have argued that the Howard Government’s foreign policy behaviour has resembled that of a ‘deputy sheriff’ acting on behalf of US interests in South-East Asia. The Australian-led military intervention in East Timor during late 1999 engendered widespread suspicion throughout South-East Asia that Australia had little interest in becoming a part of the region. This impression has been reinforced by the Australian Prime Minister’s adherence to a pre-emption doctrine to combat regional terrorists, by Australia’s decision to buy 700-kilometre range missiles from the United States for extending its forward power projection capabilities, by its ongoing hard-line policy on refugee matters and, more recently, by its decision in December 2004 to declare a thousand-nautical-mile maritime safety zone. However, the Australian–Indonesian security relationship strengthened again after the October 2002 Bali bombing, and Australian–Malaysian ties improved with Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir’s departure from office at the end of October 2003. Australia was successful in gaining entry to the inaugural East Asian Summit (EAS). Concerns are still evident throughout the region, nevertheless, that Australia’s unwavering support for the American occupation of Iraq and its participation with the United States and Japan in a bilateral alliance network that may develop into a containment system directed towards China will undermine regional stability.

Despite these apprehensions, an equally strong case can be made for ANZUS and the Australian security tie as giving the Americans constructive access to the region. Australia has bridged ANZUS with various regional security arrangements, such as the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) with Malaysia and Singapore, and the Shoalwater Training Area Memorandum giving the Singapore Armed Forces access to large tracts (4500 kilometres) of Australian territory and opportunities to train with Australian force counterparts for approximately 45 days annually. The Howard Government has also upgraded its counter-terrorism cooperation with the Philippines, announcing in October 2005 that it would conduct joint maritime and aerial patrols with the Armed Forces of the Philippines and coordinate such efforts with the US Special Forces group at Headquarters Joint Special Operations Task Force operating in the southern Philippines sector.

Indonesia is a particularly illuminating case of the way Australia’s relations with a key Asia-Pacific state underpin the influence of ANZUS in South-East Asia. Australia’s ties with Jakarta have oscillated over the years, with its spearheading of the INTERFET operation in East Timor reflecting a thirty-year low point in bilateral
relations between the two states. Yet Australia and Indonesia’s proximity to each other means that their geopolitical fates are inevitably intertwined. Since the Bali bombing in October 2002, Australian and Indonesian law enforcement agencies have worked closely on counter-terrorism operations and related security issues. In April 2005, the two countries entered into a ‘comprehensive partnership’ designed to coordinate extensive Australian development assistance to Aceh in the aftermath of the December 2004 tsunami and to address people smuggling, narcotics, outbreaks of disease and money laundering. While hardly representing the comprehensive bilateral security arrangement in force between 1995 and 1999 (the Agreement on Maintaining Security), the new agreement posits a more realistic set of functional security tasks that require tangible cooperation between the two countries’ law enforcement agencies and the two countries’ military establishments (the ADF and the Indonesian TNI).39

The US Congress, until very recently, barred American military relations with South-East Asia’s largest country due to concerns over human rights violations. However, the George W. Bush Administration has regarded Indonesia as a key front line in its Global War on Terror and as a major determinant of ASEAN’s ultimate role as a stabilising influence in South-East Asia and the entire Asia-Pacific region. In November 2005, it restored full military ties with Indonesia that had been in abeyance since 1999. In a March 2006 visit to Jakarta, US Secretary of State Rice praised the Indonesians for making tangible progress towards democracy and for setting an example of ‘moderation, tolerance and inclusiveness’.40 By facilitating a stable socio-political environment in the world’s largest Muslim country, on Australia’s northern doorstep, the United States has contributed to the national security of both Australia and Indonesia’s ASEAN neighbours.

In a recent (mid-2005) visit to the US Pacific Command (PACOM), members of the Australian Parliament’s Joint Foreign Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade learned that US defence officials particularly valued the evolving Australian–Indonesian bilateral security relationship. This is based on what these officials asserted is a general lack of knowledge about Indonesia in US defence policy-making circles...
and ongoing legislative restrictions on developing US–Indonesian military ties. While some of these restrictions have since been lifted, the Committee reported that the value of Australian–Indonesian bilateral ties to regional security was well understood and appreciated in Washington: ‘… discussions with [US] defence officials made clear to the delegation how important Australia’s bilateral relations with its regional neighbours are to stability in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly as they can be used to increase the level of understanding of regional issues within America.’

In a broader South-East Asian security context, recent progress by the ASEAN peninsular states (Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand) in coordinating maritime surveillance of the Malacca Strait—such as the ‘Eyes in the Sky’ initiative—has direct implications for ANZUS regional influence and objectives. Eyes in the Sky was a regionally indigenous alternative to the US-proposed Regional Maritime Security Initiative that was rejected by Indonesia and Malaysia as too intrusive in terms of their sovereign maritime prerogatives. Affiliates of this new arrangement are now reportedly ready to accept the assistance of the FPDA in coordinating Strait air patrolling, potentially giving Australia a more direct role in safeguarding Western maritime and commercial interests, although in a South-East Asian rather than ANZUS capacity. This is a clear instance in which Australia’s geographic position allows it to play a low-key but significant role in South-East Asian security which the United States cannot assume due to its superpower profile.

All of these networks and initiatives fulfill Australian national security objectives by allowing it to act as a meaningful participant in the building of a more stable region. They simultaneously reinforce the US strategic commitment to and involvement in the Asia-Pacific—the hallmark objective of overall Australian strategic policy. The latest challenge to this linkage is the convening of the EAS in Kuala Lumpur in December 2005. That Australia, New Zealand and India were even invited to attend this gathering was a triumph. ASEAN states such as Singapore and Indonesia, as well as Japan, wanted to circumvent the ‘exclusivist’ approach, championed predominantly by China, as to who makes up Asia. Beijing initially wished to restrict membership to the ‘ASEAN + 3’ grouping (that included Japan, South Korea and itself).

To gain entry into this new and potentially important regional club, Australia was required to accede to the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation (TAC). It had previously declined to do so because of a perceived conflict of interest with ANZUS...
obligations, including future interventions against terrorist concentrations in South-East Asian territories. A breakthrough occurred in mid-2005 when South Korea and Japan reportedly convinced the Howard Government that it could—as they had done—circumvent this conflict of interest by agreeing to an exchange of written understandings between Australia and ASEAN that would guarantee that adherence to the TAC would not compromise alliance responsibilities. Australia subsequently indicated to ASEAN ministers that it would accede to the TAC in exchange for an EAS invitation. It remains unclear at the time of this writing what long-term impact the EAS will have on building a new regional security order in East Asia. More certain, however, is that Australia’s presence at its inaugural meeting should facilitate the summit’s sensitivity to US regional interests, notwithstanding the absence of American representation.

ALLIANCE LEGITIMACY/ALLIANCE RISKS AND COSTS

Critics of the alliance have pointed to what they believe is a growing trend of Australian obsequiousness to US strategic objectives. Some believe that this continues a long pattern in Australian foreign policy of seeking out a ‘great and powerful friend’, but that at this historical point in time Australia’s chosen senior partner is a ‘revolutionary’ rather than stabilising hegemon. Others accuse Australian policy-makers of having fallen into a culturally misleading trap of pursuing an ill-fated ‘Anglophile’ version of geopolitics. Johns Hopkins University historian Stephen Morris (a native Australian) has countered such arguments. ‘The idea that Australia is looked down on in Washington as a lickspittle is wrong … Australia is respected and its role in the alliance is appreciated. It has built up credit in the eyes of its friends, so it is listened to.’

‘Alliance legitimacy’ can be viewed within the ANZUS framework as Australia’s succeeding in strengthening US credibility in strategic behaviour, sometimes by restraining that ally from pursuing policies that in hindsight would appear to have been shortsighted. If this is a legitimate view, then Australia’s track record of serving the United States in such a capacity over recent years has been decidedly mixed. In fairness, however, the Bush Administration’s first term was underscored by a proactive commitment to a neo-conservative-driven, unilateralist strategy that was to test even the most nuanced of alliance managers operating from Canberra and other Asia-Pacific capitals. As the noted Australian political commentator Paul Kelly has observed:

‘The idea that Australia is looked down on in Washington as a lickspittle is wrong …’
Australia prefers an America that values partnerships and coalitions, that utilises soft as well as hard power, that emphasises political methods as well as military ones. It is idle to suppose that any lurch to an American unilateralism would not erode the domestic political support within Australia for the alliance.46

Alliance legitimacy should therefore not be confused with unmitigated Australian alliance loyalty to the United States. Policy-makers can ill afford to entertain love affairs when core national security interests are at stake. The Howard Government committed itself to military action in East Timor despite the Prime Minister's discomfort over his lack of personal chemistry with Bill Clinton and the obvious disappointment it felt over an American reluctance to commit 'boots on the ground' to that operation. Australia's military commitment to the American intervention in Iraq during 2003 was visibly limited: around 2000 military personnel and a small number of Special Forces, F/A-18 aircraft and naval ships out of a total Australian force of around 50 000 regular service personnel and another 20 000 reserves.49 Australia was up front in applying conditions to its Iraq contribution: that its ability to deal with regional contingencies would not be undermined and that its military contribution would be withdrawn quickly after Saddam Hussein's removal from power. During a July 2005 visit to Washington DC, moreover, Howard went out of his way to distinguish Australia's posture of policy pragmatism directed toward China from the Bush Administration's more ideological stance.50 He did so despite his obvious personal admiration of and cordial relationship with President Bush.

What Australia did not do very well was to treat US intelligence estimates of Iraq's WMD program with appropriate scepticism prior to committing the ADF to the Iraq intervention campaign. Assessments of this episode commissioned by the Australian Government, such as the Flood Report, concluded that this policy failure, in part, could be attributed to a lack of 'contestability' in intelligence advice that the Government received from its own sources.51 Others have been more critical, asserting that Australia's intelligence community...
was generally unwilling to provide alternative assessments to a Government that promotes a culture of tightly controlled foreign policy formulation from the Prime Minister and Cabinet downward.

Alliance legitimacy and alliance risks and costs dovetail in situations where an ally offers advice to its security partner that influences the latter to reach sober judgments about the risks and costs of military action relative to what perceived rectifications or benefits such action may generate. Legitimacy rests upon the action initiator’s ability to make a prima facie case to the international community that such action is justified and is limited in proportion to the initial threat. US and allied intervention in Afghanistan appeared to meet this test. The intervention of the US-led ‘coalition of the willing’ in Iraq did not because the rationale of WMD pre-emption failed to withstand the test of time and forcing a regime change in Iraq was, by itself, an inadequate basis for justifying war. Future historians will have a field day sifting through the operative policy documents in both the UK and Australia that led to those two countries’ participation in the 2003 Iraq conflict.52

However, governments do learn from past miscalculations. The Howard Government is no exception. Avoiding Australian involvement in a Sino-American conflict over Taiwan has now clearly become a key Australian foreign policy objective. Alliance legitimacy in any such conflict would be tested by how well Australia responded with a judicious combination of strategic restraint and alliance support. If China were to invade Taiwan without credible provocation, the United States would most likely apply the Taiwan Relations Act to such a contingency and intervene. Under such circumstances, Australia could extend low-key or tacit support for the Americans by offering to assume additional maritime or air surveillance responsibilities normally covered by PACOM. But it could refrain from directly involving Australian forces in or around Taiwan itself as any such conflict would not immediately entail a substantial requirement for Australian ‘niche capabilities’ (Australia’s Collins diesel submarines could be an exception to this, but recent operational difficulties with them puts their readiness in doubt).

Australian policy-makers and their American counterparts would prefer to work out any such Australian response in advance of a future crisis escalation in the East China Sea. What cannot be allowed to occur is the unfolding of a public drama reflecting alliance division: one in which US policy-makers demand that Australia support US objectives and actions or risk alliance dissolution, and in which Australia

Future historians will have a field day sifting through the operative policy documents … that led to … participation in the 2003 Iraq conflict.
is faced with a New Zealand-type policy dilemma. Nor can China be encouraged to demand that Australia not apply ANZUS to any such contingency or face the consequences—a demand that at least some Chinese officials raised when China passed its Taiwan anti-secession law in early 2005, which was strongly rebuffed by the Australian Government. In this context, Alexander Downer’s recent speculation offered in Beijing (during August 2004) that Australia may not necessarily invoke ANZUS in response to a renewed Taiwan crisis was unnecessary and unfortunate. It precipitated a strong American diplomatic rebuke and encouraged the Chinese to subsequently press Canberra on the issue. It appears that, for Australian policy spokespersons, the alliance legitimacy/risk and cost balance is still a learning process.

CONCLUSION

ANZUS is sufficiently beneficial to the United States to cast serious doubt over Douglas Bandow’s recommendations listed at the outset of this article. His assumption that Australia can defend itself in a no-threat environment does not take into sufficient account the rapid, de facto merging of contemporary regional and global security. Alliance strength means that Australia can and must relate to its American ally at different levels of strategic interaction because the regional and global dimensions of threat and response are becoming so integrated. International terrorism, energy security and other forms of ‘alternative security politics’ co-exist with WMD proliferation and power balancing to create a far more complex world than when ANZUS was initially created as a mere instrument of Cold War containment. Australia has committed its defence efforts and resources to realise niche and interoperable capabilities that can be employed selectively within future and mostly American-led military coalitions. The ANZUS imprimatur constitutes the heart of such initiatives. They are based on shared core and enduring values that underlie the politico-cultural dynamics of the alliance. It is unlikely that Australia will find better alternatives than the United States.
The sheer scope of and strategic transformation embedded within the US Global Posture Review precludes Washington’s adopting a constricted ‘offshore balancing’ approach for the Asia-Pacific region. In either case, however, Australia would have a key role to play in facilitating US strategic credibility. Under the Posture Review, joint intelligence facilities in Australia, the potential to deploy advanced network-centric related systems at widely dispersed sites and the build-up of joint training facilities are vital to modern war. Real-time information and emphasis on long-range targeting and maximum lethality will increasingly prevail over manpower and vulnerable platforms, especially in scenarios dominated by asymmetrical conflict. Even a minimum US strategic presence in the Asia-Pacific would not change this reality: forward force presence may be reduced, but on the basis of force reconfiguration rather than strategic retrenchment. The extent to which Australia is contributing to the integration of US and allied assets is appreciated at the highest levels of US decision-making and reinforces alliance viability.

Australia is reaffirming alliance (ANZUS) access to the Asia-Pacific through its bilateral and multilateral regional security ties. It is building a modest but viable network of counter-terrorist operations with various ASEAN states and is a rising force in US–Japan deliberations about how security problems in North-East Asia affect the wider world. It is also a vigorous player in Asia-Pacific security dialogues, often providing both regional policy-makers and American counterparts a ‘second Western view’ on how preventative diplomacy and strategic reassurance can be more effective within such institutions as the ASEAN Regional Forum and the forthcoming EAS. This hardly resembles the containment strategy that Bandow believes is operative and directed against China. The Howard Government’s visible hedging strategy regarding Sino–American security relations undercuts those who would argue that containment is alive and well in an ANZUS context.

Even an alliance as close as ANZUS will confront Australia with formidable challenges over the near future as structural change affects regional and global power and stability. US foreign policy will need to be rationalised and
explained more effectively if an inherently conservative Australian electorate is to remain comfortable with American leadership as a force for constructive rather than arbitrary change. The comparative rate of Australian economic growth will have much to do with how effectively the ADF can buy into and operate state-of-the-art defence systems in ways that add value to American coalition strategy. As a maritime trading state, Australia is required to assess the value of its ever-growing trade and investment volume in East Asia as a strategic factor. The extent to which the Australia–US Free Trade Agreement can balance such calculations will not be known for years to come. In the meantime, the China factor presents Australian officials with a highly complex myriad of geo-economic and geopolitical interplays that must be better understood and managed.

The testimony of ANZUS relevance and strength in the eyes of US policy-planners is the way that the alliance has endured for over half a century. As the US Government submission to the Australian Parliamentary hearing on the alliance observed, ANZUS provides a formal commitment ‘that buttresses a multi-dimensional alliance relationship’ and one that complements each ally’s strength with the other’s security in a variety of key sectors: strategic consultations and planning; intelligence sharing; joint military exercises; interoperability; and cooperative defence research and development. The United States is on record as wanting to sustain ‘both the habits and muscle of our cooperation’ because doing so constitutes ‘a vital interest for both of our countries.’ This is one case where a historical legacy of cooperation in war and peace has evolved into a highly effective and appropriate relationship with which to face an uncertain future.

ENDNOTES


In 2004, for example, nine out of ten Americans assigned a 'favorable' rating to Australia in this category with only about seven per cent saying they viewed that country 'unfavorably'. See ‘Nine out of ten Americans like Australia best’, Sydney Morning Herald, 24 February 2004.


Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, In the National Interest, chap. 3.

Ibid.

18 Gary Waters and Desmond Ball, *Transforming the Australian Defence Force (ADF)* For Information Superiority, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 159, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2005, pp. 80–2.


28 Ibid, p. 5.


32 For background on the first three categories see Australia Department of Defence Submission, February 2004, at Ibid. For reports on the intelligence exchange upgrade, consult Greg Sheridan, 'Bound by Intelligence', The Australian, 3 September, 2005.

33 Cultural affinity is an important determinant of those 'comfort zone' factors that underpin alliance cohesion. Writing recently for the National Review Online, Michael Rubin has compared the informality of the Australian–American relationship with the ‘stiffness’ of Anglo–American ties: ‘The ease of interaction between Americans and their Australian counterparts is also one of culture: both countries have an immigrant culture; both eschew the class distinctions that so many Eton and Oxford-educated British officials embrace. While Britain perfects nanny-state political correctness and closed-circuit televisions on every street corner, Australians and Americans emphasise small government and liberty.' Rubin, 'Our Ally Down Under' National Review Online, 7 July 2005, at <http://www.nationalreview.com/rubin/rubin200506070948.asp>.

34 US Embassy Canberra, 'Inquiry into Australia's Defence Relations with the United States…'


36 Australia’s lead-up to signing the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation is a case in point of where such suspicions created a row over Australia’s commitment to the region relative to its traditional alliance commitments. See 'Howard flies into storm over ASEAN treaty', Sydney Morning Herald, 28 November 2004.


49 White, ‘Australian Strategic Policy’.


52 These views were recently summarised by Tony Walker, ‘Getting too close for comfort’, *The Australian Financial Review*, 18 November 2005. This article attacks former US Ambassador Michael Thawley’s contention that Australian war critics should exhibit more confidence in the independent judgment of their government in matters of war and peace. It observes that this ‘is an odd proposition since it is now clear that whatever the original pretext for the decision to go to war, it has not survived the war itself.’

53 United States Embassy, Canberra, ‘Inquiry into…’

**THE AUTHOR**

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War and the New 21st Century Disorder

Jeremy Black

Abstract

This article is based on a presentation prepared in August 2004 for the Land Warfare Studies Centre’s occasional seminar series. Professor Black begins from the premise that technology alone cannot win war. In the 21st century, with urbanised Third World populations suffering poverty and unemployment, warfare and its aftermath will take place in the complex terrain of megacities, where the war-winning power of technology is reduced. He argues that war is won when your enemy is persuaded that they have lost. Consequently, defeating the enemy should not be confused with causing more casualties—just as winning battles does not equate to winning wars.

Today, more than ever, I find myself challenging the technological interpretation of war. Perhaps this is because I see this interpretation as asserted rather than demonstrated. Many military thinkers and scholars appear, by contrast, to place much more emphasis on the cultural factors of war. By ‘cultural factors’ I mean the way different societies have different tolerances of and different understandings of victory and defeat, suffering, death, and casualties. While I intend to examine these cultural differences in the ensuing discussion, I also want to look at the way in which war is currently developing and may develop in the future.
I want to look closely at the technologically driven interpretation of war. Put simply, it is clear that those fighting or engaged in power projection want better weapons than their opponents; they want better weapons systems, they want better means of force projection. The difficulty arises when superior weaponry alone is regarded as sufficient to ensure victory. The general historical interpretation in the past, certainly up to the early 1990s, viewed developments in military proficiency essentially as linked to developments in weapons systems. Early modernist historians cite the impact of gunpowder; 19th centuryists point to the changes in handheld weaponry and cannon in that period. Naval historians, of course, view the 19th century in terms of armour plating and steam power. While there is an enormous amount of truth in these assertions, they also rest on a number of fallacies and I intend to deal with these in conceptual ways as well as drawing on some points of evidence. Let me start with one or two conceptual points.

One of the most obvious fallacies is that you win a war by winning battles. This may seem an obvious point—if you don’t win the battles, you are unlikely to win the war. I would argue, however, that you win a war when you persuade your enemy that he’s lost—when he ceases fighting, when he surrenders. Certainly there have been wars in history that have ended with the complete extirpation of the other side; but in virtually all cases, wars end with one side being expected or forced into surrender. The factors that lead to that surrender merit careful thought because clearly—to introduce the cultural element—they are determined by the way in which people understand that they have lost.

One historical example of this perception of defeat is that of the American Civil War, in which the white cohort in the Confederacy took twenty per cent fatalities and twenty per cent injuries before accepting that they had lost. In most modern wars, casualty figures would never reach that level. But what has become apparent over the last hundred years—and this is likely to continue in the future—is that different societies’ tolerance of casualties will vary enormously. One of the great mistakes is assuming that the other side’s understanding of ‘casualty’ is the same as yours. Some historical interpretations of this sense of casualty can be blatantly flawed. For example, the historian Niall Ferguson, who is quite a well known historian, published an article in a major British newspaper...
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about three years ago in which he attempted to argue that the Wehrmacht—the German Army—was the best military force in the 20th century. He based this on a statistical analysis showing that the Germans had killed more of their opponents than they themselves had suffered by a bigger ratio than any other army in World War I or World War II. The problem with that analysis is that the Germans actually lost World War I and World War II. In other words, being able to inflict a much heavier casualty rate, which in World War II was particularly the case at the expense of the Soviets, did not prove decisive for the Germans given that their opponents were willing to go on taking much heavier casualties. In a sense this is obvious, yet it undermines many of the standard interpretations of war that present a rather crude dichotomy between symmetrical and asymmetrical.

The argument popular with most scholars and military thinkers at present is that we are in an age of asymmetrical war. It’s important to bear in mind that, in symmetrical warfare, the two sides will not necessarily have the same willingness to entertain casualties. As a consequence, there’s really no point attempting to plan one’s military operations on an attritional basis in which you kill more of the enemy than you lose yourself and then they accept the verdict. It simply won’t operate that way in symmetrical warfare—so it certainly won’t do so in asymmetrical warfare.

To return to the issue of the technological interpretation of warfare, my problem with this view is that it often merges two very different stages in war and power projection. It merges the ability to move to the battlefield, the zone of conflict or the zone of the actual contact, with what actually happens there. There is no doubt that advanced technology brings with it enormous advantages. The simple fact of air travel, particularly combined with aerial refuelling in a way that would have been a fantasy in the past, represents an ability of power projection which is a major form of capability. Once a destination is reached, however, a whole new set of challenges unfolds. This is particularly the case in an environment in which the distinction between enemy and friendly forces is difficult to establish. This is far more common in the history of war than the relevant literature would have us believe. Much of the documented history of conflict is based on defined armed forces, easily recognisable as armed forces—they wear uniforms or, in the pre-uniform age they had some sort of designation that made them quite clear—and they operated as regular forces. Even in civil wars—which are a much more prevalent form of warfare than is
commonly held—the American Civil War or the English Civil War, for example, were fought by what were, in effect, regular armed forces. Historically, there has been a whole range of conflict in which there is no clear-cut separation of the two sides—and this is likely to become a common feature of future warfare. New tasks such as peacekeeping or peace-making are particularly prone to a lack of clarity in separation. Even in simple crude warfare, however, it may not be easy to differentiate between the two sides and therefore establish the opponent against which you impose your power.

Technology also imposes its own difficulties and the use of air power in the interwar years provides a good example of this. The Americans used air power and marines on what they termed ‘peacekeeping missions’ in Haiti, the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua in the 1920s and 1930s, although their actions may not have appeared much like ‘peacekeeping’ to the natives. In the early 1920s air power had a tremendous impact and this was particularly demonstrated by the British in Iraq, Somaliland and Yemen where it was used to great effect—on those occasions when the British were able to establish just who they were targeting. In urban environments, however, it proved very difficult to establish precisely who the target was, even with the advanced technology in the possession of the militaries of that period. Destruction was an easy option; the French, for example, resorted to shelling Damascus in 1926 as they simply had no form of precision targeting more sophisticated than that.

Future theatres of conflict will undoubtedly be urban and involve the world’s great population centres. Any insight into the future of the world’s population will show clearly that about ninety-five per cent of population growth occurs in the Third World. Much of that growth is concentrated in vast cities, places like Kinshasa, Karachi, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, and Johannesburg. Engaging militarily in cities such as these is extraordinarily difficult given the very topography of those areas, their characteristically urban societies and the close way in which they are mixed together. It is going to be incredibly hard to use the kind of power projection possible today in order to achieve results. Yet these are the environments most likely to become theatres of

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conflict in the future. There are a number of reasons for this, not least the fact that the cities in the Third World are experiencing enormous economic and social change at a level unprecedented for those societies. In these societies, massive economic change commonly results from the rapid deterioration of an agricultural base. This is often accompanied by an enormous demographic increase which pressures societies that simply cannot produce enough jobs and whose cities become swamped by people moving into urban areas in search of work. These pressures are combined with social patterns of a breakdown of deference and the erosion of the pre-existing ways of organising society. Such dramatic change and its ensuing dislocation can often lead to elements of the population being exposed to very radical political pressures. Tehran is a fine example of this. In the eyes of the outside world, Iran appears firmly under the control of what is a fairly authoritarian government. It’s my belief that they don’t control it at all. The Iranian government simply cannot control what’s going on in Tehran, which is a vast sprawling city of no real structure, of neighbourhoods which have moved beyond the control of the civil authority. Likewise the Pakistani government cannot control Karachi. Other cities are the same. There are very few major cities which are actually under reasonable control.

In a sense, the West has little experience of intervention in countries such as Iran and Pakistan. Most of the intervention that has occurred has been in countries in which the population density has been much, much lower. I am deliberately excluding Iraq from this argument as the war in Iraq began as a conventional war. I’m referring to interventions in countries such as Liberia or Sierra Leone where the major problems were not so much controlling the cities, Monrovia or Freetown, but in attempting to control the distant forest regions. I suspect that such interventions are going to appear relatively easy in comparison with the enormous problems of controlling urban terrain for which there is yet to be an established and successful *modus operandi*. Despite this, there have been Western successes and successes by non-Western governments in attempting to control insurrection. It’s generally agreed, for example, that the French brought Algiers under control through intensive...

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policing characterised by brutality in 1957–58. One of the great problems with that campaign, however, was that the French timetable of control was so completely different to that of the insurgents. This issue of a timetable of control is another looming difficulty in the interventionist scenario. The French pulled out of Algeria because of a build-up of political pressure within France. The key to this political pressure was the continued ability of sufficient Algerians to defy the authority of the French government of occupation.

The issue of a timetable of control and the effect of political pressure on military outcomes reflects what I would refer to as the revolution in attitudes to the military. In Western societies in particular, there is a growing disinclination to accept the notion of casualties, long-term commitments and arduous roles. This disinclination manifests itself in civil society and within the ranks of politicians. The issue of casualties has long plagued the political architects of war. The War Cabinet in Britain in the Falklands War of 1982, for example, decided in its wisdom that domestic public opinion would accept a thousand British fatalities after which it would be necessary to negotiate with the Argentinians via the Americans. At that stage, the British population was over 50 million. Given the nature of labour in a modernist society, it is far easier to endure higher casualty levels without any real economic or demographic problem. Even after a very major war in which casualty levels are very, very high, history has shown that society classically suffers only short-term demographic blips. Nevertheless, under what was perhaps the most resolute Prime Minister I can ever expect to see in my time, Cabinet estimated that a thousand fatalities was the maximum that would be acceptable. And that was a war that was fought in defence of British sovereign territory—of course to the Argentinians it wasn’t a war in defence—but to the British it was fought in defence of British sovereign territory. In the current international context, the Americans are clearly suffering a great deal of public angst given that their casualty levels have risen well over a thousand. For a society of 290 million people (the American population on the last census figure), the idea that losing a thousand males should be a crisis is surprising. To add some context to this point, just over fifty years ago in the Korean War, societies such as Britain, Australia or the United States were prepared to envisage much higher casualties for a territory—Korea—about which they knew very little and which certainly wasn’t part of their established geopolitical concerns. Clearly there has been a shift. World War II, on the other
hand, was obviously different, with attacks constituting a very real threat to existence. The Korean War, however, presents a sound basis for comparison, and demonstrates quite starkly that, within two generations, the public willingness to accept casualties has changed radically.

Looking ahead, it’s a matter of some debate as to whether this is going to remain the case or not. The American scholar Victor Hanson has argued that this is just a short-term blip and that, in his view, Western societies will revert to a willingness to take high casualties—what he calls ‘civic militarism’. I’m very dubious about that. I think that in fact there have been a whole series of quite profound social changes in the late 20th century and into the 21st century in terms of the atomisation of society, greater individualism, greater expectations of hedonism, and a different relationship with the state. I don’t think this will be reversed. It is certainly the case that there are different sets of values compared with those of the warrior societies of the mid-20th century. Again this varies around the world. Any study of the Iran-Iraq War of 1980–1988 will produce evidence of losses amounting to several hundred thousand among the combatants, and a willingness to engage in frontal charges against unsuppressed machine-gun fire with very heavy casualties. The same kind of conflict and the associated willingness to slaughter civilians is clearly evidenced in the Congo, for example, or in recent events in the Sudan, let alone what happened in Rwanda in the 1990s. This form of conflict is characterised by a high willingness to accept combatant losses, very high willingness to inflict casualties on non-combatants, and often an erosion of any real understanding of the difference between the two. That is likely to remain the case in large areas of the world. Again, it’s worth noting that most conflict in the world will occur in Third-World societies. Third-World societies house the greatest social pressures and suffer the greatest economic strains. These are the countries in which the demographic ratio is more and more of a problem, where there are lots of young males without jobs, often poorly socialised with a high tolerance for violence. The collision of these factors will ensure the highest incidence of violence in these countries.

... there have been a whole series of quite profound social changes ... [leading to] a different relationship with the state.

... there are lots of young males without jobs [in the Third World], often poorly socialised with a high tolerance for violence.
Australia has a natural geographic buffer from the conflict zones of the Middle East and Africa. Yet, it is reasonable to assert that the balance of world power has shifted quite considerably to the Pacific in recent times. I think this is a trend that will continue. I would argue that the European Union is a relatively failed economic model. I foresee a situation in which the demographic and economic weight of Europe within the world system will decline and the demographic, economic and military weight of East and South Asian countries will increase. There are, of course, conventional volatile geopolitical environments all round the perimeter where the Pacific area meets Asia. It is very difficult to engage in the arms races currently being waged in South and East Asia without some form of confrontation. It doesn’t have to be war. This potential for confrontation forces other regional powers, of which Australia is one, to at least plan for their responses to it. It’s quite obvious that there are going to be confrontations over Taiwan, for example. When those confrontations occur, the powers with links to Australia—classically the United States—will turn to the Australians and expect them to take a major role. Any form of refusal may not necessarily be acceptable.

Currently, the United States’ power is primarily projected into the Balkans, the Middle East and South Korea. It is short of military resources and it has run down its conventional army—in my view, unadvisedly so. Yet the United States’ military focus may be about to change. There are certainly going to be problems in Near America, for example, when President Castro dies, or if civil conflict erupts in Colombia—a country which is highly unstable—or in Venezuela where the Chavez regime is deeply unpopular with the American administration. It is therefore entirely conceivable that America’s allies, NATO—as far as the Balkans is concerned—and Australia and Japan—as far as the Western Pacific is concerned—will find themselves in a scenario in which the Americans pull back some of their troops and military resources to the Caribbean and Central America and require NATO, and countries such as Australia and Japan, to take over security tasks in their own regions. It is fair to say that states such as Britain and Australia have had, to some extent, a free ride in strategic terms for several decades. This is because the Americans have actually underwritten everything in strategic terms which have been crucial to their own interests. As a result, the US has been able to respond quickly to situations as they have arisen, without having to build up the capabilities needed to address future threats. However, this approach is unsustainable in the long term. The US is already under considerable pressure to reduce its defense spending, and there are growing concerns about the sustainability of its military commitments abroad. In order to maintain a robust military presence in the region, the US will need to increase its investment in defense and intelligence activities. This will require a significant reallocation of resources from other areas of government spending.

[The US] is short of military resources and it has [unadvisedly] run down its conventional army …

… we cannot assume that … America’s ability to commit itself militarily will match our geo-strategic needs.
to our security. This doesn't mean we have found all their policies acceptable since, quite clearly, there is major disquiet among America's allies over the war in Iraq. The practicality is that we cannot assume that, over the next half-century, America's ability to commit itself militarily will match our geo-strategic needs. This is becoming very apparent both in the Asia-Pacific and in Europe. The Americans are telling the Europeans in no uncertain terms, 'It's your responsibility in the Balkans; it's your responsibility in the Mediterranean.' The only reason the Americans don't push it even further is their desire to maintain the capability to intervene in support of Israel and, accordingly, they have a great interest in the East Mediterranean. Australia, in turn, may find itself under increasing pressure from the Americans—who see Australia as a wealthy society that hasn't invested enough in defence. It is worth bearing in mind that American power projection into this part of the Pacific dates essentially from the 1940s and to the Indian Ocean it dates as recently as the 1970s. The same levels of commitment at all stages cannot be assumed.

In discussing the future stability of the Asia-Pacific region, it is dangerous to assume that the tensions within East and South Asia can be insulated. Looking close to Australian shores, for example, the potential for Indonesia to remain unified hangs to a certain extent on its success in managing to suppress separatist movements in, for example, Sumatra. Indonesia has really only worked as a state since the very beginning of the 1950s, and even then there were separatist movements in Sumatra and Java. The possibility of its continuing to work successfully as a state for the next fifty to a hundred years is minimal at best. The possibility of many countries being able to operate in that fashion is unlikely. The Japanese, for example, are very worried about China becoming too powerful; yet they are also concerned about China becoming too weak. If only one per cent of the Chinese population flees to Japan in the event of a breakdown of order in China, the Japanese simply couldn't cope. We have to bear in mind that many of these states are actually quite weak and the possibility of one of them becoming a failed state will have obvious consequences in terms of refugee control.

Should we be seeking to take a far more interventionist role in shaping and educating those nation-states with a potential for failure? One has to be very cautious about the practicality of interventionism. I once heard Paul Wolfowitz speak on the topic. He explained very lucidly that his interest in Iraq came from his experience in his early days in the State Department where he played a role in persuading the American government to withdraw its support for the Marcos regime in the Philippines. America duly withdrew its support and Marcos...
went and, added Wolfowitz, the Philippines has worked ever since. This same success, continued Wolfowitz, is quite possible in the Islamic world and he cited Turkey as a case in point. The problem with that analogy is a simple one. In Turkey, it was a Turkish military regime that imposed the change. There is a degree to which people appear more ready to take enforced reform from within their own society or from groups within their own society. If enforced change is imposed from outside that society, it is far less acceptable. I certainly would not regard military intervention as in any way a first option. I actually feel that the United States has taken too much of a militaristic view of national power projection. They have under-invested in diplomatic advice; they have under-invested in positive economic intervention. I've heard it said that America can 'take out' fourteen other countries in the world. What happens then? Once a military solution is adopted, it is very difficult then to transition smoothly. Take Afghanistan as a case in point. From the 1930s through to the 1970s, even the Afghan monarchy found it quite difficult to maintain control of that country. How much harder is it for an alien force? From 1979 to 1988 the Soviets used 120 000 men and resorted to brutal methods and, even then, they weren't able to subdue the country. Bombing cities such as Kandahar certainly didn't help them gain control.

I think there are very few reasons for willingly engaging in conflict. There is much to be said for Bismarck’s comment, ‘the Balkans aren't worth the bones of a single Pomeranian Grenadier.’ Military power is strongest, most effective, when it is used very rarely. Military strength rests fundamentally not on the ability to beat others but on the ability to intimidate them. Intimidation is strongest when there is no risk that it will go wrong. The risk is higher if the level of involvement is greater. The danger is, as with the Americans in Iraq, that other people will draw lessons that you can be beaten or snubbed or humiliated. In fact the Americans in many respects have succeeded, as they have removed Saddam Hussein; they took a thousand casualties, put in a caretaker regime and, to a certain extent, they've succeeded in the long-term pattern of history. But in practical terms, they've failed: they’ve found themselves in a situation in which their power has not had the consequences that they wished and, to that extent, their ability to intimidate others has actually been partially compromised.

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I believe there is a double naïveté about the Middle East. There is an American naïveté and there is a European naïveté. The European naïveté is that fundamentally, if only Israel didn’t behave in such a nasty fashion, there wouldn’t be a problem because the Arabs would be sympathetic to Israel and they could have limits and it would all work out. That’s naïve. There is an American naïveté which places the blame for global disorder at the door of international terrorism and refuses to believe that it has anything to do with the policies of the state of Israel in the Middle East. Both these views are naïve and both fail to understand that it is a much more volatile situation. The American idea of the draining of the swamp is a false analogy. In fact, what I actually think this does is to create environments in which there is likely to be even more trouble particularly because many of the centres of terrorism are based in allied states which are not under full control.

One of the major centres of terrorism at the moment is Karachi. You’re not going to end terrorism in Karachi by bombing Islamabad. I think the notion that somehow we get rid of the rogue regimes and suddenly we create a better world is a deeply flawed approach to terrorism. Yes, we have to be robust toward terrorism, but I also personally think that the rules of engagement have to be changed and much of the war on terrorism should be handled not by the regular military but by Special Forces which operate outside the military. While this always represents a danger to the state, in a sense, the rules of engagement which affect military units are not ones which necessarily are most appropriate for dealing with terrorists. A country like Australia, which is a couple of islands, has the ability to control its borders. While border control is a fundamental defence against terrorism, it isn't the only defence because a certain amount of terrorism is home-grown. Many people think of terrorism in terms of an Islamic threat. Terrorism itself is much more general than that; it isn't always politically slanted, and it is part of the continuum in which sheer criminality and sheer psychotic behaviour are aspects of terrorism. We need anti-terrorist techniques when we're up against organised movements. But we also have to be aware that terrorism *per se* can come from a whole series of causes and with some of those what you need is simply sophisticated policing. And for that, a technologically based military is of little use.
THE AUTHOR

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ABSTRACT
This article is based on a presentation to the Rowell Profession of Arms Seminar, held at the Telstra Theatre, Australian War Memorial, on 23 June 2005. It is a personal reflection on the evolution and context of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), by the man who planned and deployed Australia's contribution to that operation. A truly international and interagency effort, RAMSI is often viewed as a template for promoting security and governance in Australia's volatile neighbourhood.

INTRODUCTION
Operation Helpem Fren was the codename given to the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI). My involvement in the mission began with initial planning in the weeks before the first waves of police and military deployed to Solomon Islands on 24 July 2003. Subsequently, I served in Solomon Islands in the dual roles of Commander of the Participating Police Force (PPF) and as Deputy Commissioner of the Royal Solomon Islands Police (RSIP) until 1 August 2004. This experience was a great honour and privilege and, after
living in Solomon Islands for a little over a year, I developed a deep affection for the country and its people. Before going any further, I should also acknowledge the loyalty and great respect I feel towards the many dedicated and committed police officers who remain in the RSIP and who persevered in their duties through years of neglect and intimidation before RAMSI.

RAMSI has had a profound impact upon the people of Solomon Islands by literally changing the course of their nation’s history. While this discussion will consider the success of the mission up until mid-2005, I would also like to preface these remarks by noting that there is still a great deal of work to be done in Solomon Islands. The job remains a difficult and, at times, a very dangerous one. In the past eight months there have been two assassination attempts on RAMSI personnel and, in May 2004, at Manakwai village on Malu’u, North Malaita, shots were exchanged between RAMSI military forces and a criminal element. The second assassination attempt against RAMSI personnel (which, like the first in October 2004, was a cowardly ambush of a PPF patrol in Honiara) resulted in the shooting death of Australian Federal Police (AFP) officer Adam Dunning on 22 December 2004. While the mission has been incredibly successful, it is also necessary to remember the fragility of the peace created by RAMSI. There remains a critical need to address the complex causes of the underlying ethnic tensions that led to the breakdown of civil society in Solomon Islands during the mid- to late-1990s. Before proceeding, it is important to develop some context by describing the country and some of the recent history that led to the political, economic and social crisis for which RAMSI was the response.

SOLOMON ISLANDS—GEOGRAPHY, CLIMATE AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Solomon Islands is located in the south-west Pacific. The Shortland Islands form the country’s northern border, which is adjacent to the island of Bougainville in Papua New Guinea. The islands of Choiseul, Santa Isabel and Malaita make up the remainder of the northern part of the Solomon chain, while New Georgia, Guadalcanal and Makira form the southern part, with the Santa Cruz Islands further to the east. In total, however, almost a thousand separate islands comprise the Solomon group, with the six major islands and many smaller ones forming a double chain that stretches for 1500 kilometres in a south-easterly direction from the...
Shortland group. The national capital, Honiara, is located on the island of Guadalcanal, which is about three and a half hours flying time from Brisbane. Guadalcanal is perhaps best known to most Australians as the focal point of the many sea and land battles fought during the Second World War, primarily between Japanese and American forces for the possession of the strategically located Henderson airfield.

Just a few degrees south of the equator, Solomon Islands has a tropical climate, with rugged mountain ranges and heavy jungle forming the major terrain features across most of the islands. Due to the geography of Solomon Islands, many of the communities are extremely remote—a factor that makes the delivery of services very difficult. The primary means of transport is by boat, with motor vehicle traffic mainly being confined to the major centres of Honiara, Auki and Gizo. The population of the islands is about 500 000 and growing at a rate around 3.5 per cent per annum. The rate of population increase is high and of increasing concern because of the pressure it places on both natural resources and the demands for services. Melanesians make up the majority of the population; however, there are also pockets of Polynesians and Gilbertese, particularly on some of the outer islands. Religion plays a significant role in the life of the people. More than ninety-five per cent of the population is Christian, with the remainder following customary beliefs. In some places Christianity is practised alongside traditional beliefs of magic and ancestor worship. Over eighty languages are spoken in the country. On numerous occasions, particularly on the rugged island of Malaita, a five minute helicopter flight from one village to the next would mean that RAMSI personnel needed a different interpreter.

Solomon Islands was a British protectorate from 1893 until 7 July 1978, just over twenty-five years ago, when the nation achieved independence. Since that time, for a variety of reasons, standards of living have deteriorated to the extent that social indicators are among the lowest in the Pacific. Unemployment remains very high, with approximately ninety per cent of the population following a rural subsistence lifestyle. Almost all export earnings are

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derived from primary products, particularly timber, fish, palm oil, copra and cocoa. Over recent years, Solomon Islands’ economy became dependent on the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and a succession of budget deficits. There was very little capital investment, few development projects or employment generation schemes, and basic infrastructure such as roads and electricity supply were eroded.

ETHNIC TENSIONS

Urban drift to the national capital, Honiara, throughout the 1990s exacerbated unemployment and other social problems, further heightening tensions between various ethnic groups. In particular, friction between the inhabitants of Guadalcanal and Malaita over issues such as land, internal migration and compensation claims led to numerous outbreaks of violence and criminality. At the height of this conflict some 20,000 Malaitans were forced, through fear and intimidation, to flee their homes in Guadalcanal and return to Malaita. Young, dispossessed and aggrieved youths took up arms and clashes between rival groups became commonplace.

Prior to RAMSI, Solomon Islands was a troubled nation in a steady state of decline that met all the indicators of a ‘failing state’. Honiara was under the sway of armed criminal elements. In more remote areas there was a state of virtual civil war, in which self-proclaimed warlords and thugs with guns created no-go zones where they committed horrific crimes at will.

These groups were largely unopposed by an almost totally ineffective police force that was riddled with corruption and which frequently exacerbated the situation by forming alliances with opposing groups based on wantok loyalties.¹ In some cases, the police provided arms and ammunition to militants directly from the RSIP armoury. The national government, paralysed by fear, and deeply compromised by its own connections and dependence upon some of the armed groups, was reduced to rubber stamping outrageous demands for ‘compensation’ from parties claiming to have been wronged. Police officers were also often involved in exacting huge sums of cash at gunpoint from a beleaguered national Treasury. Money destined for provincial development programs and...
normal services such as hospitals and schools was squandered by the thieves and thugs who were virtually ruling Honiara. At village level, people found themselves without even the most basic of services. The spiral of economic decline was directly related to law and order problems. The normal social welfare responsibilities of government, particularly in the areas of health and education, were almost entirely reliant on aid funds from the international donor community and church groups. By mid-2003, the situation had deteriorated to the point where the Prime Minister of Solomon Islands, Sir Allan Kemakeza, heading a weak and divided government that was also essentially bankrupt, wrote to the Australian Prime Minister, John Howard, asking for assistance.

THE RAMSI CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS

PLANNING ASSUMPTIONS

Planning for the mission was based upon several underlying assumptions that developed out of the initial government-to-government discussions between Australia and Solomon Islands. These ideas were further refined through three high-level scoping visits that were undertaken to Solomon Islands prior to the formal arrival of RAMSI personnel on 24 July 2003. It was these early planning assumptions that have proved to be the key ingredients for the success of the mission in its first two years.

It is important to recall that the RAMSI deployment followed a request for assistance by the Government of Solomon Islands. Moreover, the majority of its citizens wholeheartedly supported the request for assistance. These two key factors, along with careful management, have ensured that the mission began with, and has maintained, the overwhelming support of the population. Evidence of this support could be seen in the incredible reception at Honiara International Airport on 24 July 2003 when thousands of cheering Solomon Islanders greeted the constant stream of C-130s and charter aircraft bringing in the police, soldiers and civilian specialists. Soldiers on the first planes had disembarked in defensive postures, but quickly sensed the mood of the population and shouldered weapons in order to wave to elated crowds. Even before the arrival of RAMSI personnel, the first illegal firearms had been handed in and stolen cars suddenly appeared in their owners’ yards overnight.
One of the greatest challenges for the mission will be to continue to maintain the high level of support of the majority of the Solomon’s population. One obvious barometer of the ongoing level of public support for RAMSI is the monitoring of newspaper editorials and comments from the man in the street and the woman in the village. The friendly smiles and waves of school children walking to re-opened schools at the sight of a passing RAMSI vehicle is another less scientific, but equally demonstrable, sign of continued support. I recall saying on many occasions that when the kids stop waving to us, we need to reassess what we are doing and how we are doing it.

The second factor contributing to the mission’s success was the possession of a strong mandate. The passing of the Facilitation of International Assistance Act 2003 by the Parliament of Solomon Islands, prior to the arrival of the mission, enabled almost 2000 soldiers and 300 police to arrive legally empowered to commence the immediate restoration of security and law and order. During the planning phase, there was some debate about how large and visible the military presence needed to be in order to fulfil its dual roles of protection of the PPF and logistical support to the mission. One can now say that arriving with the support of a significant military force has enhanced the success of the mission in a number of ways. The earlier experience of the International Peace Monitoring Team, an international effort in the Solomons from November 2000 to June 2002, had demonstrated the futility of a peace mission without ‘teeth’. On that occasion, police had been limited to monitoring and reporting incidents, and were not empowered to act against crimes being perpetrated in front of them. It was interesting to see numbers of AFP and New Zealand police officers who had served with the International Peace Monitoring Team returning to Solomon Islands with RAMSI to address what they described as ‘unfinished business’. Empowering an intervention force with a strong mandate often draws criticism over a range of sovereignty issues but, for the villager at the grass roots level, the notion of sovereignty takes a distant second place to daily survival. There is also an argument that in such cases sovereignty is not taken from but actually restored to the host nation.

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A third critical factor in the mission’s success has involved the multinational and multidisciplinary character of the mission. Operationally, RAMSI is a police-led mission, a feature that is something of a novelty in itself. The mission brought together a mix of police, military and civilian expertise that was not only able to deliver security and law and order, but also simultaneously to provide significant peace dividends such as development and nation-building. The role played by Nick Warner, a seasoned diplomat from the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as the mission’s civilian Special Coordinator, greatly enhanced the human face of the mission and ensured its success.

THE IMPORTANCE OF REGIONAL PARTNERS

In addition to being multidisciplinary, RAMSI includes personnel from 10 regional partners: Fiji, Samoa, Cook Islands, Kiribati, Tonga, Vanuatu, Papua New Guinea, Nauru, New Zealand and Australia. This diversity, along with the support of the Pacific Islands Forum, has strengthened the legitimacy of the mission by demonstrating the high level of regional commitment to its success. While some nations have contributed only limited resources, their efforts on the ground show that the commitment is not just about numbers or symbolism. RAMSI is about doing something to help a neighbour and it was a great source of pleasure for me to nominate the pidgin words ‘Helpem Fren’ as the mission’s operational title.

OPERATION PHASES

The planning phase of the mission made use of the excellent facilities at the AFP’s Wangaralli Nurrumbai Centre at Majura in the Australian Capital Territory. The centre now houses the AFP’s International Deployment Group, but in mid-2003 it was used to bring together planners from the main agencies involved in the mission—Defence, the AFP, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and AusAID. The aim of these sessions was to come up with a consolidated view of where we were going and what we were trying to achieve. There were some interesting meetings and a great deal was learnt about various organisational cultures and the differences in such basics as the language and terminology used by Canberra’s various bureaucracies. A good example of these differences involved priority setting and the understanding of the duration of the mission. Some members on the whole-of-government planning
team were thinking that the mission would only be ‘in country’ a matter of days prior to its withdrawal. Others were planning in months and years for achievement of specific goals, while those focused on aspects such as nation-building rightly argued that success could not be judged until Solomon Islands could stand on its own feet, which would probably take decades to achieve.

The end product of these deliberations was a plan encompassing three phases: commencement, consolidation and final. The commencement phase focused on immediate tactical and operational issues such as establishing a presence in the country, winning back the streets of Honiara from the criminal elements, commencing investigations, neutralising the self-proclaimed warlords and collecting illegal firearms. The second phase was aimed at addressing the issue of consolidation of rule of law in the country, so as to enable the essential nation-building work to get underway. The final phase, as the name implies, was about ensuring the sustainability and self-reliance of Solomon Islands and paving the way for a return to normal bilateral relationships. Given the importance of the commencement phase in terms of establishing credibility and acceptance of the mission in the eyes of the people of Solomon Islands, much of the remainder of this chapter will focus on key events in those early days.

Prior to leaving Canberra for Townsville, the jump-off point for the operation, a number of ‘desk-top’ exercises were conducted. These exercises involved a series of ‘what if’ scenarios that included all the government agencies, but particularly the small group of RAMSI Principals—the leaders of the police, military and development teams—coordinated by Nick Warner. The aim of the exercises was to determine what we would like to achieve on each day of the mission’s first week. For example, on the day of our arrival, one of the objectives included initiating joint unarmed PPF and RSIP foot patrols on the streets of Honiara. This move was necessary to demonstrate that a viable police presence was henceforth going to be in place to ensure the safety of...
citizens. The foot patrols were also symbolically important to show that the PPF was in the country to support and work with the RSIP and not as a totally separate entity. Of course, to have unarmed police showing the friendly face of policing in Honiara meant that simultaneously there was a need to provide mobile patrols of armed police to act as backup. Indeed, because of the types of weapons available to the militant gangs that had controlled the streets before the arrival of the mission, it was also necessary to have a robust military response at close call. Detailed planning and cooperation were required to get these arrangements up and working so quickly.

As a result of these exercises, it was possible to launch the first joint RSIP/PPF foot patrol within 100 minutes of arrival ‘in country’. I went to the Central police station in Honiara to look for an RSIP officer to take part in a foot patrol of the town’s main marketplace. As the station’s front desk was unmanned, I went to where the watch house and prisoner cells were located. There I found a person, wearing a singlet and blue trousers, hosing blood out of the cells. I told him who I was and asked if he had a police uniform shirt. He scurried away and re-emerged a couple of minutes later with a sergeant’s shirt which he hurriedly buttoned on as I introduced him to the AFP officer who was to accompany him on the foot patrol. This simple act, while obviously a form of beat policing which the particular RSIP officer had not done for some time, was important both practically and symbolically in order to demonstrate to the people of Solomon Islands that the status quo was changing. Gratifyingly, images of the RSIP officer and his AFP counterpart walking around the markets together on the day of our arrival were subsequently beamed around the world.

PROTECTIVE SECURITY

Another important activity on that first day, conducted prior to mounting the joint police patrols, was a visit to the office of the Prime Minister to discuss his Close Personal Protection (CPP). Following very brief consultation, those thugs engaged in providing physical protection for Sir Allan Kemakeza were replaced by uniformed police officers trained in CPP tasks. Also replaced, by members of the AFP Protective Services, was the ragtag assortment of RSIP and their wantoks who guarded the Prime Minister’s residence and office. These actions were vital because, in the lead up to the arrival of RAMSI, there was considerable resistance from both groups and individuals who saw that their corrupt practices would probably end. Resistance to the coming of RAMSI took the form of threats and intimidation aimed at the Prime Minister.
form of threats and intimidation aimed at the Prime Minister. Fearing that the Prime Minister might be killed, the RSIP Commissioner decided to conceal him until the mission arrived. When I spoke to the Prime Minister on 25 July 2003, one day after his new CPP team had taken up duty, he beamed from ear to ear, saying that he had just had the best night’s sleep in years.

EXTENDING THE INFLUENCE OF THE MISSION BEYOND HONIARA

The main presence of RAMSI was established at a site known as the Guadalcanal Beach Resort, which in reality was anything but a resort. Even as the mission consolidated itself at this location, there were already plans to establish additional police posts beyond Honiara. While it was crucial to secure a presence in known hotspots such as the Weathercoast and Malaita, where most of the fighting had occurred, there was also a keen sense that all Solomon Islanders across the country’s nine provinces needed to feel that RAMSI was there for everyone. Many people in the outer provinces had suffered incredible hardships throughout the years of the ethnic tensions. In numerous places, no goods or services had ever reached the villages; in other instances, villages had been subjected to raids by marauding gangs.

Day 14 of the mission saw the first police post outside of Honiara opened at Avu Avu on the Weathercoast. Three days later another police post opened at Auki, in Malaita and, by day 28, there were six more posts established in three provinces. By day 100 of the operation, there were 16 police posts across all nine provinces of Solomon Islands. Just prior to the first anniversary of RAMSI a seventeenth police post was opened at Lofung on the border with Papua New Guinea. The creation of these posts in such a short period of time was an incredible achievement, particularly when each post establishment needed to be preceded by significant negotiations with local chiefs and elders, political representatives and rival militia commanders. In addition, this task presented a logistical nightmare, especially when it required the building of police stations in incredibly remote areas of dense jungle with little local infrastructure and under very adverse climatic conditions.

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Great credit must be given to the military component … in such a difficult environment.
Great credit must be given to the military component of the mission for running the logistic support in such a difficult environment. At the newly constructed police post in Maluu I spoke with exhausted Army engineers who had constructed a complete building, including office facilities and living quarters, in just 12 days. To achieve this result, they had not only worked 18-hour days, but also managed to build up a great relationship with the local people. Initially, Lieutenant Colonel John Frewen, the commander of the military contingent, had agreed with me to establish nine police posts across the country. He managed to retain his sense of humour when told after only a few weeks on the ground that there had been a miscalculation and the requirement was 17 posts. The success of the mission is deeply indebted to the military for such excellent support in this aspect of the operation.

As a final word on the posts, it is worth noting that, of the 17 posts established, seven were what came to be called ‘accompanied’ posts. This term meant that a risk assessment had determined that it was too dangerous to send police into an area without also having a full-time military presence. This was another requirement that drew heavily on the resources of the Army, because an ‘accompanied’ post consisted of two PPF officers and over a platoon of soldiers. In these locations there was the added ability for the police and a team of soldiers to trek through the jungle to isolated villages and deliver policing services. The police posts became critical, not only in terms of delivering these policing services, but also by acting as a network for the delivery of RAMSI’s public relations strategies. The posts became a focal point for interaction between local people and the police and military personnel attached to that area. They provided such an excellent conduit for getting consistent messages out across the country that police posts have now become a central gathering place for people to meet and discuss problems. The posts also coordinate sporting and community events and provide a place where villagers can go to read the Solomon Star newspaper which, at the time of the operation, was usually full of information about RAMSI operations and where the mission was heading.

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE KEY MILENITANT GROUPS

The police posts also provided RAMSI with a base in the stronghold areas of the key militant groups from which it was possible to progressively negotiate with the various factions in order to get them to lay down their arms. Major factions included the Guadalcanal Liberation Front (GLF) and the Isatabu Freedom Movement, both of which were running military style campaigns against each other on the
Weathercoast. Another was the Central Neutral Force, which occupied tracts of land in central Guadalcanal and was headed by Stanley Kaoni who also used the alias of ‘Satan’. Another major group was the Malaitan Eagle Force, with strongholds located in Auki and Maluu on Malaita and strong affiliations with rogue police. The Malaitan Eagle Force was responsible for much of the criminality being committed in and around Honiara.

The engagements with the militant groups on the Weathercoast were of particular importance, as there had been a virtual civil war raging there for some time. The task of securing the Weathercoast and disarming the rival warlords there was among the highest priorities to ensure the success of RAMSI. The three RAMSI principals travelled to the Weathercoast probably no less than 60 times during the first year of the mission, talking with hundreds of villagers, chiefs and elders and bringing the RAMSI messages to the people at the grass roots level. During these visits, we also attended numerous traditional reconciliation ceremonies facilitated through the police posts. In these ceremonies, opposing villages brokered tentative peace agreements and exchanged custom gifts. One of the most sensitive issues in Solomon Islands that still requires careful management involves reconciling traditional custom law with the criminal justice system administered by the central government.

**DAY 21 OF THE MISSION—THE ARREST OF HAROLD KEKE**

When asked to nominate the most significant day in the first year of Operation Helpem Fren, RAMSI Special Coordinator Nick Warner is quick to reply Day 21, 13 August 2003. This was the day on which Harold Keke, self-proclaimed warlord and head of the GLF, surrendered and was formally arrested aboard HMAS Manoora. Keke’s arrest, arguably the most significant made during the operation, was also the first arrest made by the PPF. Harold Keke had gained a well-earned reputation throughout Solomon Islands as a vicious and cold-blooded killer who had established a no-go zone across a large area of the Weathercoast and refused to negotiate with the government. Rumours and stories added to the hysteria created by the horrific deeds allegedly committed by Keke and, to many people, he was seen as a demon.
I wrote my first letter to Harold Keke before leaving Canberra. In the letter I introduced myself and spoke about the mandate of RAMSI and requested a face-to-face meeting. In the following weeks there was frequent correspondence between us, the letters being collected by a member of the GLF who travelled from the Weathercoast to Honiara by small boat. At one point, just a few days after the arrival of RAMSI, this ‘courier’ was identified in Honiara by anti-GLF thugs who chased him and beat him up. He managed to escape from the thugs only to be arrested by the RSI Police and locked up. This affair then developed into a bit of a ‘Keystone Kops’ exercise when it became necessary to employ PPF members to negotiate the release of the courier from RSIP so he could deliver the next letter to Keke. After this experience, the courier refused to return to Honiara and from then on he was met at a location in the jungle on the outskirts of the town.

On the Weathercoast, Harold Keke’s influence was as profound as his methods were brutal. In one raid he destroyed a village. The 400 residents of the village were held at gunpoint, while Keke took two young boys, stripped them naked and beat them to death in front of the villagers. Their bodies were then tied to the hands of the local priest. Finally, Keke and his followers burnt down all the houses in the village. Only the little chapel was left standing because Keke was quite religious. Harold Keke eventually agreed to a face-to-face meeting with the three RAMSI Principals—Special Coordinator Nick Warner, Lieutenant Colonel John Frewen and myself. After a few of these meetings, which took place in a small church at Mbiti village, a place of Keke’s choosing, he finally surrendered and laid down his arms on the morning of 13 August 2003. As he said his good-byes to hundreds of his followers on the beach at Mbiti, many of them were in tears and visibly distressed. Many of these people had seen Keke as their protector and believed that his surrender would see them fall prey to other warlords who had been terrorising the Weathercoast. Indeed, Keke’s authority was such that, once in detention at a temporary remand facility built at the Guadalcanal Beach resort, the PPF were able to use him to write letters to other GLF members on the Weathercoast who were accused of serious criminal acts. In this way, it was possible to effect many dozens of what I call ‘arrests by appointment’ of suspects who would otherwise probably still be at large in the jungles of Guadalcanal.

I am convinced that if Harold Keke had not peacefully surrendered, it would have been necessary to insert significant military resources into the Weathercoast region in order to capture him. The great difficulty associated with that option was that Keke knew every inch of the incredibly difficult terrain and had a large number of well-armed
supporters. It is almost certain that RAMSI would have suffered casualties if it had become necessary to arrest Keke by force. On the day of Keke’s arrest, his second-in-command Ronnie Cawa and a number of other key GLF personnel were also taken into custody. Some weeks later, after further investigations in which witness and confessional statements had been obtained, we realised the value of the other men who had been detained when Keke was arrested. Finally, on the day that Keke was arrested, as agreed in the negotiations, there was a formal ceremony at Mbiti in which members of the GLF surrendered to RAMSI 40 high-powered firearms, 28 of which were military style weapons. These weapons were destroyed on site in front of villagers and those GLF members in attendance.

THE WEAPON AMNESTY

The destruction of the GLF’s weapons at Mbiti was part of a process conducted across the country to collect weapons from the various factions and the public. The eradication of weapons, either seized or handed in voluntarily, was important to the success of RAMSI. A central strategy in disarming the groups was the declaration of a 21-day amnesty. During this period, people could surrender weapons to RAMSI or to the RSIP without being prosecuted for possession of those firearms. Another element of the strategy involved destroying the weapons in front of the people who had surrendered them. This action ensured that it would not be necessary to guard those storage facilities vulnerable to attack. It was also a means of building trust with those who laid down their arms, as the destruction of weapons frequently occurred at large public events that took on the character of ceremonial occasions.

Those who surrendered weapons gained a deal of attention and respect from fellow Solomon Islanders and were assured that no ballistics examination would be conducted of any firearm surrendered during the amnesty period. Incentives to surrender weapons were also complemented by a significant disincentive for those who might seek to retain them. This disincentive took the form of some very tough legislation that would be applied to any person found in possession of a firearm after the 21-day amnesty period. The legislation, which was passed swiftly, included penalties of up to 10 years imprisonment and/or a fine of $25 000 for anyone caught with an illegal weapon. As a result of these measures, a total of 3730 weapons were collected during the first year of the operation, with all but five of these being surrendered during the amnesty period. In addition to the weapons, over 300 000 rounds of ammunition were also collected.
The amnesty did not succeed in collecting all the guns. The death of AFP Officer Adam Dunning and other shooting incidents prove that at least some weapons were cached. Certain individuals had made a choice to cache weapons in the hope that RAMSI would eventually leave the country. However, it is very likely that many of those same people who buried guns have been unable to access them due to their own subsequent incarceration in Rove prison. There are, however, two indicators that permit some confidence to be drawn from the large numbers of firearms collected during the amnesty that firearms are certainly not as readily available as they once were. One of these factors is that two assessments of the number of guns in circulation, conducted prior to our arrival in the country, both came up with total figures that were lower than the numbers of weapons actually collected. The second factor is that, other than the incidents discussed above, since the end of the amnesty, firearms have not been a feature of crimes committed in Solomon Islands. This is an extraordinary achievement when you consider the countless acts of murder, robbery and intimidation committed with guns in the four or five years prior to the arrival of RAMSI on 24 July 2003.

INVESTIGATIONS

The apprehending of Harold Keke and his key henchmen was followed by a series of arrests of key militants and their followers. In the first 12 months of Operation Helpem Fren, a total of 3390 arrests were made and 4900 criminal charges laid. While some of these charges related to minor crimes and street offences that were laid as part of restoring basic law and order to Solomon Islands, the most prevalent charge preferred by the major crime investigation teams was murder, closely followed by abduction. One of the most massive investigations in the South Pacific is still ongoing, involving over 50 bodies already exhumed from numerous gravesites on the Weathercoast of Guadalcanal. A significant number of criminal trials are also underway. The most significant arrests had to be timed in order to ensure that RAMSI was not seen to be favouring any particular group—from time to time claims of this nature had been made against the mission. Considerable time was also spent studying and discussing the flow-on effects, especially any possible political implications from these arrests. The wave of arrests, like the criminality itself, has had an impact across the whole of Solomon Islands society. To date, these high profile arrests have included all of the self-proclaimed warlords (and enough of their respective hierarchies to render the groups largely ineffective), the...
ombudsman, a magistrate, lawyers, numerous police, public servants, corrections officers and even two serving government ministers. From the outset, there was significant pressure on RAMSI to show that the mission was not a pawn of the government of Solomon Islands. There were, and still are, numerous calls to arrest the so-called ‘big fish’ whom the population at large believe to be guilty of official corruption, amongst other things. Many hours were spent explaining, on Solomon Islands national radio and at public meetings, the practical realities of gathering evidence to substantiate corruption allegations.

REBUILDING THE POLICE SERVICE

One area where RAMSI demonstrated that no one was above the law was in the very vigorous and very public cleansing of the RSIP. The RSIP had lost the trust, respect and confidence of the people and there was a need to demonstrate to the public that serious steps were being taken to clean it up. In the first year of Operation Helpem Fren, over 400 officers were removed from the RSIP. In some cases individual officers made the choice to leave the police service themselves, perhaps anticipating or witnessing what was happening around them. A number of other officers had the decision to separate from the force made for them and they were dismissed from the service. A total of 74 serving officers were arrested and charged with serious criminal offences and several are now serving lengthy prison sentences. These arrests included officers from all ranks, up to and including the two RSIP Deputy Commissioners.

Rebuilding a police service, however, is not merely about locking up or sacking corrupt officers: it is also about rebuilding the organisational culture and philosophy of the service. This task involves extensive community consultation about the values a community expects from the police and what services it wants the police to deliver. It is also a process that requires the identification of the true champions of the police service and the cultivation of those members in leadership positions that will take the force into the future.

To achieve this goal, a strategic review of the RSIP was established based on 15 terms of reference. In reality, every aspect of policing conducted by the RSIP was placed under the microscope and working groups of experts came up with a range of recommendations, many of which were rapidly implemented. The recommendations of the strategic review included revised recruitment standards for the RSIP and a new training regime that requires all new recruits to undertake tertiary studies.

… there was significant pressure on RAMSI to show that the mission was not a pawn of the government of Solomon Islands.
as part of their training. New relationships have been established with institutions such as the Australian Federal Police College, the New Zealand Police Academy and the Australian Institute of Police Management. Shortly before I left Solomon Islands, I had the pleasure of addressing the first wave of new RSIP recruits brought in under the new regime. Of the 30 latest recruits, 16 are female and the new officers represent all nine provinces of Solomon Islands. This statistic is a far cry from the recruitment practices of earlier years that saw the ethnic representation of the RSIP, particularly at higher ranks, become dominated by a single minority group.

While my discussion has focused primarily on the police service, significant work was also being undertaken to rebuild other public and private sector institutions in Solomon Islands. However, this account has demonstrated that the establishment of the rule of law is central to the rebuilding of a shattered country and shows how important an effective and trusted police service is to the rule of law. In a little over a year, Solomon Islands experienced a remarkable change in its destiny. Rampant criminality was checked after some 3000 arrests and the seizure of thousands of illegally-held weapons. The important work of eliminating corruption and graft from the Royal Solomon Islands Police Force was well advanced, and the RSIP was set on the road to regaining the trust and confidence of the citizens of Solomon Islands.

CONCLUSION

Successes in security and law enforcement paved the way for the critical task of nation-building to occur. The return of the rule of law resulted in travel warnings for overseas visitors being dropped. The placement of foreign in-line advisors in Treasury and the Finance Department has seen financial procedures regularised and a degree of accountability restored. For the first time in years, a responsible budget was brought down by the government of Solomon Islands and provincial premiers received grants to enable them to address local priorities. In addition, public servants across the country were able to receive their pay on time. As a result of these reforms, international financial institutions re-engaged with Solomon Islands, arrears to the World Bank were met and evidence of reconstruction and return of foreign investment were visible. With positive economic indicators, development donors are now able to move freely around the almost 1000 islands of the Solomon group to deliver development aid to those most in need.
RAMSI is unique in many ways. Throughout the first year of the mission, Solomon Islands was visited by academics and strategists from around the world who were curious about the factors that produced such a success.

The formula employed in RAMSI was right for the mission at a particular point in time. The same formula will not necessarily yield the same success anywhere else at some other point in time. The road to recovery is a long one but, as the saying goes, ‘if you want peace, work for justice’. There is still much to be done and there will be spills and hurdles but, so long as RAMSI continues to listen and learn from the wonderful people of Solomon Islands, both parties will forever be richer for the experience.

ENDNOTE

1 The wantok system is a complex web of reciprocal obligations based mostly on ethnic identity and language (hence the name ‘wantok’, which is pisin or pidgin English for the same language). In Solomon Islands, the interaction of traditional Melanesian systems of social organisation (such as wantok), the country’s colonial history and the post-independence decline of the national government, promoted vertical linkages of patronage that reinforced the negative effects of the wantok system.

THE AUTHOR

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TACTICS

LIGHT INFANTRY?

A PERSPECTIVE ON LOAD CARRYING AND THE SOLDIER, FROM PAST TO PRESENT

LIEUTENANT OWEN PAULSON

ABSTRACT

The load of the infantry soldier has remained steady through centuries of technological evolution—about 40 kilograms. The essentials: ammunition, food, and water are eternal. Yet, these are only part of the exhaustive ‘load list’. The author argues that logistic systems must be able to deliver resupply ‘just in time’ and commanders must rigorously enforce a weight limit. He presents his case for profound reform in what the infantry soldier carries into battle, leading to true ‘light infantry’.

Porterage. Platoons may be required to carry out porterage tasks, such as moving ammunition, explosives, rations and defence stores. Porterage is normally an administrative requirement and much greater loads will be carried than for patrolling.¹

The Rifle Platoon
Department of Defence

¹
The light infantry unit is capable of being projected by a broad range of mobility assets and utilised for a large number of tactical tasks. While the light infantry unit must be sufficiently flexible to deploy via a number of platforms, it must also be able to self-deploy on foot in complex terrain if required.

The role of infantry has remained largely unchanged over the centuries. The tactical employment of infantry, however, has evolved and the technology and weaponry available to the infantryman have developed exponentially. Yet the infantry role has essentially remained the same.

I propose to examine briefly the way in which tactical loads have evolved and question the relevance of present practices to the modern battlefield. My argument will encompass the mechanics of the load list, the way in which logistics relates to infantry tactical load carriage, the light infantry and the nature of current practice.

THE LOAD LIST: A GUIDE OR REQUIREMENT?

The infantry soldier does not decide what to carry into battle. The soldier’s load is determined by his superiors who compile a list of what he is to carry, usually promulgated as a standing operating procedure (SOP), or a load list, for the unit. While this SOP is intended to act simply as a guide, more often than not it is used as a checklist of what the soldier must carry. A soldier who is missing an item on the list is expected to obtain that item immediately or face disciplinary action. With the evolution of technology and weaponry for the modern battlefield, the infantry soldier, now more than ever, is expected to be deployable for a wide range of tasks. As a result, the SOP/load list has evolved into a lengthy, drawn-out document covering the entire inventory of a soldier’s issued equipment.

I would argue that the infantry soldier should be given the basic load list purely as a guide. The only prescribed items should be ammunition, food and water. Specialist soldiers could be given the freedom to adapt their list, adding the equipment relevant to their specialisation, so that they have a reliable means of checking that they have all the equipment they require. In reality, however, the current practice is to conduct a check of the equipment carried by non-specialist infantry soldiers in accordance with the items on the load list. As a result, all too often soldiers are required to produce and carry equipment that they would not carry if given the choice. The policy of dictating what soldiers are to carry is arcane and incongruent with the concept of manoeuvre warfare that dominates today’s tactical thought.
The adaptability of the Australian infantry soldier is widely recognised and documented throughout Australia’s military history. The ability of soldiers to endure hardship in the face of insurmountable odds has become the hallmark of Australia’s veterans. Diggers are renowned for their ingenuity and resourcefulness in compensating for a lack of supplies and available equipment and improvising in times of desperation. Examples of these qualities litter the landscape of Australian conflict. In recent times, however, the ordering of soldiers to carry large amounts of equipment has turned them into packhorses, labouring across the battlefield. Too often, the infantryman is inserted rapidly by an array of modern transport platforms only then to be expected to take up his impossibly heavy pack and trudge towards the enemy. While battlefield tactics have evolved in quantum leaps, our soldiers carry the same load as a Roman centurion from 1000 BC. 

During Operation Citadel in 1999, soldiers were required to carry up to 10 litres of additional water to cope with the increased temperature and humidity. This comprised an additional 10 kilograms of extra weight with no compensatory decrease in their load. The load increase, in turn, resulted in an increased consumption of water, and so the cycle continued. The load list provided did not include the requirement to carry the extra water and therefore did not compensate for the extra load. Soldiers moved more slowly under the extra weight, and the incidences of heat-related illness increased—much to the concern of their commanders. Among the small amount of guidance provided to junior commanders in this situation is this advice from the handbook Junior Leaders on the Battlefield:

Regardless of technology and modern transport your soldiers, particularly in the Arms, must be prepared to carry exceptionally heavy loads on the battlefield … There is always great danger that such immense loads will have an adverse effect on your ability to fight as a team. The burden it carries will impede movement, speed and above all cause physical exhaustion. It is, therefore, most desirable to rationalise loads and above all, when in heavy contact, to remove packs and provide more freedom of movement for the team to get on with the task at hand.

It seems contradictory to issue junior commanders a word of warning concerning excess loads while, at the same time, advising them to rationalise their loads. Anecdotal evidence from previous conflicts provides some guide as to what ‘rationalising’ means in a combat situation. During the Vietnam conflict, for example, soldiers would jettison food so they could carry ammunition. On other
occasions, only one man per section would carry a mosquito net so that, if a soldier were evacuated with symptoms of malaria, he would not be charged for not having a mosquito net. 4

The rationalising of a soldier’s load should be the responsibility of all commanders. This means that, at the higher levels, tactical mobility should be re-examined and doctrine amended to reflect any change to the role of logistics. At the lower command levels, the load list should be minimised and consideration given to a move towards the concept of the ‘lightened fighter’. Equipping soldiers for every eventuality should be the responsibility of the logistics element that supports the infantry. The requirement for additional tasking and possible eventualities should be identified during the logistics planning cycle.

THE LOGISTICAL PUSH OR PULL?

All commanders are aware of the requirement for rapid replenishment of their soldiers. While the Air Force relies on mid-air refuelling and the Navy on replenishment underway, the infantry has its own system of rapid replenishment. Or does it? Well, actually no, the Army still uses the same system it always has. The Army relies on the minimum number of people possible located to the rear of its formations to provide its infantry with vital ammunition and food. These supplies are moved forward packed on to two or three vehicles per manoeuvre element. These vehicles are not capable of deploying their own security so the unit at the forward line must deploy elements rearward to bring forward its resupply. The only way to ensure that this does not happen on a daily basis is to allocate each soldier sufficient ammunition and food for three days. Thus, a logistical and doctrinal problem is solved by what is referred to in a time-honoured adage, ‘just make them carry extra, if they don’t use it they can keep it for later’.

Such practices should be the result of unforeseen circumstances caused by the uncertainty and chaos of battle, rather than the rigid requirements and outdated practices of commanders. Because of the lack of doctrinal shift in logistics, the infantry soldier still suffers at the hands of the same practices that underpinned the previous two world wars.
Light Infantry?

wars. Commanders at all levels need to critically assess the logistics elements of SOPs and provide advice to those who can implement change. Instead of the traditional infantry readiness to respond, whatever the circumstances, infantry commanders must learn to ask for improved logistics that operate further forward—that are proactive rather than reactive. Alternatively, commanders have to be ready to relieve their men of equipment that they do not believe is necessary to achieve the mission. Instead, that equipment should be carried by the logistics tail and be available as required.

Commanders should be lightening their soldiers’ loads and placing the equipment onto a platform capable of being brought forward when required. Such a platform should be crewed by a highly mobile group of logisticians capable of self-protection—not by two people responsible for a company-sized group. The modern infantry battalion’s logistical capability is vastly overstretched. A more self-sustained soldier has replaced the extra time taken to push forward a more frequent resupply. The soldier carries more equipment to make up for this logistical shortfall and, with the equipment, comes extra weight. The carrying of three days’ rations and water for the first seventy-two hours of an operation is clear evidence of this. If this practice were reviewed critically it would be obvious that, while soldiers do not consume all their rations during this time, they almost always drink most of their water. A resupply is often required at the thirty-six-hour mark solely for water. Once again, soldiers are required to carry extra weight as a safeguard against exceptional circumstances rather than as appropriate to their normal requirements.

Economy of effort as a principle of war is not applied to the individual soldier; it is applied at the national level and eventually determines the manning of an infantry unit. This principle dictates that only two soldiers per rifle company can be employed in a logistical role—little wonder that the ‘logistical push’ of a rifle company almost becomes a chain around its soldiers’ necks. The modern infantryman needs to be given the lightest possible loads to carry so that he is prepared to carry the heavier loads as the exception, not as the rule.

THE LIGHT INFANTRY?

Historically, the load carried by a soldier should weigh approximately one-third of his body weight. This has been the case in the British, American and Australian armies during the last one hundred years. Of course, this weight varies according to the soldier’s weight and is often exceeded to comply with the load carriage list and because of operational or exercise requirements.
The average load carried by an American G.I. in the Second World War was approximately 36 kilograms, with a BAR gunner’s load approximately 45 kilograms. During the Vietnam War, a rifleman and a machine-gunner carried that same weight, although for some soldiers the load increased to 54 kilograms. These loads have not changed in the post-Vietnam era. During Operation Citadel, soldiers carried loads in excess of 45 kilograms with gunners and signallers carrying loads in excess of 50 kilograms.

Current policy allows the carriage of a minimum of 20 kilograms on a 25 kilometre approach march. A combat fitness assessment (CFA) for combat arms units requires a load configuration which does not exceed 35 kilograms. The CFA is one of the infantryman’s indicators of combat fitness and readiness. The expectation is that a soldier, as part of a cohesive warfighting unit, is able to march 15 kilometres to battle within an allocated time. Realistically, his load should be 35 kilograms—indicative of a combat load—with revised timings to allow for the heavier load. Once again, policy needs to reflect reality and, in the short term, I would expect that the time allotment would be increased accordingly. A more effective approach would be a review of the load-carrying policy to decrease the soldier’s load to a more manageable 20 kilograms.

There is a clear case for the adoption of an attitudinal approach to load carrying. Instead of enforcing a minimum weight for infantry by way of inspection and weighing, the opposite should be adopted. If the infantryman were set a weight limit which was rigorously enforced, the result would be a lighter, more mobile infantry soldier, one capable of deploying with loads closer to those weights against which he was assessed during the CFA.

CONCLUSION

While modern technology and the modern battlefield have changed the way that we conduct warfighting, the infantry load has remained unchanged. Armed forces are now capable of rapid deployment across continents to conduct a range of tasks utilising complex weaponry and capabilities. Precision-guided munitions can be employed with lethal accuracy and large amounts of data transmitted in a matter of seconds; yet we have not managed to reduce the infantryman’s load in almost 3000 years.
A systematic change is required at all levels so as to lighten the soldier’s load. Ultimately, the load will need to be moved from the soldier to a different platform until resupply is deemed necessary. This will require a review of transportation and logistical load data and will only take place once a shift in doctrine and policy is mooted at the higher echelons of the Army.

We are loading our soldiers with large quantities of equipment and using exhaustive load lists to ensure that this equipment is acquitted. We do this to allow for the inadequate logistical system that is so overstretched it is on the verge of pulling us backwards. Our soldiers carry an excessive amount of equipment so as to provide our logistical system sufficient time to react to a demand for resupply which, in turn, ensures that the system becomes less reliable, rather than proactive and accountable. Is it any wonder that the light infantry has almost become a contradiction in terms? In fact, it is our mechanised infantry that goes into battle carrying only what it needs to fight.

Perhaps we should leave the final word to Brigadier S.L.A. Marshall:

I well recognise that the suggested changes are much easier said than accomplished. To say what the soldier should carry into battle to be able to fight and to remain mobile is the work of but a few minutes. But to weigh what has to be done by the Army to make possible such a reform requires consideration at almost every aspect of the Army’s policy, including its training doctrine, its procurement program and its budget.\(^9\)

ENDNOTES

1 Department of Defence, MLW 2-1-1, The Rifle Platoon, Headquarters Training Command–Army, Georges Heights, 1996.
3 Department of Defence-Army, Junior Leadership on the Battlefield, Headquarters Training Command–Army, Doctrine Branch, Georges Heights, 1994, p. 32.
5 Infantry Load, 70th Infantry Division, www.trailblazersww2.org/foster_infantry.htm.
6 Hall, Combat Battalion, p. 87.
8 Land Headquarters signal TRG BAA OU02042/99 of 180146Z MAY 99.
9 Marshall, The Soldier’s Load and the Mobility of a Nation, p. 72.
TACTICS ~ LIEUTENANT OWEN PAULSON

THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Owen Paulson enlisted in the Australian Army in 1992 and has served in 8/9 RAR, 3 RAR and 1 RAR. He graduated Royal Military College, Duntroon in December 2002. In 2003, Lieutenant Paulson served as a Platoon Commander in East Timor. Lieutenant Paulson is a Thai linguist and is currently posted to Headquarters 3 Brigade as the Liaison Officer to Commander 3 Brigade.
TACTICS

MORTARS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE
AN AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER’S PERSPECTIVE

CAPTAIN DAMIEN GREEN

ABSTRACT

The mortar is the only organic indirect fire support available to Australian Army infantry battalions. The author argues that detailed consideration of the mortar as a battalion asset has been neglected during the Army’s prolonged commitment to peace operations. This article examines the Army’s mortar training and employment requirements in light of future operations and capability development initiatives. The author concludes with options for further developing this battalion asset.
FIRE MISSION

‘Fire mission, section’ echoes through the night.
I race to show my aiming light;
To rip the cover from the mortar,
And hear the next staccato order.

The CP has the information,
To tell me ‘where’ and ‘elevation’.
Then – thump – I spin the bipod round,
And stamp the legs into the ground.
And then with accuracy and care
We’re ready to bring fire to bear.

My mate checks the charges near the fin
And, on command, out comes the safety pin.
The round is blasted to the sky –
I know our boys will not deny
They feel relieved to hear our sound –
The ‘crump’ of friendly incoming round.

The enemy try to escape the ‘shrap’.
But find they’re in a deadly trap.
When it’s all over, it’s ‘end of mission’,
And for the results we keenly listen.

INTRODUCTION

Australian Army doctrine describes the mortar in complicated fashion as a high-trajectory crew-served indirect-fire support weapon with a relatively short range and a high rate of fire. The mortar is also highly mobile, which makes it well suited to close support of manoeuvre units. It is ideal for engaging targets on reverse slopes, narrow gullies, in an urban environment and other areas that are difficult to reach with low-trajectory weapons such as artillery. The mortar is organic to an infantry battalion and is its only form of guaranteed indirect fire support. The mortar came into being in the early 1700s when siege warfare became the predominant form of combat in Europe. The cannon of the time could not fire into fortresses and could only inflict piecemeal damage on the thick walls. A new type of
A short cannon that could fire almost straight up into the air was developed—and the mortar was born. During World War I the mortar was purpose-designed to lob an explosive in a high-angle arc so that it would land in narrow enemy trenches. The artillery available at the time was hindered by its flat trajectory and could not lob rounds at an angle which allowed them to land inside the enemy trenches. Mortars, on the other hand, designed to send a round almost straight up and almost straight down, were perfectly suited to the task.

The medium calibre 81mm mortars came of age during World War II, providing a lethal and previously unseen level of support to the infantryman. Countless promising attacks were literally torn to pieces by a single, violent, accurate barrage of often only brief intensity. In the offense, mortars could stun the enemy defenders long enough to allow riflemen to move into the close battle. Of all the weapons at his disposal, the mortar undoubtedly provided the battalion commander his most lethal tool.

This analysis will examine the Army’s current mortar capability, the strengths and weaknesses of the 81mm F2 mortar and those of the mortar platoon itself. This discussion will also explore what the future holds for the battalion’s only organic indirect fire support.

THE CURRENT MORTAR PLATOON

The structure of the mortar platoon has not changed since the Vietnam era. The platoon still consists of the joint offensive support coordination centre (formerly the fire support coordination centre), observer group, platoon command post, mortar line (three sections of two mortars) and the administration group. Unfortunately, the two aspects that have changed since Vietnam are the availability of ammunition and the use of the platoon’s skills. Many of the Army’s ‘mortarmen’ would argue that the mortar is underrated, under-utilised and under-funded.

Australian mortars have not fired in anger since Vietnam, as the Australian Defence Force (ADF) has not committed to large-scale offensive operations since that time. The ADF’s operational commitments have largely comprised peace
enforcement, peacekeeping or peace monitoring—operations that have altered the ADF’s focus from warfighting and training for war. As a result, the training of mortarmen has suffered over the last few years.

**TRAINING THE ARMY’S MORTARMEN**

Problems in the mortar training regime were highlighted by the Australian infantry battalions’ inability to field fully qualified mortar platoons at the mortar concentration held in Townsville in May 2004. The conduct of basic mortar courses has continued throughout the years—largely limited to training within the battalions. While the training management plan has been badly neglected, the battalions have been able to ensure that there were at least a minimal number of qualified soldiers in the battalion to post to positions in the mortar platoon.

One vital issue concerns the training of mortar non-commissioned officers and officers by the School of Infantry—to ensure that mortar-specific skills and corporate knowledge are maintained. The degradation of mortaring skills began when the original officer/non-commissioned officer mortar course of six weeks’ duration was replaced with the advanced mortar course of two weeks’ duration and supplemented by artillery joint offensive support team modules at the School of Artillery. The results of this change in training were the loss of danger close qualifications, loss of tactical considerations in the employment of the mortar platoon, and loss of badly needed observer training for mobile fire controllers.

To the professional mortarmen, the fact that potential mortar officers and non-commissioned officers were trained by members of the Royal Australian Artillery seems ludicrous to say the least. This may well have been a major contributing factor in the loss of skills and under-utilisation of mortars. Happily, mortar training has now reverted to the province of infantry instructors who possess a detailed knowledge of infantry tactics and specialist weapons.

**MORTARS AS AN ASSET: THE PROS AND CONS**

Mortars are a key asset in support of infantry operations for a number of reasons. These include the fact that mortars are responsive—in most cases they are controlled by the commanders of small units. Mortars are relatively inexpensive and are lightweight, which makes them extremely mobile. The mobility of mortars provides them increased survivability from counter-battery fire and also allows their use in raids, harassing and interdiction missions.
Mortars have the ability to quickly shift and fire on multiple targets simultaneously and through obscuration. The mortar platoon has a smaller signature and combat service support trail than its artillery counterparts. Mortars have a higher trajectory, which enables them to fire onto targets in less accessible locations such as creek lines, reverse slopes and urban environments. This also means, however, that the time of flight is longer than that of artillery. Mortars are man-portable, which allows their deployment in rugged terrain inaccessible to vehicles or by air. Within a fire support base, mortars are easier to protect as a result of their ability to fire from smaller field defences. The mortar round is usually not as powerful as an artillery round; however, it is more easily acquired by the company, platoon or section. While the intimacy that mortars provide is an advantage, they are vulnerable while firing and require local protection. Artillery, on the other hand, is typically a shared combat asset whose fires are directed by those an echelon above (and some distance from) the unit that needs the support of the big guns.

**AMMUNITION—BANG FOR YOUR BUCK**

The purchase of the new Denel 80mm ammunition has forced a number of changes in the use of mortars. First, the minimum safe distance has moved from 550 metres to 900 metres and the minimum safe limit has increased from 200 metres to 300 metres, provided troops are in a danger close bunker. A source of frustration to mortarmen is the fact that artillery has a minimum safe limit of 150 metres from troops in pits without overhead protection. Given that the minimum safe distance of artillery is 600 metres, the implication is that the lethality of the Denel mortar round exceeds that of an artillery round.

Unsurprisingly, offensive support experts refute this implication. They argue that the minimum safe limit for artillery is shorter because of the gunners’ ability to survey their gun positions while providing close support. This is cold comfort for the average mortarmen who is unable to realistically train for danger close missions despite the benefits of today’s advanced simulation technology. Such technology allows computer fire controllers working...
with mortar laying systems, GPS and laser range finders to increase the accuracy to a target round on the second or third adjusting round. Doctrine also provides safety measures in its prescriptive requirements for the positioning of the mortar line; procedures for calling in close fire missions; proving targets; and safety staff regulations aimed at reducing risk during the conduct of battle practice.

Unfortunately for the mortarmen, limited ammunition supplies restrict their ability to conduct regular high explosive activities and thus their opportunities to demonstrate their ability to support an attack at the point of break-in. On average, battalions are receiving an annual allocation of mortar ammunition that, according to the 1st Division Fire Power Policy, equates to what should be used in a quarter.9

One solution to the current shortage of mortar ammunition in the ADF may lie in the use of different types of ammunition. Globally, the armed forces of the world use a diverse mix of mortars and ammunition. There are three categories of mortars most commonly used, described as light, medium and heavy. Light mortars are those up to 60mm with a maximum range between 500 and 2000 metres; medium mortars are those between 60 and 100mm with a maximum range of 2000–6000 metres; and heavy mortars are generally over 100mm with a maximum range over 6000 metres.9

MORTAR CHARACTERISTICS

Each type of mortar has its own set of characteristics and uses. Light mortars, for example, have a number of advantages over their heavier counterparts. The 60mm mortar increases the company’s firepower substantially by providing quick, effective and always guaranteed indirect firepower. The light mortar is capable of firing to greater effective ranges than any other weapon available at company level. The range of 60mm ammunition increases the flexibility and manoeuvrability of the company. Use of the light mortar relieves the heavier calibre weapons of some of their smaller tasks, thereby enabling them to remain concealed from sound-ranging devices and mortar-locating radars until the last possible moment.10

Yet the light mortar also has a number of disadvantages. For example, its use necessitates the incorporation of another type of ammunition into the administrative system. The light mortar increases the load of the already heavily loaded... recent operational experience in Afghanistan has shown that... the enemy rapidly outran the 3700-metre maximum range of the lightweight company mortar.
infantryman. In addition, recent operational experience in Afghanistan has shown that, when employed in a support by fire position, the enemy rapidly outran the 3700-metre maximum range of the lightweight company mortar. The Mk 19 quickly became the weapon of choice due to its reduced set-up time and the shorter time of flight of the 60mm mortar.\textsuperscript{11}

Medium calibre mortars have been the most commonly used since World War II. This is often because these mortars are more lethal than light mortars but they remain easily portable for the light infantry battalion. Medium mortars also have a lower logistics signature and their collateral damage in an urban environment is less than that of the heavy mortar. Yet the range of the medium mortar limits it in a mechanised battalion, as the mortar’s operating system often cannot keep pace with a rapid advance.

Heavy mortars are gaining considerable popularity throughout the world given the changing nature of operations. Many operators believe that 120mm mortars have greater utility in terms of both potential lethality and the ability to fire newer natures of ammunition.\textsuperscript{12} However, heavy mortars are just that—heavy. They are not man-portable and require vehicles to transport both the weapon system and ammunition and thus they have an increased logistics signature. In addition, they are easier to detect than smaller mortars and not as mobile in counter-battery drills if they are not vehicle-mounted.

Despite their disadvantages, many of the world’s armies are increasing their mortar capability from medium to heavy in favour of that mortar’s increased lethality and ability to use a greater variety of ammunition. Since the ADF is predominantly budgeted for a limited mechanised and motorised capability, medium mortars appear best suited to its current needs. So what does the future hold for mortars?

**THE FUTURE OF MORTARS**

In Australia, as in many other nations, mortars traditionally have been treated as the Cinderella of weapons systems. Tanks and other armoured fighting vehicles, artillery, anti-armour rockets and missiles, surface-to-air missiles and others have all registered in the land forces’ development budgets during the last fifty years. Mortar weapons, conversely, have received almost no investment—even in nations with almost limitless defence budgets such as America—until now.\textsuperscript{13}
Current and future military operations are primarily centred on what is referred to as ‘peace support’ and, therefore, are infantry-centric in nature. Units deployed on peace support operations are being equipped on a lighter scale than for previous full-size warfighting missions. However, peace support operations still present a requirement for offensive fire support, which in the past might have been provided by close support artillery units. Moreover, peace support operation missions often take place in urban areas where it is difficult to engage many targets with low-angle artillery fire.

With this in mind, the future looks reasonably bright for the mortar. At present there is considerable research and development being conducted into the production of precision-guided munitions that will enable mortar teams to fire a target round every time. Research continues also into non-lethal mortar ammunition which would increase the functionality of the mortar for different types of operations such as population protection and control.

The 2000 Defence White Paper announced a new requirement for a 120mm mortar system mounted on an unspecified ‘light armoured vehicle’. That requirement has since been constituted in the Defence Capability Plan as the Land 135 program. This program now seeks to develop a long-range mortar capable of firing in-service ammunition which is infantry-portable and can be vehicle-mounted. The program also seeks to increase the range of the mortar currently in service.

CONCLUSION

Given the current trend in operations, it is increasingly likely that mortars will be required to support the battalion in a more complex environment. This increased requirement for mortar support should be met with a commensurate increase in investment in resources and training to ensure this asset does not become a reduced capability within the battalion.

The training regime for future mortar soldiers, officers and non-commissioned officers must be examined to ensure the skill of mortaring does not become a lost or black art. This training must remain in the hands of Infantry Corps instructors who are best equipped to maintain high standards of mortaring in order to provide timely, accurate and safe support to the infantry battalions.

This training must be complemented by an increase in ammunition allocation to the Combined Arms Training Centre so as to ensure that the appropriate number of courses are conducted. This will increase the pool of qualified officers and non-commissioned officers to man the mortar platoons now and in the future.
Additionally, each battalion’s 81mm mortar ammunition allocation must be increased in accordance with the Divisional Firepower Policy so as to allow effective and realistic training within battalions to realise the goal of the mortar platoons’ achieving their required proficiency levels.

An increase in training and resources will lead to increased exposure to and awareness of the capabilities of the mortar platoon. This, in turn, will result in a more effective employment of mortars in training and on operations. The introduction of new technology will also be assisted by an increased level of skill within the mortar platoon.

The mortar is a battalion asset that has been particularly neglected over the last ten years since the commencement of peace operations. This is a capability that cannot be allowed to degrade into a non-viable specialist platoon. Budget and training considerations must ensure that the mortar platoon remains the most intimate and effective indirect fire support in the battalion’s arsenal.

ENDNOTES

3 Ibid.
4 See http://www.stormpages.com/garyj kennedy/Tactics/ Formations/ FireSupport/ mortar_platoon.htm
6 The minimum safe distance is defined as the minimum range for the first round of a mission.
7 The minimum safe limit is that distance from the burst of a projectile beyond which there is an acceptable degree of risk of casualties to unprotected troops in the majority of operational circumstances. In artillery the term is expressed as safe splinter distance.

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TACTICS ~ CAPTAIN DAMIEN GREEN

9 Mortar Platoon Tactical Employment and Fire Control, p. 3.2.
12 See http://www.defenseworld.net/html/features/Mortars%20Are%20Back_S.htm

THE AUTHOR

Captain Damien Green enlisted in the Army as a soldier in 1987 and was commissioned under the Army Warrant Officer Commissioning Scheme in January 2000. As an officer he has filled a variety of regimental and staff appointments in the Army Personnel Agency Townsville, 31st Battalion, The Royal Queensland Regiment and the Combat Training Centre. Captain Damien Green is currently serving in the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment and was Mortar Platoon Commander in this Battalion at the time this article was written. He has recently returned from operation service in Iraq as a Company Advisor for the Australian Army Training Team Iraq – Five.
ROBOTICS IN FUTURE LAND WARFARE

LIEUTENANT COLONEL MARCUS FIELDING

ABSTRACT

Robots and their uses are a staple of science fiction, and yet practical applications are already in the field. Uninhabited aerial vehicles, such as Predator or Global Hawk, can be considered robots. This article examines robots by using the battlespace operating systems (BOS) paradigm. The author concludes that, as technological change gathers pace, capability planners need to consider the uses and benefits that robots offer the military of tomorrow.

INTRODUCTION

Anyone who has seen the latest episode of Star Wars will have entered a fantasy world populated by ‘robots’ with a versatility that many of us could only have imagined. But just how fantastic is such a vision?

The use of robot technology is not new. During World War II, the German Army employed a tele-operated tracked vehicle known as ‘Goliath’, which was packed with explosives and detonated under advancing Allied tanks. Outside defence, several other domains—including the manufacturing, construction and mining industries—have been successfully using robotics applications for many years. The drivers for such action within industry include the need to remove people from
danger, to eradicate boring and repetitive work, and to reduce manpower costs. Many of these driving factors are equally relevant—if not more so—to defence. Robotics is a field that the military can no longer afford to ignore. Capability developers should continue to enjoy the movies but also start to think seriously about using robots for military operations.

My intention in examining this issue is to identify potential applications for robotics in the conduct of land warfare, specifically within each of the battlespace operating systems (BOS). I also intend to examine the broad performance parameters for military robots, and touch on some of the issues relating to the use of robotics in the conduct of land warfare.

WHAT IS A ROBOT?

There is no universally agreed definition of what constitutes a robot. For the purposes of this discussion, a robot will be defined as a mechanical device that can be programmed to perform tasks or functions involving movement and manipulation previously performed by humans. All robotics systems contain some form of decision-making function—whether it be at the commencement of a mission or during the mission itself. Robotics systems comprise the robots themselves, their operators, and their maintainers. A robotics system might also include a communications system that operates between the robots and their home base or between groups of robots. ‘Robotics’ refers to the application of robots to specific tasks or functions.

Robots may be remotely operated (tele-operated), act semi-autonomously or autonomously. Tele-operated robots generally rely on the operator to sense the operating environment and control the performance of the robot in that environment. Semi-autonomous robots—once deployed—are capable of performing some of their intended functions without human intervention. Autonomous robots—again, once deployed—are capable of performing all of their intended functions without human intervention.

Tele-operated and semi-autonomous robotics systems must therefore include a control and communications element so that there can be interaction between the robot and its operator. Semi-autonomy is likely to allow an operator to manage...
fleets of robots. Additionally, communication between robots will enable them to cooperate and perhaps increase their degree of autonomy. All robotics systems also require materiel and technical support—even if only in the early stages of a task.

In fields other than industrial automation, most robotics applications need to move through the environment and thus the term ‘uninhabited vehicle’ has become fashionable. Uninhabited vehicles include uninhabited aerial vehicles (UAVs), uninhabited ground vehicles (UGVs) and uninhabited underwater vehicles (UUVs). These terms have limited utility as they describe only the environment in which the robot operates and not the function of the robot itself.4

UAVs with a surveillance and reconnaissance function are now evolving to include the ability to fire a weapons system—necessitating a change in term to Uninhabited Combat Aerial Vehicle (UCAV). Given the increasing number of robotics applications, these terms have the potential to become too broad to remain meaningful. A return to the function or task—reconnaissance, for example—is likely.

THE UTILITY OF ROBOTICS

The use of robotics offers multiple advantages to military forces in the conduct of land warfare. Like industry, the paramount advantage lies in removing soldiers from immediate danger. The ability to reduce costs (especially manpower) to achieve the same or greater effects is a second persuasive advantage. These advantages alone warrant the evaluation of robotics for application in the conduct of land warfare. Surpassing both these, however, is the fact that robots have the potential to change the way we conduct military operations.

LAND WARFARE APPLICATIONS

The single greatest impediment to the development of robotics applications for land warfare at this time is not the limits of technology—it is the lack of guidance from the military on the way in which robotics might be useful in the military context.5

There is one key delineation between military applications, and it concerns the distinction between those that are designed to kill the enemy and those that are not. This delineation is crucial because our present ‘rules’ for warfighting allow the enemy...
to surrender at the last safe moment before imminent death or injury. Any active engagement of an enemy target by our weapons systems is routinely preceded by a number of checks designed to ensure that the target is legitimate. An ethical issue that arises from this scenario concerns the question of whether it is acceptable to ‘set and forget’ a robot to go forth and kill the enemy, perhaps several days or months hence. Should robots have the means to discriminate—to capture a surrendering adversary rather than simply killing all designated ‘enemy’? Could or should robots be programmed to abide by the applicable rules of engagement? While these issues occupy a future horizon at this stage, the non-lethal applications, on the other hand, have the greatest potential for utility in the near term and are also likely to provide the most return on investment in the immediate future.

I intend now to focus on identifying potential applications for robotics in land warfare, employing the BOS construct as a means to examine these.

**THE COMMAND, CONTROL AND COMMUNICATIONS (C3) BOS**

The C3 BOS has broad applications across all the other BOS as it is a necessary function for the conduct of warfare. As a result, the application of robotics to the C3 BOS may be relevant in whole or part to each of the other BOS. There are two primary applications for robotics within the C3 BOS. The first of these involves the use of robots as communication re-transmission or re-broadcasting nodes that position and re-position as the force moves, in order to optimise connectivity. The second role for robotics lies in the reduction of deliberate electromagnetic emission signatures through distancing or dispersion.

**THE MANOEUVRE BOS**

The specialised requirements of the manoeuvre BOS also give rise to potential robotics applications. These include the remote destruction or neutralisation of the enemy, particularly in conditions hazardous to humans. Likewise, the clearance of mines, booby-traps and other obstacles ahead of friendly movement is a valuable application for robotics. The provision of sentry systems that identify and warn of approaching threats is a role that could be readily adapted to the use of robotics. Equipping these robots to engage an adversary may also be possible once issues surrounding the rules of engagement have been resolved. Specifically designed robots could locate and attack designated targets including vehicles (for example, tanks), equipment (helicopters and UAV), stores (fuel dumps) and facilities (C2 nodes). The final target on this list is the adversary himself. Imagine...
the psychological impact on a commander who learns that the enemy has just released 10,000 multi-environment ‘assassination robots’ programmed to locate, identify and assassinate him. Each of these targets has a unique signature. Robots such as these may be the next generation of precision munitions—in fact, it is in this area that robotics has the single greatest potential for changing the way we fight.

In a direct lift from a sci-fi novel, wearable robotic suits could be designed to enhance the performance of individual soldiers. Robotic suits could potentially incorporate climate control, protection, information systems, and first aid or drug regulation.

Robots could also be used to mount decoy manoeuvre BOS and other ‘signature’ vehicles and equipment which move in accordance with a deception plan.

THE INTELLIGENCE, SURVEILLANCE AND RECONNAISSANCE (ISR) BOS

The ISR BOS is also applicable across the broad spectrum of other BOS as it involves the acquisition of information about the environment in which forces operate. Thus, the use of robots within the ISR BOS will apply also in whole or part to each of the other BOS. By far the most significant opportunity for the application of robotics to the ISR BOS lies in the conduct of remote reconnaissance and surveillance. This particular application has been well supported with the use of a range of UAVs in recent years. UAVs have been recognised as high performers in this role principally because of their ability to move through an environment that contains relatively few obstacles. Movement along the ground is more challenging, but there remains enormous utility for reconnaissance UGVs and UUVs—particularly in confined, complex and hazardous environments. The environmental boundary is an artificial one and there is tremendous potential for the development of a robot that can fly or swim to a site, conduct its reconnaissance on the ground and then return to the sea or air in order to relay its collected data.

THE INFORMATION OPERATIONS (IO) BOS

The IO BOS involves a number of potential applications for robotics. These include support to deception plans with decoys; support for the conduct of psychological operations; and support for the conduct of electronic warfare and navigation warfare.
THE OFFENSIVE SUPPORT (OS) BOS

The OS BOS is rich in possibilities for the application of robotics, particularly in the area of target acquisition. These applications primarily involve the detection, recognition, identification, location and marking of targets. Robots could also be used in the mounting of decoy high-value targets to unmask enemy weapons systems. Robots could play a role as platforms for the deployment and operation of delivery systems. The mounting of decoy OS BOS vehicles and equipment that move and emit signatures in accordance with a deception plan constitutes a further significant role for robots.

THE MOBILITY AND SURVIVABILITY (M&S) BOS

Potential robotics applications within the M&S BOS include the vital aspect of mobility support. The clearance of land-mines is an area that has already been populated with tele-operated flails and rollers. Clearance of booby-traps, mines and unidentified explosive objects (UXO) through spoofing or by detection and neutralisation provides another role for robotics. Likewise, the reduction of complex obstacles, including the clearance of simple obstacles such as rubble and surface-laid UXO, or cluster munitions from airfields or key areas, presents a further opportunity for the use of robotics. Robots could also be used in the detection, identification and marking of areas contaminated with CBRN and other hazardous materials.

Robots are ideally suited for use in counter-mobility support, particularly in the positioning of demolition charges. They have the potential to be highly effective in the demolition of buildings and bunkers with mass blast effects, although they are probably unsuited for the demolition of bridges or other complex structures. Robotics is already applied through mines and networks of mines that move (independently or on command) and which detonate autonomously (these are currently recognised as ‘fourth generation mines’). Robots could be used also in the construction of complex obstacles including the laying of minefields and digging of anti-tank ditches.

Robots have significant potential in the area of survivability support, particularly in the mounting of decoy vehicles, equipment and multi-spectral smoke generators in accordance with a deception plan. They could be used to mount decoy high-value targets to encourage enemy weapons systems to unmask.
Large-scale earthmoving and construction projects comprise another area in which there is opportunity for the application of robotics. Additionally, robots could be effectively employed to acquire geospatial data and position differential GPS stations.

**THE GROUND-BASED AIR DEFENCE (GBAD) BOS**

Potential robotics applications within the GBAD BOS include target acquisition, particularly in ground-based or airborne threat detection systems. The identification, location, classification and marking of targets are tasks that could also be accomplished by robots. Robots could have a wider application in the deployment and operation of delivery platforms including cooperative systems that optimise coverage and that are networked with other air defence assets. The mounting of decoy GBAD BOS platforms and equipment which move (and emit) in accordance with a deception plan could also be achieved through the clever use of robotics. Assessment of battle damage to confirm the effectiveness of an engagement is yet another task well suited to robots.

**THE COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT (CSS) BOS**

The CSS BOS is closely linked to all other BOS given the primary need for each to be sustained in order to perform its role. Thus, potential applications for the C3 BOS may be applicable in whole or part to each of the other BOS. In the CSS BOS area of supply, there is potential for the use of robots as follower ‘mules’ for the carriage of stores, weapons and other equipment behind mounted or dismounted BOS elements. Robots could also be used to transport all classes of supply to their users. Leader or follower ‘mule’ combinations in the first generation may be employed to transport supplies in any environment—land, sea or air—and in time may be able to move between environments. Robots may also be utilised as labour-saving devices in the handling of inventories and the packaging of supplies such as bulk water.

Robots could potentially be used to evacuate casualties from forward battle areas to medical facilities. The use of robotics in remote diagnosis and surgery is currently well established in advanced medical centres in the Western world. In terms of equipment repair and maintenance, robots could be used to populate equipment repair facilities and to recover vehicles and equipment, particularly from combat zones.
ROBOT PERFORMANCE PARAMETERS

Across the broad range of applications, there appears to be a set of consistent performance parameters for robotics systems against which there is scope for maximum or minimum criteria to be applied. Optimally, maximum criteria would include the ability to operate in a complex warfighting environment; the ability to be integrated with other land force systems; endurance, robustness and survivability; and simplicity and versatility. The minimum criteria applicable would comprise mass and volume; cost; and signature (unless producing a large signature is part of the robot’s function).

Clearly, individual solutions would apply within these parameters. Any robotics system would, however, suggest an immediate improvement to the current approach in terms of performance of function, training cost, supply and maintenance costs.

ISSUES

There are a number of issues that relate to the use of robotics in the conduct of land warfare. I will touch on those that predominate and look for the opportunity for further discussion of these and other issues in the future. Many of these issues concern the impact of robotics on the rules of engagement as we know them. They raise questions such as:

- Would it be an act of aggression to deploy a robot into another sovereign country’s territory?
- How do we engender human trust in a robot’s performance, particularly for applications such as mine and booby-trap clearance?
- How ‘deep’ into the battlespace would we want to control robots—as far as possible?
- How can we reduce the vulnerability of robotics systems to navigation warfare?
- How do we prevent the capture of any secure communications equipment carried by the robot? Will a robot be able to determine when it has been captured?
- Given that robots are likely to become targets, what degree of protection (physical and electronic) is necessary or cost effective?
- Is there scope for counter-robot robots? What counter-robot measures might an enemy take?
- Could robots conceivably be ‘turned’ against their original operators?

Could robots conceivably be ‘turned’ against their original operators?
Robotics in Future Land Warfare

What counter-robot measures might it be necessary for us to adopt against adversary robotics systems? Should these include physical (fires and obstacles) as well as electronic interdiction?

How expensive could a robot become before it is judged to be more cost effective to continue using a soldier for the task or function?

The Way Forward

The potential advantages in using robotics in future land warfare demand that robotics applications are, at the very least, considered by capability developers. Clearly, the Army has a moral responsibility to investigate rigorously any action that could reduce the amount of risk to which soldiers are exposed. Indeed, the introduction of robotics applications in the battlespace has the potential to change the type of people the Army seeks to recruit. Contrary to expectations, anemic high school drop-outs with a talent for violent computer games may yet become highly prized assets.

How can we move forward in this area? It is crucial that capability development staff investigate robotic solutions and challenge the traditional paradigms on the achievement of tasks or functions. Some current robotic technologies can be readily brought across from other domains into military applications. Other applications, however, will require more research and development. Certainly the recent agreement between the Defence Science and Technology Organisation and the University of Sydney’s Australian Centre for Field Robotics for the formation of a Centre of Expertise in Defence Autonomous and Uninhabited Vehicles is a step in the right direction. It is vital not to be constrained by environmental boundaries and equally important that the Defence Science and Technology Organisation be well placed to consider issues along technology lines and apply these to the relevant environmental areas. In future, robots may become some of the first truly multi-environment or joint platforms.
ENDNOTES

1 Readers unfamiliar with the battlespace operating systems (BOS) should refer to Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD)1 *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, Australian Army, 2002, p. 83. The electronic version of this publication can be found at: http://www.defence.gov.au/ARMY/LWD1/LWD1sitemap.htm

2 Given this definition, information technology and computers are not robots in and of themselves although they may be an essential component of robots.

3 This involves sensing either directly or remotely through the robot, albeit not necessarily through purpose-designed sensors.

4 Nor do they describe all the potential environments in which robots are capable of functioning. For example, how should we refer to robots that may travel inside the human body for medical applications?

5 This became clear at the DGLD, DSTO and LWDC-sponsored ‘Robotics for Future Land Warfare’ seminar and workshop, May 23–4, 2002.

THE AUTHOR

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LAND FORCE AIR AND MISSILE DEFENCE

DEALING WITH THE COMPLEXITIES OF FUTURE WARFIGHTING

LIEUTENANT COLONEL INGER LAWES

ABSTRACT

In the future, land force commanders will need to manage the use of airspace to enable multi-dimensional manoeuvre—coordinating joint and coalition assets and denying adversaries. Battlespace management, in an era of uninhabited and automated systems, is becoming increasingly complex. The author argues for the development of a ‘land force air and missile defence’ (LFAMD) to enhance friendly capability and defeat conventional and asymmetrical enemy manoeuvre.

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) Future Warfighting concept asserts that ‘the challenges of complex environments reinforce our view that warfare is multi-dimensional.’ In future warfare, because of the presence of both conventional and asymmetric air threats, air and missile defence will become an essential capability in enabling the land force to conduct multi-dimensional manoeuvre.
Military Technology

Lieutenant Colonel Inger Lawes

The Future Land Operating Concept Complex Warfighting describes the contemporary operational environment in terms of defining characteristics such as complex physical, human and informational terrain and urban environments, increased threat diversity, diffusion and lethality. These characteristics necessarily impose a broader spectrum of challenges, increase unpredictability and ultimately give rise to ambiguous and asymmetric threats, including terrorism. \(^2\)

‘Airspace’ is the third dimension of the operational environment. Within the Complex Warfighting scenario, airspace appears much more complex in terms of both the air threat and the demands of airspace battle management. Future adversaries are unlikely to rely exclusively on conventional air power. Using a diverse mix of asymmetric and conventional air power, adversary groups will seek to exploit real or perceived weaknesses conventionally, while selectively attempting to counter friendly strengths asymmetrically. Further, as friendly airspace use increases, so the demands and complexity of airspace battle management increase commensurately.

I have divided this discussion of the complexity of future airspace into two parts. The first part analyses the airspace environment of twenty-first century conflict so as to establish its impact on the future Army. This analysis will also incorporate the identification of possible future capability needs. The second part of my discussion will focus on addressing the impact of twenty-first century conflict, in particular the airspace dimension, by providing an overview of the land force air and missile defence system in terms of basic system attributes. I intend then to define an operational concept for land force air and missile defence.

The complexity of future airspace: the importance of the third dimension

In order to create the necessary conditions for multi-dimensional manoeuvre, the land force will require a significant volume of airspace that is free from adversary interference. \(^3\) Control of the air is a prerequisite to the prosecution of successful ground operations and requires joint layered effects. The land force commander will be required to deny airspace to the adversary within his tactical area of responsibility while exploiting the third dimension to enable his own freedom of manoeuvre. To meet these twin requirements, the land force will need to contribute to the generation of joint layered effects to defeat the air threat while effectively managing friendly airspace.
THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF THE AIR THREAT

Air power, of any level of sophistication, is a significant force multiplier because it has the ability to deliver a lethal effect disproportionate to the size of the force committed. The combined use of aerial sensors, weapons and delivery platforms has the capacity to quickly overwhelm the land force commander, reduce his situational awareness and inflict significant casualties.

Confronted by a technologically superior force capable of generating the conditions for air supremacy, adversaries will no longer be able to rely on strictly conventional air power such as fixed and rotary wing aircraft. As a result, adversary groups may resort to the use of adaptable strategies aimed at avoiding direct confrontation and that seek to counter, rather than match, superior air power capabilities. These strategies may involve the use of terrorism, tactical ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, uninhabited aerial vehicles (UAV), air-launched stand-off weapons (SOW), ground-launched precision rockets, artillery and mortars.

Adversary groups, driven by the need to overcome a mismatch in capabilities and exploit the strategic defeat threshold of Western powers, are increasingly turning to the use of uninhabited systems, in particular cruise missiles and UAVs. Cost is a further driver of this trend. For the price of a single new fighter aircraft, it is possible to obtain a significant number of cruise missiles and UAVs, and these weapons systems are increasingly available on the world market. Even rudimentary versions of these systems pose a significant danger to the deployed land force. UAVs optimised for surveillance and target acquisition can detect land force operations and provide the basis for near real-time targeting. Helicopters also pose a significant threat to the land force, given that they are relatively cheap and their low-level flight characteristics make them capable of evading detection by fighters and long-range tactical radars. In addition, helicopters have the ability to deliver SOW optimised for the defeat of manoeuvre platforms.

The land force commander will be required to deny airspace to the adversary ...

For the price of a single new fighter aircraft, it is possible to obtain a significant number of cruise missiles and UAVs ...
Fixed wing aircraft also continue to evolve as highly capable weapons systems. However, these aircraft are expensive and their cost will prevent many actors from acquiring the latest generation of fixed wing aircraft. Despite this, the comparative low cost and abundance of second-hand fixed wing aircraft means that they cannot be discounted as a threat.10

THE INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF AIRSPACE BATTLE MANAGEMENT

There is no doubt that effective airspace use contributes to success in complex warfighting. Within the land force commander’s airspace, a high concentration of friendly weapons systems and aerial vehicles—with overlapping operating envelopes and flight profiles—must operate freely so as to realise their maximum combat effectiveness without interfering with one another. Airspace battle management aims to maximise force effectiveness without hindering the combat power of any friendly element.11

The airspace battle management system comprises the control, coordination, integration, and regulation of the use of airspace of defined dimensions. It also provides for identification of all airspace users. Coordination is that degree of authority necessary to achieve effective, efficient, and flexible use of airspace. Through integration, requirements for the use of this airspace are consolidated to achieve a common objective. Through regulation, activities within this airspace are supervised to prevent real-time conflict among the various airspace users while achieving the necessary flexibility to ensure the greatest combat effectiveness. Identification ensures timely engagement of the air threat while reducing the potential for fratricide.

The term ‘battlespace’ recognises the inherent third dimension of modern warfare. The Complex Warfighting force multipliers—versatility, agility and orchestration—describe the characteristics of successful combat operations.12 These three force multipliers—particularly orchestration—require airspace control and an effective airspace battle management system.13

Orchestration is the ability to synchronise and coordinate effects to achieve precise, discriminate application of force. Orchestration occurs within the Army through battle grouping into combined arms teams. It also occurs within the ADF and with other government agencies through joint inter-agency task forces. Orchestration with coalition partners occurs through combined joint task forces.14
Land Force Air and Missile Defence

Airspace battle management aims to maximise the effectiveness of joint force assets by ensuring the concurrent employment of airspace users, orchestrated in time, space, and purpose to produce maximum combat power at the decisive point. As armed reconnaissance helicopters, additional troop lift helicopters and tactical UAVs are delivered, the airspace below 15 000 feet will become increasingly frenetic as users compete for space. Surface-to-surface offensive support adds to the complexity of this battlespace. As friendly airspace user requirements increase and in the absence of the means of near-time positive control, the land force commander will find it more difficult to exploit the third dimension and orchestrate effects.

The land force commander will be confronted with the need to control airspace use and, at the same time, orchestrate effects. Orchestration and control of friendly airspace use will become more complex as the Army seeks to reduce reaction time through the introduction of networked land systems.

Increasing Airspace Complexity—The Impact on Army

As indicated earlier, the third dimension of the operational environment will have a number of key impacts. I intend to examine each of these key impacts in turn. The first of these concerns multi-dimensional manoeuvre.

To affect multi-dimensional manoeuvre, the land force commander will require a significant volume of airspace that is free from adversary interference. To achieve this, the commander needs land force systems that are capable of denying the adversary entry to a significant volume of airspace, yet allow friendly forces freedom of manoeuvre.

In the face of friendly air supremacy, the adversary is forced to turn to a diffuse mix of asymmetric and conventional air power as a counter. Adversaries may come to rely more heavily on uninhabited air power such as cruise missiles, UAV and SOW. The relative threat posed to the land force by fixed and rotary wing aircraft is decreasing but will not disappear completely. An evolving air threat defines the need for the land force to be protected from an eventual diverse and complex air threat that will increasingly rely on uninhabited platforms.

Using adaptable strategies, the adversary may seek to avoid direct confrontation and counter, rather than match, superior air power capabilities. This will generate the need for modular and versatile land force systems with the agility to detect, identify and defeat air threats of varying complexity from asymmetric terrorism to conventional fixed wing aircraft.
As friendly airspace use intensifies, so the demands and complexity of airspace battle management increase. In order to orchestrate effects, the land force commander will aim to exploit the third dimension. Further to this, and just as importantly, he will seek to deny the adversary use of the third dimension. Consequently, a land force airspace battle management system capable of near real-time automated airspace control, coordination and integration will be needed in the very near future.

EXISTING CAPABILITY

By 2014, the ADF air defence system (AADS) will comprise interdependent elements of intelligence, long- and short-range surveillance sensors (including airborne early warning and control aircraft, tactical air defence and over-the-horizon radars), fixed and mobile communication and control centres, fighter aircraft, anti-air warfare ships and ground-based air defence (GBAD) systems.

The Army’s GBAD capability is based on the RBS-70 man-packable short-range air defence weapon system. The RBS-70 has a range of 8 kilometres and a maximum ceiling of 15 000 feet and is optimised for the defence of ‘points’ against helicopters and fixed wing aircraft delivering conventional unguided ordnance at low level. The RBS-70 capability includes organic locally networked early warning sensors, centralised control and threat assessment, weapon cueing and a night engagement capability. The RBS-70, however, is not capable of sharing target tracks or threat assessment with other elements of AADS in near real time.

DEALING WITH THE FUTURE COMPLEXITY OF AIRSPACE: LAND FORCE AIR AND MISSILE DEFENCE—AN OVERVIEW

In order to deal effectively with the complexity of future airspace, I propose that the Army acquire a new capability which I have termed ‘land force air and missile defence’ (LFAMD). I would envisage LFAMD as an evolution of the existing GBAD capability. The LFAMD capability would combine the elements of surveillance, identification, response, and command, control, communications, computers and intelligence (C4I). The first order effect of the LFAMD capability would be to deter
or counter violation of the deployed task force, battlegroup or combat team’s airspace. LFAMD capability second order effects would include, but not be limited to, contributing to three-dimensional situational awareness and friendly airspace battle management. Beyond generating these effects, the LFAMD capability will need to be an essential and integral component of the AADS and would operate independently or in conjunction with other air missile defence weapons. The effectiveness of the LFAMD capability would be dependent on the near real-time integration of surveillance, response and C4I. The basic attributes of the proposed LFAMD capability are illustrated in figure 1.

The LFAMD capability, as I propose it, is to be a fully distributed network of three functional components: C4I, sensors, and response. Each component is capable of being ‘plugged’ into the network at any point, allowing the LFAMD capability the requisite flexibility to support the entire spectrum of operations. The backbone of the LFAMD capability will be the C4I

... I propose that the Army acquire a new capability which I have termed ‘land force air and missile defence’ (LFAMD).

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Figure 1. LFAMD capability basic attributes
system. The purpose of the C4I element of the LFAMD is to integrate all means of defence against an identified threat in the most efficient and effective manner, while also safeguarding and providing flexibility for the movement of friendly air assets.

The C4I element of the LFAMD capability provides the airspace situational awareness that empowers the land component commander to shape, control, and coordinate airspace and set conditions for the fight. It comprises command support, tactical data and air picture systems that fuse data from various sources to provide a near real-time link between the command and control (C2), sensor and response functions. The C4I element will be capable of conducting positive near real-time airspace battle management to control, coordinate and orchestrate friendly airspace users.

The critical function of the LFAMD C4I system is to effectively and efficiently coordinate a response to defeat the air threat. The C4I system controls one or more distributed networks, and is itself tied into the joint or coalition air defence C2 network. The C4I system will receive the recognised air picture from the joint or coalition air defence C2 network and distribute it to the land force.

The C4I system should be capable of networking and fusing data from a number of sensors, producing a localised air picture. This system will be flexible and have the ability to sustain damage or loss of elements of its functionality without catastrophic loss of performance. Secure, near real-time, digital data transfer is essential to the C4I element of LFAMD.

The control function of the C4I element will evolve to allow cooperative engagements. Targets evaluated by sensors and target allocation systems in one area of the battlespace may be allocated to a response element in another area of the battlespace or the response element of another Service and vice versa. This may include third party targeting through airborne early warning and control systems or maritime assets.

The C4I element is the backbone of the requisite LFAMD system: it is the essential factor that enables network centric warfare. Identification and target allocation will be achieved through electronic, electro-optic, electronic support, third party information or by a combination of these means. Identification solutions will include cooperative systems and non-cooperative target recognition systems such as acoustic recognition or analysis of radar signature.
LFAMD sensors will perform specific surveillance, detection and tracking functions. LFAMD sensors will be required to detect a variety of high-speed, manoeuvring, low radar cross-section and stealthy targets in all environmental extremes. LFAMD sensors will be distributed and modular in design. These sensors will be capable of sufficient elevation to operate clear of close screening, thus enhancing deployment flexibility and aiding survivability. Use of multiple active and passive sensors will create functional redundancy, provide spectral diversity and further improve survivability. For effective control of engagements beyond visual range, LFAMD sensors will require three-dimensional active sensors. If missiles are used as a response option, these sensors may need to supply updated target data to the missile, post-launch.

The systems architecture will be such that the LFAMD capability will have the capacity to operate as part of an integrated system. In practical terms, this means the LFAMD capability will be able to receive secure digital air and missile defence information while itself contributing to a common air defence picture. Sensors used by the LFAMD capability will operate independently, as an organic component of a response option, or a combination of both. LFAMD capability sensors will be highly mobile. Those operating in support of manoeuvre forces will have commensurate protection and mobility.

The LFAMD response allows the capability to strike the air threat. The diversity of the air threat described earlier means that a single response option is unlikely to be capable of dealing with the entire threat spectrum. Separate, yet complementary, response elements are required. An active beyond-visual-range response option will be required to strike air threats before they deliver SOW or conduct surveillance of the land force. The terminal guidance of these systems also increases the likelihood of defeating cruise missiles. A protected and mobile response option is also required to provide close protection to manoeuvre platforms from late unmasking attack helicopters and the UAV threat. This response option will need to be automated to facilitate rapid engagement.

OPERATIONAL CONCEPT

The operational concept envisages the LFAMD capability as a modular and networked C4I, sensor, and response component, optimised for versatility, agility and orchestration. The LFAMD capability will be enabled by layered defence relying on employing surveillance, C2 and response systems in concentric overlapping zones, centred on the area to be protected, and focused (whenever possible) on the direction of the threat. Each element of a layered system has its strengths and weaknesses. However, the sum of the individual elements determines the overall effectiveness of the air defence system. In order to achieve a coherent defence, all system elements must be appropriately integrated. The LFAMD operational concept is illustrated in figure 2.
DEPLOYMENT OPTIONS

Modular and networked C4I, sensor, and response components will enable the LFAMD capability to be tailored to deployment options spanning the entire conflict spectrum. Indicative deployment options include, in particular, military operations other than conventional war (MOOCW). In MOOCW, the LFAMD capability will be deployable to deliver airspace battle management, surveillance and intelligence collection through the use of C4I and sensor components. The LFAMD capability also has the potential to become a crucial element in protecting sovereign Australian territory (PSAT). Within PSAT, the LFAMD capability will be deployable to provide layered air missile defence of vital assets through the use of C4I, sensors, and response components.

LFAMD will also possess the ability to contribute to coalition operations worldwide (CCOW). Modular LFAMD capability components will have the versatility to be deployed to support coalition operations in several combinations: airspace battle management, surveillance and response components; airspace battle management component only; surveillance component only; response component only; or any other combination. Effective realisation of these deployment options will require high levels of interoperability with ABCA armies.¹⁷

Figure 2. LFAMD operational concept
CONCLUSION

This discussion has examined the importance of the ‘third dimension’ of the battlespace from the perspective of the land force commander and argued the requirement for an air and missile defence system. My primary contention is that the land force commander will be required to deny airspace to the adversary within his tactical area of responsibility while exploiting the third dimension to enable his own freedom of manoeuvre. Analysis of the future air threat shows that adversary groups, driven by the need to overcome a mismatch in capabilities and exploit the strategic defeat threshold of Western powers, are exhibiting a clear trend towards the use of uninhabited systems, in particular cruise missiles and UAVs.

Effective airspace use will clearly contribute to success in complex warfighting. Within the land force commander’s airspace, there will be a high concentration of friendly weapons systems and aerial vehicles with overlapping operating envelopes and flight profiles, all of which must be free to realise their maximum combat effectiveness without interfering with one another. The land force commander in the future battlespace will be confronted with the need to control airspace use and orchestrate effects. Orchestration and control of friendly airspace will become more complex as the Army seeks to reduce reaction time through the introduction of networked land systems.

ENDNOTES

1 Australian Army, Complex Warfighting (Future Land Operational Concept), Army Headquarters, Canberra, 2003, p. 8.
2 Ibid., p. 9.
3 The ‘2020 Objective Force’ manoeuvre paper defines the battlespace as being about 250 square kilometres.
4 NATO defines ‘air supremacy’ as the condition in which ‘the enemy air force is incapable of effective interference. Through the complete destruction of the enemy air forces, this condition is the ultimate goal of an air campaign. Under the condition of air supremacy, the air commander employs all of his aircraft at will [emphasis added].’ It should be noted that the term ‘air supremacy’ does not embrace control of air threats that may be ground launched or controlled, such as, but not limited to, cruise missiles and uninhabited aerial vehicles.
5 During Operation *Iraqi Freedom*, the Coalition enjoyed overwhelming air supremacy. This, however, did not prevent the Iraqi Army from launching Seersucker anti-shipping cruise missiles against US Army and Marine ground forces. On 28 March 2003 the forward elements of the 3rd Infantry Division were subjected to surveillance overflight by ultralight aircraft. See US Department of the Army, 32nd Army Air Missile Defence Command After Action Review, 2004, pp. 45–7.


7 The complex warfighting scenario envisages a battlespace in which there are numerous different actors, and this diversity creates asymmetry—a mismatch of capabilities, cultures, technology, objectives, or will. Asymmetry, in turn, exploits a mismatch in ‘defeat threshold’—how much one must damage a force to defeat it. Western forces tend to have high tactical defeat thresholds: they are difficult to defeat in battle. However, their strategic defeat threshold may be lower than their tactical threshold—they may be vulnerable to changes in public opinion, political will and (perceived or actual) casualty aversion. The use of Scud tactical ballistic missiles against Israel is an example of this.


9 Single and joint service experimentation conducted in 2003 demonstrated that the ADF does not have an effective counter to the UAV threat. In 2004, US Army experimentation showed that the deployment of ground-based air defence (GBAD) into an area of operations reduced hostile UAV detection of friendly assets by 2063% (12,547 detections without GBAD deployed verses 608 detections with GBAD deployed).

10 Several aviation brokers, such as Star Avia, offer a variety of ex-Eastern Bloc aircraft for sale. See <http://www.staravia.co.uk/aircraftsales.htm>. GlobalPlaneSales.com is an Internet search engine listing over 120 used military aircraft for sale. Aircraft type range from 1977 Mirage F1 (ex-Jordan) to 1992 S-70 Black Hawk. See <http://www.globalplanesearch.com>.

11 The complexity of airspace battle management is clearly illustrated in the US experience during Operation *Iraqi Freedom*. US Patriot systems averaged 100 tracks on each sensor system at all times for the duration of the conflict. The challenge was to separate Iraqi tactical ballistic missile tracks from friendly air movements. Adding this complexity, US air missile defence units reported an 80% failure rate on coalition aircraft identification friend or foe (IFF) transponders due to system faults and masking.

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13 Airspace control should not be confused with ‘control of the air’. Control of the air refers to one of the roles of aerospace power and is the fundamental aim of air defence. Airspace battle management, however, does not rely on control of the air. See Australian Defence Force, ADDP 3.3, Aerospace Battle Management, Defence Publishing Service, 2003, pp. 1–4.

14 Australian Army, Complex Warfighting, p. 19.

15 The Rapier system retires in December 2005.

16 A ‘point’ is approximately one square kilometre.

17 The ABCA comprises Australia, Britain, Canada and America.

The Author

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UNINHABITED COMBAT AERIAL VEHICLES AND THE LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT HYDER GULAM AND CAPTAIN SIMON W. LEE

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the application of the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) to the world of cutting-edge military technology in the form of the uninhabited combat aerial vehicle or ‘UCAV’ as it is known in military circles. UCAVs are pilotless aircraft that can launch, attack, recover and return to base. The discussion focuses on LOAC, examining the legal implications of the use of UCAVs in combat with particular reference to Australia. Prior to the introduction of UCAVs into military service, the user nation—in this case Australia—has a legal obligation to ensure that its employment of the UCAV complies with customary international law and the various applicable conventions and treaties.
The law of armed conflict is something that all military people need to know. I never found it constraining. There were some targets we wanted to hit that we couldn’t. But nonetheless, we must abide by some level of morality.

USAF General Charles ‘Chuck’ Horner
Coalition Air Commander, 1991 Gulf War

INTRODUCTION

On 3 November 2005, Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, stated that miniature unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) were to be deployed to Iraq to provide increased protection for Australian Defence Force (ADF) soldiers. The miniature UAVs were to be used for reconnaissance and surveillance missions and provide real-time information about terrain and activities. UAVs are not new to the ADF, which deployed them as part of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands. The logical next step in the genesis of the UAV is undoubtedly the introduction of combat functions to these craft. This article concerns the next step in the progression from UAVs to ‘uninhabited combat aerial vehicles’ (UCAVs) and the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC) implications of the employment of these craft.

UCAVs are aerial vehicles that can launch, attack, recover and return to base without onboard aircrew. Some UCAVs are used as imagery sensors for reconnaissance or as a tool for guiding other weapons onto a target. UCAVs represent the air power element of the revolution in military affairs in that they embody an intersection of technological advancement, conceptual innovation and organisational adaptation. From an economic perspective UCAVs are perceived to represent value for money in that they are cheaper to buy and fleet operations cost less. Given the spiralling expenses of many defence budgets, UCAVs have the potential to allow a military force to field an effective and substantial fighting force without the overheads traditionally associated with manned aircraft and without the risks posed by having combat pilots undertake dangerous missions.

The aim of this article is to discuss the legal implications of the introduction of UCAVs into the military forces of a nation with particular reference to Australia. Before UCAVs can be introduced into service with the ADF, Australia must ensure compliance with its legal obligations under customary international law and various conventions and treaties. These obligations may also apply to other nations,
depending on the nature of Australia's legal relationship with the applicable laws and conventions. The purpose of this article is to examine whether the introduction of UCAVs is likely to contravene any of these legal obligations.

This discussion will focus on LOAC as it applies to UCAVs (excluding the technical details of the UCAV’s operation) and also explore Australia’s other legal obligations. This article incorporates an exploration of Article 36 of Additional Protocol 1 (API) of 1977 which comprises a legal assessment of new weapons, a discussion of the legality of civilians controlling a UCAV in a combat military operation, and the issue of legal responsibility when a UCAV malfunctions with unforeseen consequences. Compliance with LOAC obligations in the current media-rich environment will avoid the stigma and consequent loss of moral and national support that inevitably result from a nation’s breaching its LOAC obligations.

**UNINHABITED COMBAT AERIAL VEHICLES AND INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW**

Air power has come a long way since Italian Army Lieutenant Giulio Gavotti launched the first bombing run against the Libyans by tossing a grenade from his biplane. Since that time air power has become one of the decisive elements in an armed conflict. The use of an unmanned combat aerial vehicle has been at the forefront of thinking by air power theorists and practitioners since the First World War. Clarence Johnson, the founder of Skunk Works (the ultra-secret Lockheed testing facility and birthplace of the SR-71 and U-2), for example, was noted to have remarked that the future of military aviation belonged to UAVs.

Unlike UCAVs, UAVs obviously do not have a combat function and thus generally are unlikely to fall foul of LOAC obligations. However, the technology for both entities remains largely similar, particularly the unmanned capacity of both craft and their control via remote access or pre-programming. UAVs have been used in Iraq, Afghanistan, and in Yemen, where a Predator unmanned vehicle controlled by the CIA is...
reported to have fired a Hellfire missile that killed a number of al Qaeda suspects.\(^{19}\)

UAVs have been used in a military role with great success since the last century. There are no more famous examples than the events surrounding the 1973 Yom Kippur War in which Israel mounted successful UAV operations over the Bekka Valley in Lebanon. These UAVs were able to suppress Syrian radars and also to simulate Israeli aircraft in order to locate Syrian radars for strikes by Israeli anti-radiation missiles. Apart from the provision of real-time video imagery of enemy positions and strength, the success of these aerial vehicles resulted in the loss of only one Israeli aircraft against Syrian losses of 18 surface-to-air missile units and 86 combat aircraft.\(^{20}\)

UCAVs can be classified within two extremes in terms of command and control. The ‘dumb UCAV’ is wholly controlled by a remote human operator via a data link. On the other side of the continuum is the so-called ‘terminator’: a UCAV that is wholly autonomous and able to function independent of human interaction once assigned a target to kill.\(^{21}\) Regardless of the command and control methodology of the UCAV, these weapons have become highly desirable given their reusability and the significant cost saving per target destroyed or neutralised.\(^{22}\) Other advantages lie in the design of the UCAV. By removing the operator from the weapons delivery system, employment of the vehicle ceases to involve risk to human life. Without the need to build a cockpit capable of enclosing a pilot, the vehicle can be smaller and possess fewer radar emitting edges, lower signature and less reflectivity. A smaller vehicle can yield greater range and endurance and has better survivability. The lack of aircrew can facilitate the political decision to use armed force, without the electoral repercussions when service personnel are wounded, killed or go missing in action. UCAVs can significantly minimise risk, especially in an air campaign against the enemy’s integrated air defence systems and are capable of deep penetration strikes against enemy centres of gravity. Finally, the long loitering ability of UCAVs over a battlespace can mean a persistent presence to rapidly strike targets of opportunity.\(^{23}\)

**LAW OF ARMED CONFLICT (LOAC)**

LOAC is the law that governs states engaged in armed conflict.\(^{24}\) LOAC seeks to regulate the means and methods of warfare permitted to combatants and protect those who are not, or are no longer participating in the conflict. Through the 1949
Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols, fundamental principles are established in relation to the conduct of armed conflict. This body of law articulates that the right of belligerents to choose means or methods of warfare is not unlimited and that distinction must be made between civilians and combatants.\textsuperscript{25}

Any military use of UCAVs must comply with the basic principles of aerial targeting as established by LOAC.\textsuperscript{26} These principles are: discrimination, military necessity, humanity and proportionality. Each of these will be discussed in turn.

Discrimination involves exercising diligence in identifying non-combatants as distinct from combatants who can be legitimately targeted. There is a rebuttable presumption that non-combatants are to be prohibited from attack. This principle is not, however, designed to stand alone, and must be read in conjunction with the other principles—in particular, that of military necessity.\textsuperscript{27} Under LOAC, combatants have a right to participate directly in the armed conflict during hostilities, while civilians do not. While combatants must distinguish between civilian and military objectives, the presence of civilians near a military objective does not render it immune from attack.

Under the principle of military necessity, the legitimate use of force in the pursuit of military objectives may cause incidental injuries and collateral damage. Military necessity involves a recognition that lives may be lost and damage inflicted. However, such losses and damages must be incidental to the military mission. The principle of military necessity does not permit an indiscriminate attack.

Humanity is the principle that recognises that there are limits to the means and methods of warfare. Because certain targets are afforded special protection, they cannot be attacked unless certain conditions apply. For example, civilians and civilian objects are prohibited from attack, as are religious and cultural sites, hospitals, medical personnel, and military forces that have left the conflict (for example, prisoners of war, sick, shipwrecked and wounded, and those who have surrendered).

Proportionality embodies the requirement to balance the principles of humanity and military necessity. The death and destruction caused must be proportional to the military advantage anticipated. Military necessity cannot justify the unmitigated
use of force, as the principle of proportion carries with it established limits. Thus, the consequence of the attack must be weighed up against the military objective to be achieved. Again, proportionality attempts to minimise collateral civilian casualties and collateral damage to civilian objects.

THE ADF’S LEGAL OBLIGATIONS

As a signatory to the Additional Protocols, Australia is obliged to honour its treaty obligations in good faith. Nowhere is this obligation more important than with reference to Article 36 of AP1. This article refers to the legal review of new weapons to ensure compliance with the rules of international law. It states:

In the study, development, acquisition or adoption of a new weapon, means or method of warfare, a High Contracting Party is under an obligation to determine whether its employment would, in some or all circumstances, be prohibited by this Protocol or by any other rule of international law applicable to the High Contracting Party.

Although Article 36 does not articulate how this obligation is to be met, the implication is that national measures are to be implemented to evaluate the employment of new weapons, means and methods of warfare. The treaties to which Australia is a party and which pertain to the ADF include the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, the 1993 Chemical Weapons Convention and the 1997 Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-personnel Mines.

Any employment of UCAVs by the ADF would need to be evaluated in light of Article 36 of AP1 and ADF policy that cover Australia’s treaty obligations, as well as the other major component of international law—customary international law. According to the International Court of Justice in its Advisory Opinion on Nuclear Weapons, there are two ‘cardinal principles’ that can be considered as customary. The first is the principle of distinction, which carries a ban on employing weapons that are incapable of distinguishing between civilian and military targets. The second cardinal principle is the prohibition on causing unnecessary suffering to combatants and on the use of weapons that cause such suffering or pointlessly aggravate their suffering. States are encouraged to address a wide range of issues in reviewing their obligations, including military, technical, health and environmental issues.

Prior to the introduction of new weapons such as the UCAV into the ADF, it is essential that an extensive review of obligations be undertaken …
Prior to the introduction of new weapons such as the UCAV into the ADF, it is essential that an extensive review of obligations be undertaken pursuant to Defence Instruction (General) Operations 44-1 Legal Review of New Weapons. This review should be conducted by ADF nominees including representatives from Defence Legal (DL). The DL representatives would be expected to pose a number of questions in order to assess the legality of new weapons, including:

- What is the purpose of the new weapon?
- What are the factors that favour the introduction of the new weapon?
- What is the damage mechanism of the new weapon (blast, fragmentation, etc)?
- Is the new weapon specifically designed to cause injury to personnel?
- What human injuries will the new weapon be capable of inflicting?
- What other weapons, if any, would be capable of fulfilling the same purpose as the new weapon?
- Has the new weapon been adopted by the armed forces of other states or by other agencies in Australia and overseas and, if so, by which ones?
- Is evaluation data concerning the new weapon available from the armed forces of other states or from other agencies in Australia or overseas?

Given that the UCAV is a platform from which conventional air-to-surface munitions are to be fired—for example, the Hellfire anti-armour missile—there appears to be no legal impediment that would preclude the introduction of the UCAV vis-a-vis the DL questions. The UCAV may be a weapon in itself; but it is more properly classified as a weapons system, able to deliver munitions onto a given target. However, the issue of the next generation of sub-munitions that a UCAV will be able to deliver is another legal question entirely. It is this next generation of sub-munitions that will need to be reviewed as new weapons systems prior to their introduction into the ADF. These weapons are capable of loitering over the battlespace under their own power and of searching out their own targets following delivery by a UCAV. The main issue is whether the UCAV that loiters over the battlefield is able to distinguish legitimate targets—friend from foe.

**MAN IN THE LOOP**

Some UCAVs can be categorised as ‘state aircraft’ under Article 3(b) of the 1944 Convention on International Aviation (Chicago) Convention. The basis for this categorisation is that, unlike a cruise missile, UCAVs are designed to return to base. In addition, the UCAVs that have been used in combat to date have complied with
the criteria laid down for a state aircraft; that is, a requirement for visible external military and national markings. In addition, UCAVs have flight control capabilities, removing the requirement for the UCAV to fly straight to its target. These technical characteristics also mean that UCAVs do not violate the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty or the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Under the former treaty, ground-launched cruise missiles between the ranges of 500 and 5500 kilometres are prohibited. Under the START Treaty, the UCAV would not be considered a bomber due to its range and payload.\(^{35}\)

The major legal dilemma that arises from the introduction of UCAVs is that of the replacement of the decision-making entity—the pilot and/or aircrew.\(^ {36}\) An element of this dilemma is the replacement of a combatant with a non-combatant while the UCAV is in an active combat role. Another issue lies in the complicated legal problem of to whom to assign legal responsibility if a UCAV malfunctions and causes collateral and other damage in violation of LOAC. The implication is that, by not having a ‘person in the loop’, the ADF may have difficulty maintaining the required fidelity and confidence to meet its LOAC obligations.\(^ {37}\) The added bonus of having a ‘person in the loop’ is that it minimises ‘blue-on-blue’ incidents of fratricide that may result from a UCAV on autopilot completing a 180-degree turn and returning to kill friendly forces.\(^ {38}\)

Questions arise over the application of LOAC if non-ADF personnel are controlling the operation of a UCAV during a combat mission. This issue of non-combatants performing part of a combat role has both domestic and international implications, as it impacts on the ADF’s obligations under LOAC.\(^ {39}\) A combination of declining numbers of military personnel and the increased use of highly complex and sophisticated equipment has made armed forces around the world more reliant on civilian contractors than ever before.\(^ {40}\) During the 1991 Gulf War, the US military was so reliant on civilian contractors that the ratio of contractors to US combatants was as high as 1:34. During Operation Allied Force in the Balkans, fewer than ten years later, this ratio had increased to one civilian contractor to ten US combatants.\(^ {41}\) The introduction of new technology such as the UCAV has resulted in a heavy dependence on civilians for major aspects of the UCAV’s operations including, in some cases, control and operation of the weapons system.\(^ {42}\) This is an obvious breach of LOAC as only a combatant is legitimately permitted to take part in armed conflict.
While outside the scope of this paper, the issue of civilian contractors merits mention due to the situation that occurred in Iraq in 2003. A number of reports noted that US troops in Iraq suffered months of unnecessary poor living conditions because some civilian contractors hired by the US Army for logistic support ‘failed to show up’.53 The major issues include not only vendor reliability, but the lack of competition for the contractor; vulnerability of the contractor to a stock market takeover by a foreign organisation that is hostile to national interests; lack of surge support; and protection of civilian contractors during an armed conflict. Another pertinent issue concerns whether civilian contractors could be deemed to be mercenaries under the definition in Article 47 AP1.44

The ADF has a policy in place that articulates the role of civilians in support of ADF operations and which outlines government policy seeking an increased role for Defence public servants and industry in support of those operations.45 This policy clearly indicates that, as a party to the Geneva Conventions and the AP, Australia has an obligation to remove civilians from military threat or to protect them to the maximum extent feasible. Importantly, civilians who support ADF operations are forbidden from wearing military uniform or carrying any form of weapon. By extension, civilians would also be forbidden from operating weapons systems such as the UCAV.

Under LOAC, the UCAV operator who actually fires a weapon must be a combatant; that is, a member of a military force in accordance with the criteria set down by The Hague and the 3rd Geneva Convention. Non-combatant civilians may thus become legitimate targets due to their proximity to the operations of the UCAV.46 These civilians are at risk of being deemed part of a military target due to their participation in hostilities—that is, assisting in the operation of the UCAV. Civilians have no right to participate in hostilities and may be targeted during the length of their involvement and even held legally accountable for their participation.

Legal responsibility for a UCAV that breaches the Laws of Armed Conflict may rest with the ground control team or even the flight authorising officer. The authorising officer is generally responsible for ensuring that adequate planning, briefing, conduct,
and debriefing of a flight has occurred. It could be argued that, under the rules of engagement, UCAVs should have a human in the authorisation loop. The human controller makes the decision to release the weapon based on situational awareness gained from the on-board systems as well as an integrated data link picture of the target. This means that a UCAV cannot autonomously release a weapon without authorisation from a ground station operator. If such authorisation is not forthcoming, or the data link from the UCAV to the ground station is lost or jammed, then the UCAV should revert to a pre-programmed flight program and return to base. The UCAV should come under command control prior to launching an attack; it should not be permitted to have an automated attack function.

Air Marshal Brian Burridge, Britain’s RAF commander during the 2003 Iraq conflict, summarised the situation succinctly:

Under the laws of armed conflict, there remains the requirement to assess proportionality, and within this there is an expectation that the human at the end of the delivery chain makes the last assessment by evaluating the situation using rational judgement… Conflicts now confront us with ambiguous non-linear battlespaces. And thus we cannot take the human, the commander, the analyst, those who wrestle with ambiguity, out of the loop.

CONCLUSION

UCAVs represent a new frontier in warfighting. These weapons systems add another dimension to the principles of modern air power with their unparalleled flexibility and reach. Despite this apparent revolution in military affairs, adherence to LOAC is paramount in ensuring the preservation of the basic dictates of humanity. UCAVs must conform to both LOAC and other international obligations if they are to be inculcated into the stable of deterrent military force of a modern defence arsenal. This article has argued that it is essential for UCAVs to have a human element so as to ensure the employment of sound operating procedures in this cutting-edge technology. The ‘man in the loop’—the human dimension of the UCAV—must be a serving member of a military force so that the nation concerned is able to meet its obligations under LOAC. To do otherwise, risks non-compliance with that nation’s legal obligations and the unfavourable glare of the international media spotlight.
ENDNOTES


4 This article will use the term ‘uninhabited’ as opposed to ‘unmanned’ because there is still a degree of ‘human in the loop’ controlling the functions of a UCAV. UCAVs are not autonomous entities able to function without input from an operator in, for example, target identification, location and flight path, actual loading and arming of weapons, etc. Therefore, even though the operator is removed from the cockpit, there is still a human element in the mission. See M. Lax and B. Sutherland, An Extended Role for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in the Royal Australian Air Force, Air Power Studies Centre Working Paper No. 46, Canberra, 1999, p. 4, accessed 1 June 2003 at http://www.defence.gov.au/apsc/publish/paper46.htm. ADFP 101—the ADF Glossary—defines unmanned aerial vehicles as: ‘powered aerial vehicles that do not carry a human operator, use aerodynamic forces to provide lift, can fly autonomously or be piloted remotely, can be expendable or recoverable, and carry lethal or non-lethal payloads.’


6 For example, the British Army Phoenix battlefield surveillance and target acquisition drone used by the Royal Artillery near the city of Basra. See C. Hoyle, ‘Iraqis capture Phoenix drone’, in Jane’s Defence Weekly, 2 April 2003.


8 C. Kopp, The UCAV Ascendancy: What are the Problem Issues?, UAV Australia Conference, 8–9 February 2001, Melbourne, Australia, E-mail: Carlo.Kopp@aus.net


See Australian Defence Force Publication 37 *Law of Armed Conflict* and DI(G) OPS 33-1 'ADF IHL Training', copy on file with the Australian Red Cross – Victoria Chapter at: http://www.redcross.org.au/vic/vic_services_ihl_home.htm

Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 relating to the Protection of Victims on International Armed Conflicts, 8 June 1977 (AP1).

Casagrande, ‘International Law and the Law of Armed Conflict’, p. 211. For example, Casagrande cites the example of the My Lai massacre by the US military in Vietnam in 1968 that both stunned the US nation and led to the loss of popular support for that conflict.


B. Sweetman, 'Endurance above all for UAVs', *Jane's International Defence Review*, 1 June 2003. This article is particularly interesting because it mentions the first UCAV (the Predator) versus manned fighter (MiG) air combat situation which occurred in Iraq in January 2003. The Predator was armed with Stinger (ATAS) air-to-air missile. The Predator lost the aerial duel.


Lax and Sutherland, *An Extended Role for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles in the Royal Australian Air Force*, p. 10.

C. Kopp, *The UCAV Ascendancy*. 

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23. Ibid., pp. 61–2.


29. DI(G) OPS 44-1, Legal review of new weapons.


32. Ibid., p. 360. The author understands that DL is in the process of formulating a Defence Instruction outlining the review of legality, amongst other things, of new weapons as per Art 36 API. This would be akin to the US Department of the Army 1979, Review of Legality of Weapons under International Law, Army Regulation 27–53; and the USAF (MAJGEN N. Sklute JAG) 1994, Weapons Review, Air Force Instruction 51–402, 13 May 1994.


34. Bender, ‘Pilotless combat vehicles await legal green light’.

35. Ibid.


38. Ibid.


40. Ibid., p. 111.

41. M. Minenko, ‘Contractors on the Battlefield: Legal Aspects’, Presentation to the Asia Pacific Centre for Military Law, August 2003, University of Melbourne.
44 For an interesting discussion of this issue see D Shearer, Private Armies and Military Intervention, Adelphi Paper 316, Oxford University Press, 1998.
45 DI(OPS) 05-3 Civilians in support of Australian Defence Force operations.
46 Turner and Norton, ‘Civilians at the tip of the Spear’, p 27.
51 Chuter, ‘U K Strike Chief Notes UAV’s Shortcoming’, p 8.

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MILITARY AND THE MEDIA

MILITARY PUBLIC AFFAIRS IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

MAJOR MICHAEL HARRIS

ABSTRACT

The conduct of military public affairs in complex environments is characterised by two prevailing themes: strategic communication to Australian audiences, and the need to build local consent and support within the area of operations. Public affairs, often underestimated at the beginning of deployments, can prove to be a vital ingredient in building and maintaining support from the local population as well as goodwill at home.

The success or failure of a military mission can often rest with the willingness of the public to support the government in the conduct of military operations. Therefore, the ability to accurately inform the government and the public in a timely and relevant manner during military operations remains critical to the success of the operation.

General Peter Cosgrove, Chief of the Defence Force, March 2005
There is no doubt that the news media regard conflict as 'good for business'. The onset of hostilities in Iraq in March 2003 saw media interest set a new benchmark with 137 media agencies registered at the Press Information Centre in Qatar accounting for almost 1000 media staff. The war in Iraq continues to offer all the ingredients of a good news story: conflict, opposing opinions, visual theatrics, debate over 'right' and 'just' causes, an evil dictator, allegations of chemical and biological weapons, and a bloody insurgency. Despite controversy over the moral and legal justification for the invasion and occupation of Iraq, the Australian and international media continue to regard the war as having provided profitable daily fodder.

The Australian Government announced on 22 February 2005 that 450 Australian Defence Force (ADF) personnel would be deployed to the Al Muthanna Province in southern Iraq. The Federal Opposition was quick to respond, identifying perceived weaknesses in the preparation of the newly constituted Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG). On ABC Television's Insiders program of 27 February, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade countered the Opposition's claims concerning AMTG readiness by stating that any shortfall had been rectified and that the Opposition Leader was 'playing politics' with the issue. The 1st Brigade found itself in the midst of an intense debate about preparedness, the risk to diggers' lives, and the political decision to support the Japanese and British forces in Iraq.

The Australian public was also less than enthusiastic about the impending deployment. In March 2005, public opinion polling by Morgan Gallup revealed that sixty-three per cent of Australians disapproved of the Government's decision to deploy Australian troops to Iraq while forty-five per cent were opposed to Australia's military presence in Iraq altogether. The Prime Minister told The Age newspaper: 'I acknowledged at the time that our decision would not be popular and the polls would indicate that it's not got popular support. But occasionally governments are required to take decisions that involve unpopularity.'

In May 2005, hot on the heels of the Morgan Gallup poll, the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) released a research report that analysed another facet of public opinion on the war in Iraq. According to the ASPI report, support for Australia's involvement in Iraq within political circles had slipped since 2001: 'three-quarters of Coalition candidates strongly approved of the war, nine out of ten Labor and Democrat candidates strongly disapproved of it, as did almost all Greens candidates.'
Military Public Affairs in Complex Environments

Military counterinsurgency operations in urban environments characterised by local political and public opposition are considered the most complex to conduct. The conduct of military public affairs in these complex environments is also considered the most difficult of such campaigns. Military public affairs necessarily includes not only military operations but also consideration of the Australian domestic political backdrop. The conduct of military public affairs in complex environments is characterised by two prevailing themes: strategic communication to Australian audiences, and the need to build local consent and support within the area of operations.

Media and the Military

An interesting characteristic of the media’s reporting on AMTG preparations for deployment was the apparent separation of politics and political commentary from reporting on operational preparedness and military training. While voicing obvious concern about the threat in Iraq from insurgent activities, the media was also prepared to quarantine the military from criticism of the Government’s decision to increase its military presence in Iraq. This was a reversal of the way the media had played the issue in 2003.

The Strategic Corporal

The news media remains fascinated with the opinions of Australian diggers, regarding these ‘strategic corporals’ as credible and highly sought after spokespersons. The AMTG conducted a combined arms exercise at the Mount Bundie Training Area in preparation for deployment and the media and the Australian public were allowed an inside view of the true state of the task group’s preparedness through photographs and video of troops training. The comments made by soldiers about the intensity of their preparation and the quality of equipment were resoundingly positive. The confidence of commanders in their soldiers illustrated the power of the ‘strategic corporal’.

Strategic Imagery

While the impact of the ‘strategic corporal’ in presenting the Defence message has been resounding, photography and vision have also played a part as strategic shaping tools. The principle that a picture is worth a thousand words was true in every sense of the coverage of the AMTG. A case in point involved imagery used...
to support the decision by the AMTG Commanding Officer to remove bar-armour from the Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAVs) within the first week of operations in Al Muthanna. Additional armour was fast-tracked through the Defence procurement system in a move to provide extra protection to the ASLAVs during their deployment. The armour increased the width of the vehicle and, while it made navigating the urban landscape more of a challenge, the benefits of the change were noted and appreciated.

The Australian media were quick to note that the armour had been removed and asked Commanding Officer Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble the reason for its removal. Video and photographs of the ASLAVs attempting to navigate crowded streets in As Samawah soon demonstrated the safety reasons behind its removal. Debate was defused in a few short days and the image of the AMTG and Defence in general remained untarnished.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

From the first week of vehicle-based patrols by the AMTG, it became apparent that the ASLAVs would need some ‘hard-sell’ to ensure their acceptance by the local population. They were loud, intimidating and, unluckily, very similar in appearance to US LAVs. Community reaction was mixed and it quickly became apparent that a community relations exercise would be necessary to dispel myths about the vehicles and the troops driving them.

Six weeks later, Operation Shoppa was born. It involved Lieutenant Colonel Noble and a number of his soldiers driving into As Samawah, in the company of the British Light Dragoons and the Iraqi Police Service, and conducting a meet-and-greet visit to the souk bazaar. Inviting the media, although beneficial to the ultimate aim of the exercise, was assessed as adding substantially to the risks associated with an already hazardous operation. Instead, an imagery specialist was assigned the task of following the Australian contingent.

The resulting footage showed Lieutenant Colonel Noble and his soldiers chatting with the local people, an image that public affairs analysts knew the Australian public would respond to positively. A media release was quickly crafted and a selection of photographs was sent just hours after the event, aimed at a timely release into the prime-time news cycle in Australia. The best images were quickly cleared for release and news agencies promptly loaded the pictures onto their web-pages. The local media event that had been programmed to build confidence and establish relationships with the people of As Samawah could now be used strategically in Australia.
The images received overwhelmingly positive feedback because they contained the clear statement that, despite the obvious security threat in Iraq, the Australians were welcome in Al Muthanna. The coverage provided endorsement that the Australian Government had made the right decision to send Australian troops to the province and embodied a tangible reassurance to the Australian public that the risk to the troops’ safety was less than previously believed.

INFORMATION OPERATIONS

THE INFORMATION CAMPAIGN

Al Muthanna is considered the most peaceful province in Iraq. Within the multinational forces (MNF) in Al Muthanna, Task Force Eagle was directly responsible for the development of a robust security structure that could manage security without direct intervention by the MNF, and one in which the public had confidence. However, in the two years since the commencement of operations in Iraq and the subsequent fall of Saddam Hussein, community awareness of reconstruction projects had remained low. Research by the Multinational Division South-East (MND-SE) assessed population awareness of reconstruction projects at just three per cent. The Japanese Iraq Reconstruction Support Group had maintained an ongoing media engagement strategy with a constant flow of news media events and coverage in the local press. However, when the AMTG and the British Light Dragoons assumed responsibility for security in Al Muthanna, there was no communication with the local media for the first three months. It quickly became clear that the civil-military cooperation (CIMIC) team would have to publicise project developments as a matter of urgency.

The local media, which boasted thirteen agencies and more than twenty-one news media representatives in As Samawah, proved the best and most powerful mechanism for reaching the people of the region. The use of the mass media was endorsed by research that estimated that seventy-three per cent of people watched the evening news.

Communication with the local population also carried a political dimension. Iraq’s successful transition to self-reliance depended to a large extent on the ability of Iraqi leaders to communicate key initiatives to the people. The philosophy of public affairs within Task Force Eagle was to progressively distance the MNF from communications and increasingly profile the Iraqi leadership. It was important to recognise that ‘an Iraqi speaking to Iraqis’ was the most effective method of developing strong press relations. The task force commander was soon provided with his own press officer, a strategy quickly adopted across the division as a key initiative aimed at building capacity when engaging the media. The press officer had two primary functions: to encourage and brief Iraqi spokespeople; and to develop strong press relations.
MASS MEDIA

Engagement of the local media was quickly recognised as a powerful and efficient mechanism for communicating Task Force Eagle and AMTG messages to the majority of people in Al Muthanna. The local media campaign relied on regular media engagement, to the order of two to three events each week. The campaign also exploited a weakness in the ability of the Al Muthanna television station to provide a consistent quantity of news by supplying an extended interview each week with the task force commander. A safety and awareness video for television was also produced for local viewing, as was a series of advertisements for the As Samawah newspaper. The constant focus of the AMTG on local media engagement had a significant impact on community feedback. Patrol reports indicated obvious local recognition of Australian soldiers, a reasonable awareness of the mission (security not reconstruction), and that there was some change in the behaviour of children when they approached the troops.

Initial polling by MND-SE on community satisfaction with MNF in each province found that ninety per cent of people believed that their quality of life had improved while thirty per cent felt that crime levels had fallen since the transition to a democratically elected government. This poll contradicted anecdotal evidence of community dissatisfaction with the MNF and flew in the face of localised protest action calling for the MNF to withdraw. The situation remained complex, however, with political activities organised by the Jayish Al Mahdi that tapped into anti-Coalition force sentiment, insurgent attacks on infrastructure which degraded services to levels below that experienced by the population during the Hussein regime, and poor governance at the local level.

TARGETING

With the conclusion of the kinetic phase of operations in Iraq, particularly in the southern provinces, an opportunity arose to use information to shape and influence behaviour. Public affairs became the key methodology for achieving outcomes and strategies included inviting the media into the Provincial Joint Operations Centre to discuss the preparedness and progress of the Iraqi Police Service in acting as a first-line response agency to incidents and emergencies. Invitations were also issued to media outlets to interview the task force commander each month to discuss the progress of CIMIC projects and security sector reform.

CIMIC was tasked to develop a projects program that was to help build and maintain consent in areas frequented by Australian patrols, as well as those areas where there was discontent. Patrols were also given briefing cards outlining and summarising reconstruction efforts across the region. This briefing card took the form of a simple ready-reckoner to assist troops to explain where money was being spent and infrastructure developed.
While psychological operations were possible, the effort required in Al Muthanna centred on public information rather than propaganda. Public affairs assisted with the development of task force messages and products that supported a coordinated and integrated communications campaign focusing on themes such as peace, safety, security and reconstruction. These were messages that were factual and truthful. The tactical-operational public affairs effort was recognised as the most effective mechanism for reaching mass audiences in Al Muthanna Province.10

CONCLUSION

Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble, AMTG Commanding Officer, readily admitted that he was only broadly aware of the capability of public affairs before the task group’s deployment to Iraq. He argued that the most impressive and influential component of the public affairs capability was the ability to use images to shape and influence. ‘I have been able to [achieve this] through … the [public affairs] team, in particular [through their use of] video and stills, and … [their] expertise in how to exploit [these] in the community.’ He remarked that the integration of public affairs into the command and operations decision-making cycle through the engagement of the news media helped achieve public support, both at home in Australia and locally in Iraq. Within the battlegroup itself, Noble said that the public affairs team was treated in the same way as the other staff specialists and participated in daily briefings, targeting, the military appreciation process, incident and issues management, and interacted more generally within the staff group. ‘I cannot over-emphasise how critical [public affairs] is in terms of the mission on the ground and also [in] managing the message back in Australia where it is quite difficult to [achieve results].’

ENDNOTES

1 Military public affairs support to Operation Bastille and Operation Falconer, Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO), Post Operational Review, 4 February–9 May 2003.
3 2003–04 Defence Department Annual Report, Chapter 2, Outcome 3: Army Capabilities.
4 The Age, 15 March 2005.
5 Australian Strategic Policy Institute, ‘Representative views: mass and elite opinion on Australian security (2005),’ www.aspi.org.au
6 ADFP 01.1.1 Defence Public Information Policy, 2002.
The Founder of the Washington PR firm, The Rendon Group, John Rendon, told cadets at the US Air Force Academy in 1996 that when victorious troops rolled into Kuwait City at the end of the first war in the Persian Gulf, they were greeted by hundreds of Kuwaitis waving small American flags. The scene, flashed around the world on television screens, sent the message that US Marines were being welcomed in Kuwait as liberating heroes. 'Did you ever stop to wonder,' Rendon asked, 'how the people of Kuwait City, after being held hostage for seven long and painful months, were able to get hand-held American, and for that matter, the flags of other coalition countries?' He paused for effect. 'Well, you now know the answer. That was one of my jobs then.' See Sheldon Rampton and John Stauber, 'How To Sell a War', In These Times, 4 August 2003.

8 MND-SE Scientific Research, April 2005.
10 Personal comment from Colonel Andrew Nikolic and Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble.

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MILITARY AND THE MEDIA

SADDAM’S LAST GULF WAR AND THE MODERN MEDIA

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MILITARY

LIEUTENANT TOM LEWIS, RAN

ABSTRACT

Working with the media is an essential element of strategic planning for the military of today. This article examines the various roles of the media and the understanding required for today’s forces to become a media-savvy military. While the media may act as both collaborator and traitor, it is the military that requires a new way of thinking to consciously factor in the newest player in the battlespace: the embedded journalist.

While every war is different, there is a constancy about many of the elements of conflict. The media first went to war with Billy Russell, who covered the Crimean War for The Times newspaper. His graphic accounts proved a powerful tool and ultimately led to significant improvement in the horrific conditions British soldiers endured as a result of poor logistics. Yet the media can also significantly damage a military campaign: witness the CBS reports of the infantry landings in Korea,¹ or the television crews with lights filming the arrival of US forces on the beaches of Somalia.² The embedded journalists in the recent
Iraqi conflict were probably closer to their military units than their contemporaries in recent conflicts. An undeniable result of this proximity is the commensurate increase in the speed of understanding of the war for those watching outside the conflict. The effect of this increased understanding can be either overwhelmingly positive or critically negative. The power of the media is such that it is consistently capable of enormous influence on the success of the military effort.

MEDIA AS TRAITOR

Generations of military commanders must have pondered the question of how much information the enemy derives from the media both before and during a campaign. Given widespread use of the Internet, newspaper commentary speculating on the strategy and tactics of a forthcoming conflict can be downloaded and distributed for discussion just as quickly in enemy headquarters as they can by friendly forces. Many commentators employed by Western media outlets are informed, perceptive and are brilliant tacticians in their own right—some with considerable backgrounds in strategic studies, politics and military planning. The very nature of the liberal democracy for which we fight demands that [war commentators and embedded journalists] remain uncensored. How, then, should the coalition military manage a graphically illustrated, well-written account of how it might attack Iraq broadly disseminated throughout the world's media?

Perhaps one possibility is for the military to simply supply the media with sufficient competing strategies to confuse the enemy with a multiplicity of possibilities. No force can prepare for all eventualities. The media can also be used to undermine a military campaign by sowing misinformation in the minds of its own people. Iraqi Information Minister Mohammed Saeed al-Sahaf, for example, kept up a constant stream of deception on behalf of his government. Neat as ever in his rimless spectacles, green Ba’ath Party uniform and black beret, the man who was Saddam Hussein’s mouthpiece continued to spin loyalty for his elusive master even as US troops entered Baghdad: ‘The infidels are committing suicide by the hundreds at the gates of Baghdad,’ he said at a rooftop news conference amid sirens and clouds and only a few hundred metres from US tank positions on the other side of the Tigris River. ‘They say they brought 65 tanks into the centre of the city. I say to you this talk is not true. This is part of their sick mind. There is no presence of American infidels in the city of Baghdad.’ Mr Sahaf became an unlikely

The very nature of the liberal democracy for which we fight demands that [war commentators and embedded journalists] remain uncensored.
media star, combining defiant and abusive language with a subtle awareness of the power of television propaganda. He was a master of plain-speaking, Ba’athist style, and appears to have had few doubts about his own credibility, despite mounting evidence that much of what he said was untrue.

The actions of the so-called ‘Minister for Information’ were both overt and subtle. The misinformation sowed doubt in some viewers’ minds as to Coalition success, comforted and heartened Iraq’s fighters, and thus continued the war, while also providing ammunition for political dissent within the West. This last point is a telling one. The Information Minister spoke the language of protestors who have remained a thorn in the side of the leaders of Britain, America and Australia throughout the Iraq War. He used phrases such as ‘the international gang of outlaws’, ‘crooks’, ‘mercenaries’, ‘stooges’ and ‘racists’—all elements of dogma that could be captured and magnified by domestic political opposition. The Iraqi government was well aware of the political pressure on the West’s leaders, and capitalised on that pressure, using it as a weapon that proved more effective than the tactics of its piecemeal army.

‘The first casualty when war comes is truth,’ reputedly remarked California Senator Hiram Johnson in 1917. This axiom is even more relevant today. Often, the military’s best tactic in the media battlespace is simply to provide as much information and as truthful an account of the battle as possible. Even withholding information is better than deception, simply because a free and aggressive press will usually find the truth anyway. And the media thrives on bad news—witness how quickly the siege of Basra by British forces was relegated to the background during campaign coverage simply because it was progressing steadily and to plan. By contrast, a negative story took centre stage and proved the undeniable power of the media. The shooting of an insurgent in the Battle for Fallujah in 2004 saw a US Marine ‘withdrawn’ from the battlefield because a media team saw him shoot a wounded enemy combatant. Journalistic ‘witnesses’ decried the fact that ‘… the man who was killed didn’t appear to be armed or threatening in any way, with no weapons visible in the mosque. The slain man was among a group of men wounded in fighting a day earlier at the mosque and left there.’

There was little consideration of the fact that the Marine may well have been acting in self-defence as there were reportedly a number of incidents of wounded Iraqis faking death and then firing on US soldiers.
What is interesting is the instant analysis of this incident in the media: the national newspaper *The Australian* used the word ‘murdered’ in its front page headline and *The Age* also leapt to conclusions in its banner ‘Video captures marine killing unarmed fighter.’ What these journalists apparently did not appreciate is the military perspective: that wounded fighters remain extremely dangerous. Many veteran accounts from previous conflicts indicate that some battle killing of wounded enemy is seen as a necessary precaution.

Sergeant Audie Murphy, the most decorated World War II American soldier, spoke of shooting enemy wounded after taking a position: ‘I step around him and examine other foxholes. Each contains a body or two. One stirs, and I give it a burst as a precaution.’ There is a lesson in this for any military force: if the media is allowed to see the true face of battle at close quarters, then the military had better have its own explanations for the dreadful actions that tactical combat necessitates.

*NEGATIVE DOMESTIC MEDIA*

A hostile domestic media requires a deliberate strategy of damage control. Even now, it remains difficult to judge whether the media as a whole supported or opposed the war in Iraq. Some newspapers were perhaps jingoistic in their approach: witness *The Daily Telegraph’s* predilection for reporting the war almost always in positive tones, as opposed to *The Sydney Morning Herald’s* often negative coverage. Commentator Gerard Henderson reflects these obvious divisions in his suggestion that ‘… most (but not all) members of the Canberra press gallery privately disagreed with the Howard government’s decision to deploy, and subsequently commit, the ADF to war.’ Henderson used this particular piece to document various examples of media hostility. He cited ABC television’s *The 7.30 Report* on 13 March, 18 March and 31 March, and Catherine McGrath on ABC radio’s *AM* on 24 January and 30 January as evidence of this hostility. He referred to ‘the bad language expressed by some veteran media commentators’, naming Alan Ramsey, Phillip Adams, and Terry Lane.
To negate the effects of a hostile media, the military needs to go on the offensive with its own outspoken supporters. For every Phillip Adams, there needs to be a Tim Blair. For every article condemning the use of war as a political weapon, there needs to be one pointing out the fallacy of not using state-controlled violence. For every individual who advocates not using a war machine to protect freedom and democracy, there needs to be another to point out how armoured divisions can be peacemakers.

MEDIA AS A WEAPON

While acknowledging that the media can be used as a weapon by an enemy, the military has to admit that the media is an effective tool to further its own cause. In just the same way as the Iraqi Information Minister bolstered his troops' morale with news of Iraqi victories and American losses (albeit false), so too can the Coalition military use the media to further its cause. The widespread promotion of the tactics of 'shock and awe' that preceded the onset of the invasion certainly led some Iraqis to believe that they would be helpless before an allied onslaught. Such propaganda may have worked to convince Iraqi fighters to run, or fight less aggressively than they might have otherwise. This is, however, dependent on enemy access to this message. The military has to ensure that its enemies are bombarded with these morale-damaging messages. US forces certainly exploited this tactic, using Humvee-mounted loudspeakers along the road to Baghdad to broadcast the insult—in Arabic—that Iraqi men are impotent. This had the effect of causing Fedayeen, the fierce Iraqi irregulars, to come out fighting—to be attacked by the invading troops without the protection of their human shields. It is fairly safe to surmise that this piece of news was not broadcast on Iraqi television.

The military must increase the use of positive images to promote its efforts. Images and their captions, such as those available on the Department of Defence's Media Room web pages, paint a positive picture of military deployment and action, providing clear evidence that the right images and the right words can do much to further the military cause. For example, many of these images portray soldiers and civilians interacting in relaxed and welcoming poses. Troops, with weapons slung and floppy hats (not helmets), are greeted by smiling Iraqis or jubilant East Timorese. These images may not be spontaneous and could be easily staged. Similarly, photographs of soldiers engaging in civil reconstruction or disaster relief are prominent, sending the message that the military is not present as an occupier but as a helping friend willing to pitch in. Often, such images ‘sell’ the message of helpful benevolence to the domestic constituency, a recognition of the importance of maintaining support at home.
THE MEDIA AS COLLABORATOR AND THE ROLE OF THE EMBEDDED JOURNALIST

While journalists have seen front-line action as war correspondents in the past, the use of embedded journalists in the war in Iraq placed photographers and commentators in closer proximity to the troops they accompanied than ever before. Undoubtedly, the concept of the ‘embedded journalist’ was initially greeted with ambivalence by the military. After all, their fears that the media presence would compromise the force’s safety or place undue demands on soldiers may have been well grounded.

Yet, the effect of such proximity to the front-line soldier could also mean that many of the embedded journalists reported on the military in a universally positive way. The tone of the following report, which was widely circulated during the early days of the conflict, is notable for the positive reinforcement it gives the Coalition forces.

Journalists on the front lines took a very different view of the need for operational security. We did not even complain when we were ordered to turn off our satellite phones because the Iraqi guns seemed to be able to zero on their transmissions, or when we were asked not to report something … Of course it was alright. Forget journalistic objectivity. There were armed men across the road trying to kill me, and my protection depended on these British troops, many of whom I knew by their first names. There was no question which side I was on.

In the same way, those of us in the field knew that those gloomy armchair pundit accounts from London and Washington of setbacks and ‘pauses’ were missing the point. We learned to understand the painstaking way the British were gathering intelligence in Basra and steadily separating the Saddam loyalists from the bulk of the population—so the place finally fell like a house of cards.

Air Marshal Brian Burridge, the British commander, suggests that the hundreds of journalists who have learned a new understanding of the military could change the way the media covers war. It is about time. Many observers believe that the media experiment in embedding journalists was so successful that it has become a blueprint for the future.

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agrees: ‘It would be very hard for any country to walk away from embedding now.’ He noted, however, in an opinion shared by others, that embedded media see a very confined view of the war.  

The increasing likelihood of embedded journalists on the future battlefield implies that warriors may well have to factor in the presence of a camera, tape recorder or intrepid questioner beside them as they fight, even more so than before. The testy response to the classic ‘How do you feel?’ may well find itself broadcast around the world with negative results. Hopefully, the ‘Stockholm syndrome’ which, as the above account suggests affects a good proportion of journalists, would increase media empathy for the soldier on the ground.

**THE MEDIA AND THE MAINTENANCE OF MORALE**

For the soldier in the field, the maintenance of morale is a crucial factor and, indeed, one of the principles of war, taught to young officers in military academies worldwide. Napoleon regarded morale as a force multiplier of the order of three to one; in other words, an army of 30,000 with high morale—all other factors including training, equipment and position on the ground being equal—will defeat an army of 50,000 with low morale.

What Napoleon neglected to consider, however, was the morale of the general public, sitting at home following the war through the media lens. While the lack of communication technology meant that Napoleon could blissfully ignore the influence of family on his troops, today’s soldier in the field has much more contact with family and friends through an efficient mail service and, in some cases, the use of email. If a military campaign is receiving negative publicity at home, this may be communicated to those fighting the war, with a resultant plunge in morale—although soldiers’ families are typically more likely to offer unconditional support. If those at home perceive that the campaign is lost, then this may affect the morale of the fighting troops, with potentially dire consequences for the campaign.

The maintenance of the morale of the fighting force thus has implications in terms of media control. As far as realistically possible, military forces would be well advised to supply the domestic media with good news and images, while the bad news and negative images are downplayed. The flow of information from the military to the public must be controlled and guarded. This is not to say that misinformation should occur or that ‘only good news’ should be...
supplied. Today’s media and the public in general are educated and questioning, and they will quickly become suspicious of anything that resembles the Iraqi Information Ministry’s ‘good news in any event’ tactic:

As Iraq’s Information Minister, Mohammed Said al-Sahhaf, defiantly denied the US advance, American soldiers were walking through the vast and lavish palace and appearing relaxed in their compound gardens.12

**THE MEDIA AS TARGETS**

The Iraq conflict, like others before it, saw journalists listed among the casualties. At least twelve journalists died during the fighting and in the insurgency campaign that followed. Some of these were deliberate enemy targets. Paul Moran, working for Australia’s ABC at the time, was killed by a suicide bomber who drove a car packed with explosives alongside him and then detonated it. Another journalist stepped on a land-mine. Possibly the most appalling attack on the media, however, occurred on 8 April when US forces fired at the Palestine Hotel in Baghdad and at the Al-Jazeera television network. Three journalists were killed and several wounded in the two attacks.13

The controversy over these attacks concerned not simply the fact that journalists were killed, but that, according to some witnesses, the attacks were unprovoked—in the case of the Palestine Hotel—and deliberate—in the Al-Jazeera case. The US Army denied this: ‘… we don’t target journalists deliberately—not now, not ever,’ said Central Command spokesman Brigadier General Vince Brooks at his daily briefing. However, it is indicative of the unpredictability of the media-military relationship at time of war. For the military, it was an additional reminder that the media presence on the battlefield must always be tracked and managed.

**CONCLUSION**

The role of the embedded journalist in the war in Iraq is tangible proof that modern militaries are now forced to factor in the role of the media in any future operation. Military forces must realise that their cause is best served by accommodating and protecting the media in the battlespace and providing journalists a wealth of information heavily promoting the positive. The role of the media as collaborator must not be overlooked and, in fact, must be exploited to further the military cause.
Conversely, the role of the media as traitor—be it intentional or otherwise—must be managed skillfully lest it have a destructive effect on the force’s morale. The military must protect itself from the insidious influence of a hostile or unscrupulous media. Given today’s pervasive media presence, every member of a military force must be regarded as a possible spokesperson for the military cause.

ENDNOTES

1 See ‘War on Television’: ‘In August 1950, a CBS television news announcer reported an infantry landing as it was in progress, and the controversy caused by this possible security breach shaped a conflict that would long continue between military authorities waging war and television reporters covering that warfare.’ <http://www.museum.tv/archives/etv/W/htmlW/warontelevi/warontelevi.htm>, 15 May 2003.

2 Southern Newspaper Publishers Association bulletin: ‘In December 1992, when Marines landed on the beaches of Mogadishu, Somalia, the only hostile groups they encountered were camera crews with blinding lights. The photographers were on the beachhead long before the Marines.’ <http://www.snpa.org/ebulletin/09.20.01.htm>, 15 May 2003.


6 Audie Murphy, To Hell and Back, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1949, p. 175.


10 Sally Jackson, ‘Journalists the first casualties in reporting the truth of war’, The Australian (media section), 17 April 2003, p. 7.

11 Sally Jackson, ‘Too close to the action?’, The Australian (media section), 17 April 2003, p. 7.


MILITARY AND THE MEDIA

THE AUTHOR

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Defence policy before the 1960s was to inter Australian troops in the foreign theatres where they fell. Repatriation of the remains of those killed before then was limited to three people: the ‘unknown soldier’, General William Throsby Bridges, and Lieutenant Keith Mackellar. The first two are icons of military honour, the third is the little-known brother of Dorethea Mackellar, who penned the line ‘I love a sunburnt country’. Keith Mackellar, like so many young men, left for war with a heart full of duty and sacrifice; this is his story.
who died in the Boer War of 1899–1902, returned without fanfare or ceremony, speeches or editorials, in 1905, simply to ease a family’s grief. The privacy of Keith Mackellar’s return has granted him lasting obscurity. His grave, in Sydney’s Waverley Cemetery, is noticed today only because it also holds the ashes of his sister Dorothea, a poet remembered for the line ‘I love a sunburnt country’.

The rank, unit, ethnicity, class, religion and attitudes of the unknown Australian soldier are, of course, unknown. But if he resembled the stereotypical digger then Keith Mackellar was yin to his yang—an officer rather than a ranker, a cavalryman rather than a foot soldier, of Scots rather than English or Irish descent, pious and patriotic rather than sacrilegious and subversive. And he died wearing a British uniform, not an Australian one. Keith Mackellar is our other unknown soldier, and his obscurity is undeserved.

A PROMISING YOUNG OFFICER

Keith Mackellar was born in 1880 in Sydney, the capital of the colony of New South Wales and, at the time, one of the British Empire’s largest cities. His father, Charles, was an influential member of an influential community—the middle-class Scottish migrants over-represented in Australia’s professions and parliaments. Charles Mackellar and his hard-working, devout, and empire-minded cohort sometimes worried that the next generation would turn its back on hard work, frequent prayer, self-denial and rigid morals, and also turn away from protecting and policing the vast British Empire—that they would fail, as Rudyard Kipling would later put it, to take up the white man’s burden. Failure seemed especially probable in Australia, where a stirring of national sentiment joined with a pinch of idealism and a larger serving of narrow-mindedness to promote the view that, outside a major war, the empire could be left in the hands of British soldiers and civil servants. But young Keith did not disappoint his elders. He thought about duty and war and empire. They judged him ‘good-looking, wholesome-minded and honourable’, indeed a ‘noble lad; brave, gentle and upright’, with ‘the faculty of inspiring esteem and affection in every one who knew him.’

The body of Keith Mackellar, a young Australian who died in the Boer War … returned without fanfare or ceremony, speeches or editorials, in 1905, simply to ease a family’s grief.

He may have already suspected, or rather hoped, that soldiering was all he would ever be good at.
Best of all, Keith Mackellar wanted to be a soldier. He could, in part, satisfy his ambition easily. Communities were then as important as governments in raising and supporting military units, and there was, predictably, a Scottish regiment among Sydney’s Volunteers, those ancestors of today’s Army Reservists. In 1898 he was commissioned a second lieutenant in the New South Wales Scottish Rifles, and began to spend Saturday afternoons and a couple of evenings a week in its doublet, kilt, sporran and cork helmet. Into his copy of Company Drill Made Easy he dutifully sketched the likely trajectory of a volley, and the killing range of Martini-Henry rifles. He enjoyed his hours in uniform. He may have already suspected, or rather hoped, that soldiering was all he would ever be good at.

But a commission in an unpaid, part-time volunteer regiment confined to defending one comfortable corner of the British Empire was the beginning, not the end, of Keith Mackellar’s ambition. Transfer to the colony’s tiny permanent force of professional artillery and engineers—an ancestor of today’s regular army—would have been a step down for him professionally, not to say socially. Nor would it have brought him closer to active service; all military units in Australia were confined to home service, to watching the empire’s wars from afar, except in the rare event when their members were called on to enlist in special contingents to go overseas and fight in a major war. It was different, of course, for the British Army, always busy policing imperial acquisitions from Belfast to Bechuanaland. In 1899 Mackellar applied for a commission with a battalion of Gordon Highlanders stationed in India. It was an unusual move for an Australian, but not an unthinkable one. The British Army was Australia’s army too, and a century earlier Edward Macarthur and Darcy Wentworth had launched the now-forgotten tradition of young Australians from prominent families taking commissions in the British Army. These commissions could be partly secured by taking an examination in Australia. Mackellar did so and passed the test.

Then war intervened. By mid-1899 it seemed certain that tension in South Africa between the British Empire and the Boer republics would end in bloodshed, and the Gordons were rushed from India to South Africa. The Boer War broke out in October, and the battalion immediately went into action. It was not the usual colonial war; the enemy was white, the stakes were high, and it seemed a good opportunity for British colonists to practise fighting beside the British Army. Australians began to raise special contingents and send them to the front to do just that. Keith Mackellar did not join them. A month later, though, he asked the commanding officer of the New South Wales Scottish Rifles for permission...
to join the Gordons in South Africa, the delay possibly explained by having to win an argument with his parents that, although only nineteen years old, he should be allowed to go to war.\(^5\)

He might have become one of the thousands of Australian men during the Boer War who boarded steamships bound for South Africa, often at subsidised rates, sometimes as grooms caring for horses, and enlisted when they arrived. But early in December the Boers defeated three parts of a divided British Army. The empire was humiliated, and there seemed a chance that France or Germany might back the Boers. In response new contingents were raised to help the army out of its mess, and many men who, until then had far different plans for their lives, found themselves in the ranks. Mackellar became one of five thousand men who formed the new Australian contingents when he was commissioned as a lieutenant in a squadron of the 1st Australian Horse. The London *Times*, in a brief mention of him, reported that he had decided to go to war with an Australian unit rather than a British one.\(^6\) If a stirring of national sentiment had led him to change his military ambitions, the new mood would not last long in him.

Before joining the squadron in camp at Randwick his family met in prayer. They took as their lesson the Old Testament’s twenty-fourth Psalm, which insisted that only those with pure hands and a clean heart would ascend the hill of the Lord.\(^7\) The family also gave the young man what practical support they could. Given their income and status, this was considerable. His bank account seems to have bulged. He may have taken a servant to war as well as a couple of horses. And he was placed in the care of the squadron’s commanding officer.\(^8\)

Not all the hours he had spent poring over *Company Drill Made Easy* proved useful in camp. Most of the new contingents heading off to war were made up of mounted rifles, whose members expected to spend as much time in the saddle as on foot. Mackellar’s squadron was a cavalry unit and expected to spend even more. Part of its brief training was devoted to learning how to charge, and a reporter commented on hearing the swish of swords coming from the camp.\(^9\) The sound echoed an innocence about how the war would be fought, but not about war itself and its cost. Young men of Mackellar’s class and time grew up reading about battle and about great commanders …
great commanders; Horatio Nelson, victor of Copenhagen and Trafalgar, twice horribly wounded and finally killed in action, was the great exemplar. Absence of censorship ensured that everyone knew that death in battle could be squalid and agonising. Sydney’s Town & Country Journal, for example, featured a widely circulated photograph of a torn, legless soldier’s body being loaded into an ambulance.\textsuperscript{10}

The squadron sailed for South Africa in January 1900 on a ship which seems also to have carried a Major Thompson of the British Army who in six months’ time would meet Mackellar again. The voyage was monotonous, full of dreary tasks such as grooming the horses and painting scabbards, stirrups and spurs khaki. Not that the young lieutenant minded. ‘Much as I miss you all,’ he wrote to his sister Dorothea, ‘I am enjoying this life above everything I have ever experienced & feel sure that it is what I will do best at.’ Though ‘not a Napoleon just yet,’ he joked, ‘in [some] future time I may be one.’\textsuperscript{11} He would not live long enough to find his bridge at Arcole.

A BRIEF SERVICE

After five weeks at sea the ship docked at Cape Town and the squadron and its horses were railed inland towards the British Army, which had regrouped under a new commander and was about to roll over the Boer republics and scatter their enemies. Mackellar found himself in a ‘great empty treeless country,’ a ‘strange & wonderful land with its wide stretches of treeless though fertile “veld” broken only by rugged steep & barren “kopjes” sometimes in ranges sometimes solitary, and its steep banked rivers, unbridged & impossible to cross except at certain “drifts” or fords.’\textsuperscript{12} The squadron detrained at Modder River, where a British force had been badly beaten a few months earlier, and rode further inland. It joined the army just after Paardeberg, one of the war’s few real battles and a serious setback for the Boers, and was attached to the Royal Scots Greys, one of the oldest and proudest cavalry regiments in the army. The attachment would have pleased a son of a prominent Scottish Australian who had been accepted into the Gordon Highlanders.

Mackellar and the squadron came under fire when the retreating Boers tried and failed to halt the army at Poplar Grove and Dreifontein. It was almost a happy introduction to war, little more than pushing a routed enemy out of the way. Even happier
was the entry of the army into Bloemfontein, capital of one of the Boer republics, on 13 March. Any pleasure soon evaporated, though. As Mackellar explained in a letter to Dorothea, the army was stuck in Bloemfontein for seven weeks regrouping, resupplying and fighting off typhoid and dysentery while its mounted troops, including his own squadron, were on outpost duty being sniped at nearly every day. During a skirmish the squadron was shelled and badly shaken. Still, disease proved more lethal than bullets. ‘We have on the whole lost very few men’ in action, he explained to his sister, ‘though the fever has made rather [large] gaps in our ranks.’

The next move in the campaign—a long ride north in May 1900 to the other Boer capital, Pretoria—came as a relief to the army. Then, a week out, Mackellar’s squadron was caught in open by a Boer police unit—well armed and trained and dressed and disciplined, and good shots too. It began, as one soldier put it, ‘in a business like way to shoot us like dogs’.

Mackellar was unhurt but, like the rest of the army, he was becoming bone tired and impatient with the enemy’s dogged but supposedly futile resistance. At least, Mackellar thought, the war would end when Pretoria fell. The army entered the town on 5 June, almost without a fight, though there was plenty of fighting a week later at Diamond Hill to the east, where the squadron was once again shelled. On 23 June it returned to Pretoria and its members slept under a solid roof for the first time since landing in South Africa. Diamond Hill was taken to be the Boers’ death rattle. Surely they would now admit they were beaten?

Three months of hard living and occasional danger had been enough for the rankers in the squadron to make up their minds about Keith Mackellar. He had not, apparently, flinched under fire. He had always treated them courteously.

‘Candidly speaking,’ one soldier wrote later, ‘he was one of the whitest & nicest men that I have ever met & it is myself that knows it better than any one else because I was his troop Sergeant.’ Another soldier described him as ‘a real nice fellow’ and ‘the best officer we had.’ Perhaps Keith Mackellar was the kind of officer most soldiers of the day respected—gentler than...
them in manner as well as tougher in a fight, more refined but just as able to live rough, better educated yet never snobbish. At any rate, he was as popular with his soldiers as he had been with his elders back in Sydney.

He kept the imperial mindset of his milieu while in South Africa, writing to Dorothea how he longed to know what was happening in China and on the west coast of Africa. Nor was he among those Australians disappointed when they saw at last British regulars up close. ‘More than once I felt like saying God bless them’, he wrote of the naval artillery serving with the army, ‘as we lay under a heavy rifle fire not daring to sit up & they suddenly sent shell after shell screaming over our heads from a few thousand yards behind & landing fair amongst the Boers & making them run like sheep.’ Undimmed admiration for the regulars kept his plans alive to wear a red coat full-time. When the army entered Bloemfontein—in other words, at the first real opportunity he had—he applied for a commission with the Scots Greys. Presumably the offer from the Gordons was forgotten now he was a cavalry officer. An acceptance arrived, but it turned out to be for the Lancashire Fusiliers—an unprestigious English infantry regiment. So he sent a telegram to his father, now in London with the rest of the family on an extended visit, asking him to lobby on his behalf. As the army was about to enter Pretoria, Mackellar was informed that he could soon state his address as ‘7th Dragoon Guards, 4th Cavalry Brigade, South African Field Force via Capetown South Africa’. The regiment in which he was now the most junior officer was not a Scottish one; it recruited in England and had its depot in Kent. Still, Mackellar hoped the regiment would return home soon and, presuming he were given leave, he could spend the rest of the summer with his family. In London Dorothea collected an illustration of an officer of the regiment in its full dress—red coat and blue breeches, steel helmet with a black and white drooping plume. Thus would her brother look when the family were reunited again.

The regiment was wearing dirty, sweat-stained, ragged khaki when Mackellar joined it outside Pretoria early in July. He was one of more than two hundred Australians fighting in South Africa who took up offers of commissions in the British Army around this time, so it was no surprise to find another young, middle-class Australian with him—Arthur Onslow from Camden, who had come to South Africa in the New South Wales Mounted Rifles. Mackellar’s new commanding officer was the Major Thompson who seems to have shared his voyage from Australia, and who might have been the connection that secured his commission in the regiment. The lieutenant proved as popular with his new command as he had been with his old one, ‘getting on splendidly’, Onslow wrote, and making ‘himself a general favourite’.
The regiment was stationed about fifteen kilometres north of Pretoria, helping to keep Boer skirmishers out of an approach to the town. ‘The general opinion,’ according to an artillery officer, was that the station was too isolated. General opinion was probably right. At daybreak on 10 July the regiment sent a squadron and some guns out to an isolated farm at daybreak to round up some Boers. It was not Mackellar’s squadron but, having patrolled there previously, he knew the way and so joined it as a guide. Onslow was present too, escorting the guns. No real trouble was expected, or encountered at first. Then Onslow heard rifle fire off to his right. Soon he could see the squadron flying pell-mell for cover—the Boers had caught it in the open and were shooting the men down. Most of the soldiers made it to one of those dry river beds Mackellar had noticed on arriving in South Africa, and began to return fire. Mackellar was among them. He fired more than thirty rounds from his single-shot carbine before, when raising his head to take aim, a bullet blew off the back of his skull. It was a week before his twentieth birthday.

After the skirmish, his body was taken to a hospital in Pretoria while a coffin and hearse were obtained and a plot located in the military zone of a cemetery west of the town. Next day, his coffin draped in a union flag, Keith Mackellar was lowered into the earth by three men of the 7th Dragoon Guards, three of the 1st Australian Horse, and a Sydney member of a regiment raised in South Africa. The customary wooden cross painted white was erected so there would be no mistake when the equally customary but more permanent marble cross was finished by the stonemasons. Most or all of his old squadron were at the funeral and ‘very much cut up’ with ‘many wet eyes around’. It seemed ‘awfully hard luck’, his old troop sergeant wrote, ‘that he should have been killed in the first action with his new regiment & just as one might say starting his career & being so young too.’ The feeling was shared by his new regiment. ‘His loss is felt keenly’, Arthur Onslow reported, ‘and we all feel that he met his death as a gallant and true son of the Empire.’

The dismay was almost equal when the news reached Sydney. ‘It has cast a deep shadow over our whole circle of acquaintance’, wrote one of the leaders of the Scottish community, ‘and indeed over the whole town: on every side one hears expressions of sympathy and regret.’ Certainly
the newspapers reported the death of 'a very smart, promising and popular officer'.\(^ {39} \)

Reports also reached the family in London, at first, perhaps, by the cold means of an official casualty list printed in the *Times*. Then came letters: from Major Thompson, gently telling how their son had died and enclosing photographs of his grave;\(^ {40} \) from soldiers who had served with him; from family members; and other Sydney Scots. Instead of seeing their son in his red coat and steel helmet fresh from beating the Boers, they would now have to make do, as the most eminent Sydney Scot wrote to them, with 'the recollection of his stainless character, and the knowledge that he met his death on the field of battle with the courage of a true and honourable soldier.'\(^ {41} \) As the family was digesting these reassurances the New South Wales Scottish Rifles held a memorial church service in Sydney addressed by the colony's senior military chaplain.\(^ {42} \) Mackellar's name joined others destined for plaques to the war dead at the city's Scots Church and at his old school, Sydney Grammar.\(^ {43} \) The fifth of nine pieces played at the reopening of Sydney University's refurbished pipe organ would be dedicated to him.\(^ {44} \)

### BRINGING HOME THE BODY

A promising junior officer had been killed in action; his men, his family and his community were grieving; soon his name would appear on a couple of memorial plaques in his home city. So far, so predictable; the same could be written of hundreds of other young men who died in the Boer War. Their families had to be satisfied with photographs of the grave, and the knowledge that a marble headstone marked out where their boy lay from the enormous, empty veld around it. But Keith Mackellar's family was not satisfied. Perhaps the death of a son so highly regarded by so many people proved unbearable. Perhaps his mother could not cope with her loss; her brother asked early on whether 'poor Marion' was 'bearing up under her sad loss. We men are to be pitied when such blows strike us but the mothers have all the worst of it.'\(^ {45} \) Perhaps the family simply had the wealth to do the little that a vast sum of money could do to nibble at the distance between them and the dead. At any rate, over the next few years they paid for two memorials to his memory and, perhaps when these proved inadequate, brought his body home.
The first memorial went up in St James’ in Sydney, the city’s most prestigious Anglican church. Since it was renovating at the time and was keen for donations, the family used the opportunity to pay for a large stained glass window to be installed and dedicated to St George, the patron saint of soldiers, and ‘in loving memory of Keith Kinnaird Mackellar … killed in action … in the twentieth year of his age.’ The saint’s face bore the features of their son’s, and the text chosen for the window was from the twenty-fourth Psalm. The window was unveiled on a wet day in 1903 before a congregation comprised partly of soldiers Keith Mackellar had served with.

The second memorial would have been even more impressive had it ever been constructed. Royal Prince Alfred hospital in the city’s south-west was also renovating, doubling its size by building two new wings. Charles Mackellar donated £1000—what a shop assistant might earn in seven years—towards these wings on condition ‘that a special ward shall be provided for soldiers in need of medical treatment, and that it shall be named in memory of my son.’

‘It is a very nice way to perpetuate your poor son’s memory,’ wrote Major Thompson from South Africa, ‘for sure no soldier, & your son was one to the tips of his fingers, could wish for a more suitable remembrance.’ The hospital erected a plaque, now in its casualty admission room, to a man ‘who perished far from here, before his time, but a soldier, and for his native land.’

This inscription, though in Latin, would have been familiar to most educated Australians—it formed the last lines of English poet Henry Newbolt’s ‘Vitae Lampada’, which urged the empire’s privileged young men to give away their comforts and ‘count the life of battle good.’ But the plaque apparently exhausted the hospital’s efforts to repay its benefactor. No ward for soldiers seemed to have been named for Keith Mackellar. Perhaps no such ward was ever built.

Then, at the request of his family and at a cost of nearly £900, Keith Mackellar’s body was removed from its grave in Pretoria five years after his death. The marble headstone was pulled up too, and both were railed to South Africa’s east coast. There they were loaded in the hold of a steamer, having been labelled ‘curios’, suggesting something between souvenirs and ethnography, to avoid alarming the sailors who would convey it to Sydney. Possibly the deception was also intended to confound customs officers who might not have approved of the passage of a disinterred corpse. Meanwhile a new grave was being prepared in the Anglican section of Waverley Cemetery in Sydney’s eastern suburbs. The body returned to Australia without arousing attention. It was reburied on 14 November 1905, marked by its old marble headstone.
As Dorothea began to write poetry, echoes of her brother and his death could be heard throughout. Her poem ‘When it comes’, for instance, which asks ‘How should I like to die’, has as its first answer: ‘without a cry, In a hard-fought fight, where blows were dealt, And the death-strokes less than a girl’s kiss felt—So would I like to die.’

In her scrapbook she transcribed a translation of a thousand-year-old poem by Wang Chien which included the lines, ‘That a young man should ever come home again, Seemed about as likely as that the sky should fall.’ But by the time she was writing down these words the Great War had killed hundreds of thousands of promising young officers, every one the pride of his community. Half the suburbs and towns in the Western world were mourning the loss of their own Keith Mackellars. Huge new memorials advertised their mass grieving. The memory of Keith Mackellar shrank to his family and the diminishing congregation of St James’ Church. When Dorothea died in 1968, her ashes were scattered on her brother’s grave, prompting the tourists and joggers who pass it to think of her, not to wonder how our other unknown soldier came to lie there.

ENDNOTES

1 Mitchell Library (Sydney), ML MSS 1959 Mackellar family papers (hereafter ‘Family papers’), box 2, bundle IV/A/v, Scot Skirving to Charles Mackellar, 30 August 1900, and box 1, bundle IV/A/ii, MacLaurin to Charles Mackellar, 16 July 1900.
2 Family papers, box 7, bundle 6, Keith Mackellar’s commissions.
3 Family papers, box 8, bundle 6, Keith Mackellar’s copy of Captain Lascelles Davidson, Company Drill Made Easy, Gale & Polden, London, 1897.
4 Times (London), 29 December 1899, p.3.
5 Family papers, box 12, bundle VII/A/vii/b, news cuttings, Keith Mackellar to officer commanding 5th Volunteer Regiment, 17 November 1899.
6 Times (London), 29 December 1899, p.3.
7 Monthly Church Messenger (St James’ Church, Sydney), vol.9, no.4, August 1903, no page numbers.
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Our other unknown soldier

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The Author

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INSIGHTS

ARMY FORCE STRUCTURE

WHAT HAS GONE WRONG?

CAPTAIN DAIMIEN PATTERSON

ABSTRACT

The structure of the Australian Army is the legacy of a long and distinguished history. The author argues that this force structure needs to be re-shaped to better provide high-readiness deployable capability options to Government. He advocates adopting on-line/off-line readiness cycles, consolidating Reserve units, reviewing the employment of foreign exchange officers, and reducing the number of formation headquarters.

We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them.

Albert Einstein
INTRODUCTION

Our Army’s force structure is in a poor state. The Restructuring the Army (RTA) and Hardening and Networking the Army (HNA) programs represent an acknowledgement of this situation by our commanders. Our force structure is a legacy of days when there were more units to command, and both officers and soldiers alike served for longer periods. It is the legacy of the Cold War–era in which the threat was clearly conventional and the requirement for a structure that could rapidly mobilise into a corps (+) organisation took priority. Conversely, during this period of perceived peace, our Army faced constant pressure to reduce its size and consequently suffered from the effects of a ruthless cost-cutting regime. Retaining one of each type of unit became a survival mechanism for maintaining the capabilities Army would need on mobilisation.

The situation is now vastly different. We currently face a broad spectrum of threats from smaller isolated conflicts. Our priority now should lay in maintaining a full range of capabilities at high readiness, ensuring the flexibility to respond in a timely and appropriate manner to the full range of threats. This cannot be achieved with ‘one-shot’ capabilities that cannot maintain the readiness cycles critical to professional high readiness forces.

Our current force has too many formation headquarters that sap manning resources from the units that actually need them—those we intend to deploy. We also lack a structure that makes us inherently interoperable with our anticipated coalition partners and our Reserve is a demoralised, under-strength skeleton with many of its units fighting for their very existence. We have some work to do and, as author Russell Weighly points out:

Unfortunately, without the violence of war to impart the inspiration for change through the need for survival, very few military establishments turn out capable of maintaining a degree of order in peacetime which makes change possible.

WE KNOW WE ARE TOP HEAVY, SO WHY WON’T ANYONE DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

Army’s force structure requires too many full-time senior officer positions. Within the combat arms units there are 33 full-time combat sub-units. For every one full-time combat sub-unit, we have one position for the ranks of Lieutenant General to Brigadier, three positions for Colonels, sixteen positions for Lieutenant Colonels
and 51 positions for Majors. There are 71 officers of the rank of Major and above per sub-unit before we even consider the Captains and Lieutenants. That's almost a sub-unit of senior officers for every sub-unit of combat soldiers. The imbalance is overwhelming.

Army’s force structure is too top heavy. A 15 per cent reduction in the number of positions for Majors and above would create sufficient positions to raise another two rifle companies and a fourth tank squadron. The manpower liability to train and support these additional positions would be offset by a reduced liability to train and support the removed officer positions. Additionally, we would come close to solving the officer element of the Army Personnel Establishment Plan problem overnight.

Why do we have so many senior officer positions? Because our legacy corps (+) command structure has too many formation headquarters and these require large numbers of senior officers to man them. We need to consolidate the number of brigades and remove the divisional level of command so we can cut the number of formation headquarters, reduce the number of officers we need, and use the recouped positions where they can deliver greater capability—in deployable units.

**OFFICER RETENTION: THE PROBLEM IS NOT SUPPLY—IT IS DEMAND!**

Army’s current force structure for officers cannot, and will not be fully manned. It is essential that we now face this fact and adopt a leaner and flatter command hierarchy. Believe it or not, officer attrition is not the problem. The average national separation rate for civilian organisations of over 5000 employees is 16 per cent whilst Army’s is at 13 per cent. Our retention rate is actually quite reasonable, yet we cannot, and will not, fill all our officer positions. Many of our best people have tried and failed at this impossible task. Our retention rate is superior to the national average. The real problem is not one of retention or supply, it is one of demand. Army’s time-in-rank and force structure requirements for the employment of officers are completely at odds with any realistic retention rate or sound rank structure.

An ideal rank structure is diagrammatically depicted in the form of the pyramid in figure 1. Army’s current officer force structure, however, bears more resemblance to the Ettamogah Pub in figure 2. Army’s current force structure requires 920 Lieutenants, 1989 Captains and 1700 Majors. Assuming zero attrition and given the time-in-rank requirements for each rank, each Lieutenant cohort requires an average of 263 officers, each Captain cohort 331 and each Major cohort 340 officers. I would argue that these numbers should be decreasing as the ranks increase in seniority. We are set up to fail by our own design.
Within a pyramid structure (figure 1), a deliberate reduction in positions occurs as ranks increase in seniority, thus allowing for attrition and creating a competitive environment, resulting in enhanced performance. The Ettamogah Pub structure (figure 2), however, makes no allowance for any attrition and reduces competitiveness for promotion within the junior officer ranks, as promotion is almost guaranteed from Captain to Major.
The keen eye will note the inclusion of the rank of Second Lieutenant in figure 1. The removal of this rank from the full-time Army has effectively damaged the credibility of the full Lieutenant. The full Lieutenant should be viewed as an officer who, while still junior in rank, has some experience and thus can be trusted to work with less supervision. This is currently not the case. The removal of the rank of Second Lieutenant has created a ‘confidence creep’ effect that has resulted in the Lieutenant assuming the credibility that should be given to the Second Lieutenant and the Captain that of the Lieutenant. Successive years of Single Entitlement Document (SED) establishment reviews conducted in mutual isolation have gradually changed many Lieutenant positions to Captain positions resulting in the Ettamogah Pub structure.

The problem is exacerbated further by a clear inconsistency. At the Land and Training Command level, Principal Staff Officers are Colonels. At Divisional level they are Lieutenant Colonels and at Brigade they are Majors. So why is it, that at unit level, the Operations Officer (S3) is a Major whilst the Adjutant (S1), Intelligence Officer (S2) and Quartermaster (S4) are Captains? The Operations Officer position can be held by a capable senior Captain and the unit Second-in-Command can serve the role of unit Chief-of-Staff. Tradition or not, the practice of having Majors as unit Operations Officers undermines all attempts to establish a sound pyramid style rank structure and is inconsistent with the rank held by Principal Staff Officers at all other levels of command.

In some units we have the Operations Officer also dual-hatted as the support sub-unit commander. This is an unfair imposition on both the commander and their soldiers. Command is a full-time job. We need to separate these two functions and provide these support sub-units with full-time commanders free from the distractions of Operations Officer responsibilities.

When considered holistically, the problem seems quite obvious. Our current force structure requires more Majors than it has Captains to draw from and more Captains than it has Lieutenants. Where are all these extra Captains and Majors required? The answer can be found where we have Captains doing Lieutenants’ jobs and Majors doing Captains’ jobs, manning our excessive number of formation headquarters, and manning the cadre staffs of our below-strength and hollow 2nd Division.
A ONE-SHOOT CAPABILITY ISN’T—WE’RE NOT STRUCTURED FOR READINESS

The Army’s position contains within it an internal contradiction. How can units and brigades that are dissimilarly ‘structured, trained and equipped’ be used as rotation forces?11

The fact that a one-shot capability isn’t actually a ‘capability’ in a professional high readiness force has generally been accepted across Army; however, our force structure still doesn’t reflect this acceptance. We need to be an Army of at least ‘twos’—not just to allow the rotation of units in and out of operations, but simply because two is the minimum number of units required to maintain an operational readiness cycle in peacetime. Maintaining such a readiness cycle is critical to providing our Government with a world-class professional force at an appropriate state of readiness. Ideally, however, we need to be an Army of at least ‘threes’, if not ‘fours’. Why? Because based on our experience in Korea, Vietnam, East Timor and now Iraq, we know that to sustain a professional force overseas we need to have one deployed, one preparing to deploy, one returning/reconstituting and, ideally, one prepared for other contingencies.

Generally, with a few obvious exceptions, our Army is not structured for readiness. The 1st Brigade, for example, maintains a deployable battlegroup comprising one Tank Squadron, one Mechanised Company and one Cavalry Squadron. The question remains as to whether this is a realistic grouping. Within 1st Brigade there is only one Mortar Platoon, one battalion Signals Platoon and one Special Equipment Troop. The Brigade has only one Reconnaissance and Surveillance Platoon with dismounts, and only one Sniper Section. Which rotation of the deployable battlegroup will go without these capabilities? Will they be ‘penny-packaged’ out or are they expected to deploy indefinitely? Surely if we want a credible deployable battlegroup capability that can maintain an on-line/off-line readiness cycle, we need two identical deployable battlegroups, each with its own tanks, mechanised infantry and dedicated support elements.

We need to be permanently organised in the same way that we are most likely to deploy and —where we have an Army of at least ‘twos’—we need to rotate like units on-line and off-line across the board. Our two primary Brigade Headquarters need to be rotating on-line/off-line as well. They too are units that have administrative and training requirements that must be met before they can claim to be ‘ready’ for deployment. We need both of these Headquarters to be identically organised and

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We are a ‘Battlegroup’ Army, not a ‘Brigade’ Army.

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equally capable of commanding light and mechanised forces. We are a ‘Battlegroup’ Army, not a ‘Brigade’ Army. These Headquarters will be required to command a mix of light and mechanised forces. We need to remember that Headquarters 3rd Brigade commanded only one of its own Infantry Battalions in the first East Timor deployment. The other two were from the 1st Brigade and one of those was a Mechanised Battalion to boot!

WE’RE NOT STRUCTURED FOR COALITION OPERATIONS

Every major offshore operation that the Australian Army has been involved in has been conducted in a coalition setting. While we currently train for coalition operations, we are not structured for them. If we are serious about preparing for war, we must be serious about structuring for coalition operations.

Historically, our deployed forces have been integrated operationally into British and American formations and in turn we have commanded troops from the island nations of the Pacific. Recent conflicts in East Timor, Afghanistan, the Solomon Islands and Iraq have reinforced these historical trends. These arrangements are no coincidence; they have occurred as a result of our standing treaties and/or common interests with these countries.

So why then does our Army employ the majority of its foreign exchange officers in instructional appointments teaching our doctrine? Should that really be our highest priority for employing these officers? While these exchange officers undoubtedly make a valued contribution in this role, surely we could make better use of their presence? If we plan on fighting in a coalition setting, we should have a US or British exchange officer on the staff of every deployable high readiness headquarters. Exchange officers employed in this manner would prove invaluable in the establishment of tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) that, while still uniquely Australian, would also be compatible with our potential coalition partners. In addition, these officers would bring their depth of operational experience with them, thus assisting us to establish TTPs for conflicts we are yet to experience.

... we should have a US or British exchange officer on the staff of every deployable high readiness headquarters.
COMBINED ARMS ARE SUPPOSED TO BE ‘COMBINED’

Colonel Douglas Macgregor’s book *Breaking the Phalanx* has proven to be one of the most influential publications in shaping the reorganisation of the US Army. The book highlights the historical trend for ‘all-arms’ formations to be formed at a lower level, be more mobile, and be more combined in nature. This is a response to an emptying battlespace created by increased mobility, more effective means of communication, and weapons with higher lethality and greater stand-off ranges. In 1750, the all-arms formation was the field army. In 1805 it was the Napoleonic Corps. In 1914 it was the infantry division; in 1940 it was the Panzer Division and, by the end of World War II, it was the US Combat Command, or the equivalent of a brigade. The all-arms formation of today is currently the battalion-level battlegroup.

The US Army has recently commenced a massive reorganisation focused on the creation of ‘Combined Arms’ Battalions to replace its Tank and Mechanised Battalions. Each new Combined Arms Battalion has two mechanised infantry companies and two tank companies. Each brigade is now made up of two Combined Arms Battalions, a Reconnaissance Squadron with dismounts (equal in size to our Cavalry Regiments), and an Artillery Battalion. US brigades are currently deployed to Iraq in this configuration.

Our Australian Army, on the other hand, still maintains a lone Tank Regiment and a lone Mechanised Battalion, while we plan to raise another Mechanised Battalion geographically displaced from its combined arms partners. Our fighting potential is being hampered by our arms corps-based unit structure. In contrast, by creating the Combat Service Support Battalions (CSSBs) and the Force Support Battalions (FSBs), the logistics corps have managed to see past their rivalries in order to adopt more effective unit organisations. The time has come for the arms corps to do the same.

It is not enough to simply ‘train for war’; we need to be ‘organised for war’. We claim to be a battlegroup army, but our tanks, mechanised infantry and cavalry remain in separate units despite the fact that they will be expected to fight together in high-intensity close combat. In my experience it is only when the training programs of each unit conveniently align, or during directed exercises, that these capabilities train together for this most challenging and serious task. In combined arms units, combined arms training becomes the rule, not the exception.
We also need to look at where we place our specialist support units in the order of battle. Army’s specialist units are currently commanded at too high a level. It is reasonable to assume that the largest Army formation to be deployed, short of mobilisation of the Reserve, will be a brigade (+), probably under command of a joint headquarters such as the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJFHQ). If this is how we are to fight, shouldn’t all specialist units be under command of the high readiness brigades or, at the most, only one level higher?

Currently, Army’s aviation, air defence, construction engineer, geomatic engineer, electronic warfare, intelligence, and military police capabilities are held at corps level, and our surveillance and target acquisition capability is held at divisional level. It should be no surprise then that a common post-operational report recommendation is that these units should ‘train with the brigades/units more often’ or words to that effect. They shouldn’t just train with the brigades; they should be part of them. These units need to be placed under command of the high readiness brigades as a rule and support the wider Army by exception, not the other way around. It is under command of these brigades that they will first deploy, so it is under command of these brigades that they should be organised.

THE RESERVE —FOR A SKELETON IT CONSUMES A GREAT DEAL

Our Reserve is a highly valuable asset that is wasting away within our dilapidated legacy force structure. The ranks of the Reserve include some of our most skilled and motivated soldiers and officers; yet for their skills and commitment we offer them service in poorly manned, poorly resourced units and little financial incentive. Some reservists actually sacrifice their higher civilian pay when they parade with us. The Chief of Army has clearly articulated what the Reserve needs to be capable of:

Consequently, the Army Reserve must be capable of providing three levels of support to the land force: first, individuals and small units force allocated to an initial deployment in any land force contribution to meet any security challenge, at relatively short notice; second, individuals and larger units from the Reserve to reinforce and rotate second and subsequent deployments. Third, the Reserve must be capable of supplying sufficient expansion forces to meet defence of Australia tasks.
Our Reserve has been described as a skeleton force; but for a skeleton it certainly consumes an enormous amount of resources. The Reserve currently comprises fewer than seven brigades. Each brigade consists of only two reserve Infantry Battalions and supporting units manned to an average of no more than 40 per cent and delivering one or two rifle companies each for deployment. Yet each of these formations maintains equipment schedules that are close to full and full-time Army cadre staff manned almost to capacity, including a total of 204 of the Captains and Majors that we are desperately short of. The Reserve budget is 20 per cent of the total Army budget and 5 per cent of Army’s full-time manpower is allocated to support it. For what the Reserve currently delivers in capability, we are not making best use of those resources. To use the words of the Joint Standing Committee in September 2000:

We recommend that all units be fully staffed to operational levels. Where a unit consists of predominantly part-time personnel it is to be staffed to 120 per cent of operational requirement.

It is hard to deny the Committee’s logic. If anything, spans of command in the Reserve should be greater, not smaller, than in the full-time army and units should be overmanned, not manned at an average of 40 per cent strength. This is necessary to compensate for the inability of some Reserve members to parade on call-out, and the departure of members volunteering for immediate service to round-out full-time units deployed in early rotations.

We need to conduct a complete rationalisation of the Reserve force structure immediately, before the Reserve self-destructs any further. The Joint Standing Committee reported that ‘the parlous state of these Reserve formations represented the single greatest concern for [the] committee during its enquiry into the Army’. Furthermore, the Committee recommended that the current ‘largely hollow brigades be consolidated into highly capable brigades’. Yet six years later, very little change has occurred since the release of that report. The number one argument for maintaining a large skeletal structure is the requirement to maintain a basis for expansion. This is the traditional role of the Reserve and, while the current strategic circumstances make it less likely to be required, it is still an important and necessary task, as strategic circumstances tend to change infinitely faster than Army’s force structure. That said, the Joint Standing Committee had this to say about Army’s mobilisation plans:

… strategic circumstances tend to change infinitely faster than Army’s force structure.
The current model used for force generation is to maintain a force structure of nine brigades. Most of these brigades are skeletal – they lack most of their staff and equipment. The Department of Defence does not resource any credible mobilisation plans to provide the necessary equipment and personnel to field these brigades. In this sense the model is a fiction.

**THE SOLUTION**

_Hollowness is the maintenance of organisations that are insufficiently resourced to be operationally useful. This problem persists in the Army. It consumes resources while not delivering capability in meaningful time frames. It has created the paradox that the Army can actually increase useable capability by reducing its organisational size._

The solution to Army’s force structure woes requires a review of officer positions, a rationalisation of the number of formation headquarters and a consolidation of the Reserve. It also requires a reorganisation of our high-readiness capabilities so that they can be inherently structured to maintain rotational readiness cycles and be more prepared for coalition operations.

However, Army is quickly becoming ‘change fatigued’. We need to decide on a sound and flexible structure that can cover all conceivable contingencies, put this structure in place, and maintain it. When we do change, we need revolutionary change followed by a reasonable period of normality, rather than constant gradual change. Constant change is detrimental to the wellbeing of an organisation such as Army. The challenge lies in adopting a flexible force structure that needs minimal change to deal with contingencies as they arise.

This can be achieved by ensuring that the full range of capabilities exists for the full spectrum of conflict and that these capabilities are all held in a state of high readiness. Should a particular type of conflict arise, the suitable capability can be sent as the first rotation and, if necessary, a risk decision can be made and other capabilities temporarily re-roled in preparation for the later rotations. Examples of the successful employment of this option include the deployment of 4 RAR and 5/7 RAR (second tour) to East Timor as light battalions.

**DESTROY THE ETTAMOGAH PUB AND BUILD A PYRAMID**

We need to reintroduce the rank of Second Lieutenant for all first appointment officer positions commencing with the very next graduating class from officer training. All officers should serve two years as a Second Lieutenant regardless of degree qualification, as the rank needs to be a reflection of experience in the Army.
outside of officer training establishments and not the level of education. Promotion thereafter should be based on demand, qualifications and performance, not time in rank. This is a very simple change. There is no requirement to change rates of pay, just simply the badge of rank. Second Lieutenants could retain the same pay level as current first and second-year Lieutenants. This action will raise the level of confidence in full Lieutenants and allow the reversion of some Captain positions to Lieutenant positions, thus broadening the base of the pyramid.

We also need to review all Captain and Major positions and reduce the required rank level of as many of these as possible. An appropriate start-point would be the reversion of many assistant staff officer jobs to Lieutenant or Captain and all unit OPSO positions to Captain. Where the OPSO is also a sub-unit commander, the Major should be retained as the full-time sub-unit commander and the assistant OPSO should become the OPSO. Unit Second-in-Commands should be properly qualified to do the job their title suggests—command the unit in the Commanding Officer’s absence. Our unit Second-in-Command positions must only be for Staff College graduates.

CONSOLIDATE THE NUMBER OF FORMATION HEADQUARTERS

We must remove the divisional level of command. We need a Deployable Joint Force Headquarters, but we don’t need a Division Headquarters. By consolidating the number of brigades down from nine to six, the brigades could report directly to Land Command. The Deployable Joint Force Headquarters needs to be separated from the Headquarters 1st Division function and, along with 1st Joint Support Unit, placed permanently under command of Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQ JOC). This makes these units truly tri-Service and allows them to focus solely on preparing for their operational role. The Air Force and Navy will simply not support the tri-Service staffing of DJFHQ or 1 JSU until they are removed from the Headquarters 1st Division function.

Once this occurs, two-thirds of the current Army staff could potentially be recouped to fill vacancies elsewhere, as these units would be staffed evenly by Army, Air Force and Navy personnel. This could save an estimated 22 Major and 22 Captain positions, as well as a number of critical trade positions such as clerks and signallers.

We need to reintroduce the rank of Second Lieutenant …

The last time Army reorganised its higher headquarters structure was in 1971.
The last time Army reorganised its higher headquarters structure was in 1971. That particular reorganisation saw Headquarters Eastern Command become what is now known as Land Headquarters; Headquarters 1st Division became Headquarters Training Command; and Headquarters Northern Command became Headquarters 1st Division. Guardians of the history of Headquarters 1st Division should note that Headquarters Training Command was originally Headquarters 1st Division. The title and traditions of Headquarters 1st Division could be passed on to Land Headquarters and those of Headquarters 2nd Division to Headquarters Training Command. This would preserve the proud history and prestige of these headquarters.

**CONSOLIDATE THE NUMBER OF BRIGADES**

As previously discussed, Army’s nine brigades could be reduced to six: two full-time and four reserve. The 1st and 3rd Brigades should remain in place as the full-time high readiness brigades and include the current full-time component of 7th Brigade. The six-and-a-half reserve brigades should then be consolidated into four fully manned, more capable brigades. Four Reserve brigades will still provide an ample basis for expansion, whilst making better use of the available resources in peacetime.

A consolidation of the reserve brigades would not require the disbandment of reserve units or the closure of any reserve depots—a move that would be fiercely opposed, and rightly so. It requires the merging of reserve units. We need to understand that the preservation of unit traditions serves us better than following a set of antiquated rules about the way we title units. B Squadron, 3rd/4th Cavalry Regiment is a good example of where a single squadron can preserve the history of two regiments if necessary.

Why not merge the 5th and 8th Brigades and call them 5th/8th Brigade? Why not use a sub-unit to preserve the title of a particular regiment while under the functional command of another regiment? What is more important: following pointless naming conventions or preserving the proud histories of units and brigades forged in two world wars? These histories are a rich source of esprit de corps and contribute significantly to the morale, and the consequent effectiveness, of the Reserve. The trick is to adopt an operationally effective structure first and foremost, and preserve the formation and unit histories at the same time by linking unit titles.

The full-time staff of what is now Headquarters 7th Brigade should assume the role and title of the Deployable Land Component Command permanently and be placed under command of DJFHQ and HQ JOC. The 11th Brigade and the reserve
component of 7th Brigade should be merged to form one four-battalion Queensland brigade, and the 5th and 8th Brigades should be merged to form one four-battalion New South Wales brigade. The Tasmania-based elements of 9th Brigade should be merged with 4th Brigade to form a three-battalion Victoria-Tasmania brigade, and the South Australia-based elements of 9th Brigade should be merged with 13th Brigade to form a three-battalion Western Australia–South Australia brigade. If necessary, those Brigades divided by states could maintain a full Colonel Deputy Brigade Commander and a small slice of the Brigade staff in the state not occupied by the Brigade Commander, to represent the Reserve in that state.

While consolidating the brigades will not reduce the number of Reserve combat units, it will reduce the number of support units. The remainder will comprise four sets of well-manned and resourced brigade supporting units. Consolidation will reduce the full-time cadre staff liability and save approximately 18 Major, 33 Captain and multiple critical trade full-time positions desperately needed elsewhere in Army. Consolidation will provide the Reserve greater focus and more confidence in its role. These factors combined will result in higher morale and greater capability.

**STRUCTURE FOR READINESS**

For our force structure to become inherently ‘ready’ we need to have at least two of each deployable capability, and have these assume an off-line/on-line readiness cycle between them. We need to reorganise our eight full-time combat arms units into four like pairs of combat capabilities. The two full-time brigade headquarters and their supporting engineer and artillery regiment headquarters need to be identically organised and equally capable of commanding both light and mechanised forces. Similar arrangements need to be made for the two high readiness Command Support Regiments (CSRs) and CSSBs. Specialist capability sub-units—such as intelligence, military police, and electronic warfare—need to be placed under command of the CSRs for collective training and administration and should only report to their parent units on technical issues.

The Tank Regiment and Mechanised Battalion, as they currently stand, are one-shot capabilities. The concept of the deployable battlegroup has serious limitations, but has served a purpose as a transitional capability. It is now time to build upon that and take the next step. We don't need another Mechanised Battalion; we simply need to get more out of our Tank Regiment by making it an individually deployable entity in itself. We can do this by...
Army Force Structure

giving it its own infantry and support troops—by making the Tank Regiment and the existing Mechanised Battalion identical Combined Arms Battalions. Reorganising these two units into identical Combined Arms Battalions will deliver a far greater capability to Army. Unit titles such as 1st Armoured Regiment (Combined Arms) and 5th/7th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (Combined Arms) could be adopted to preserve unit identities.

The structure for the proposed Combined Arms Battalion is shown in figure 3. Each unit would be tracked and have two Tank Squadrons (eleven M1A1 each) and two Mechanised Companies. In addition, each unit would include Special Equipment (SEQ), Mortar, Signals, Reconnaissance and Surveillance Platoons/Troops and a Sniper Section. Tanks and infantry would constantly train together and each unit would be fully capable of deploying independently, without the need for a last minute regrouping and extensive lead-up training. Logistically each of these units would be far better rehearsed and equipped to support both tanks and mechanised infantry. Both units would assume a yearly on-line/off-line readiness cycle, delivering a credible, self-contained, highly trained combined arms unit that can realistically deploy within a short time frame.

The deployment of Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAVs) to the Security Detachment (SECDET) and the Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG) in Iraq has proven that it is sound practice for cavalry to deploy with infantry integral to its organisation. It is now understood more than ever before that the cavalry scout and the rifleman, while similar in capability, each have separate roles. Our operational experience has proven that the current structure of the Cavalry Regiment is not sufficiently combined arms in nature and is no longer appropriate. The Cavalry Regiment needs to have its own cavalry scouts and infantrymen.

Figure 3. Combined Arms Battalion
The Cavalry Regiments need to have their own infantry. I propose we should reorganise the third squadron in each Regiment to be a Mounted Infantry Company (see figure 4). The Mounted Infantry Company could be an infantry company mounted in ASLAVs with armoured corps vehicle crews and infantry dismounts. This is not a new concept for the Australian Army as our Cavalry units started out as mounted infantry units—ie the Light Horse! This Mounted Company would perform standard infantry tasks including clearance of complex terrain, forward operating base security and dismounted patrolling of extended duration, neither of which is an entirely appropriate use of cavalry scouts.

Had our Cavalry Regiments been organised in such a fashion in 1999, we would not have had to re-role an ASLAV squadron to perform an armoured personnel carrier (APC) role for the infantry at short notice in East Timor, as such an organisation would have already existed at high readiness. Had this been the case in 2003, we would not have had to form a SECDET from separate units that had rarely trained together, because such an organisation would have already existed at high readiness. Had such an organisation existed in February 2005, we would not have had to form the AMTG from two separate units, because such an organisation would have already existed at high readiness.

We now know that our cavalry assets need to, and will, deploy with infantry. Now it is time to stop allowing corps rivalries to impede effective force structure and organise our Cavalry Regiments in the way in which we will deploy them.

Army’s current full-time Motorised Battalion needs to be joined in the motorised role by re-roling the Parachute Battalion, not as another Mechanised Battalion under the current HNA plan, but as a second Motorised Battalion. In concert with the

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**The Cavalry Regiment needs to have its own cavalry scouts and infantrymen.**

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The diagram in Figure 4 illustrates the structure of a Cavalry Regiment.
creation of two Combined Arms Battalions in Darwin, this option would be significantly cheaper than creating another Mechanised Battalion in Adelaide. It would also create a situation where we can have two Motorised Battalions rotating on-line/off-line, which the current HNA plan does not. The rotation of these two battalions would deliver an additional highly trained infantry unit with its own protected mobility that can realistically deploy within a short notice-to-move requirement.

In order to make our high-readiness units ‘ready’ to deploy with coalition forces, each high-readiness Brigade Headquarters needs to have embedded a US and a British exchange officer holding permanent appointments on staff. We should then seek to ensure that our officers serving in reciprocal postings with the US and British armies are employed in US and British headquarters that our units are likely to serve under. Where possible, all of our high-readiness unit level headquarters also need to have an embedded exchange officer from any one of our potential coalition partners. These exchange officers should then be rotated so that units constantly experience different perspectives and contributions from these valuable officers.

**MORE CAPABILITY FROM THE RESERVE**

*Understrength units in both the Reserve and Regular army damage morale and retention, provide a poor vehicle for training and, in the final analysis, do not provide useable capability.*

In order to increase Reserve capability, we need to attack the manning issue from both ends. First, by consolidating the number of formations and merging brigade support units we will increase the manning levels of the remaining units significantly and make better use of our limited resources. Second, we should stop giving money to our reservists’ employers and start giving it to the reservists themselves—under specified guidelines. If we charge a reserve soldier for failing to parade, chances are he won’t be seen again. Reserve soldiers react better to positive reinforcement measures. We need to introduce a parade bonus system where we reward our reservists for attending the parades we want them to attend.

Through reorganisation, the full-time Army could provide two rotations of four battlegroups each. Short of mobilisation, the Reserve could be made capable of providing the third, as well as providing the basis for expansion on mobilisation. By introducing a high readiness form of reserve service where we financially reward our reservists with a bonus for parading a minimum of 50 days of mandated training per year and maintaining AIRN compliance, we could increase parade attendances dramatically for relatively little cost. This does not imply a re-introduction of the Ready Reserve Scheme, but rather a higher level of commitment from existing members of the Reserve parading at existing Reserve units.
CONCLUSION

Army’s force structure is in a parlous state—but it can be fixed. In some areas the solutions are simple and could be addressed very quickly. In other areas it will take some detailed analysis, a willingness to try new structures, the redistribution of equipment and the relocation of some units. While the HNA process is taking us forward, we can still do more.

The Cold War is history. We need a force that maintains a complete range of capabilities at high readiness. We must make some tough decisions on the number of formation headquarters we need in order to restore sound manning levels to our deployable units and to adopt a structure that can be realistically filled by the available officers and soldiers. By removing the divisional level of command, making DJFHQ and 1 JSU truly tri-Service units under command of HQ JOC, and consolidating the number of reserve brigades, we can save an estimated 40 Major, 55 Captain and a similar number of full-time support staff, releasing desperately needed full-time positions. The reduction in rank of assistant staff officer positions and the change of unit OPSO positions from Major to Captain will save even more positions.

Currently our on-line force consists of a Light Battalion and a questionable 1:1:1 Battlegroup capability. With some modification to force structure within our existing resources, we could have an on-line force consisting of a Brigade Headquarters, a Combined Arms Battalion, a Cavalry Regiment, a Motorised Battalion, and a Light Battalion, all with supporting arms and services at any one time when forces are not committed overseas. Meanwhile, an identical force would be off-line reconstituting in preparation for returning to high readiness (refer Table 1).

We need to adopt on-line/off-line readiness cycles across the board with our full-time deployable units. We need to be better prepared for coalition operations and review our priorities for the employment of our foreign exchange officers. Finally, we need to breathe life back into the Reserve by consolidating its force structure while still preserving its proud unit and formation histories. These should be the next steps in the move towards a Hardened and Networked Army. It is our duty to deliver to the Government of Australia and the Australian taxpayer the greatest amount of capability possible from the resources they allocate to us. The preservation of existing inefficient unit structures must not be held above this obligation.
Table 1. Proposed readiness rotation model

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>On-line force</th>
<th>Off-line force</th>
<th>Reserve force</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brigade Headquarters</td>
<td>Brigade Headquarters</td>
<td>Light Brigade Group (4 Bns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined Arms Battalion</td>
<td>Combined Arms Battalion</td>
<td>Light Brigade Group (4 Bns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cavalry Regiment</td>
<td>Cavalry Regiment</td>
<td>Light Brigade Group (3 Bns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motorised Battalion</td>
<td>Motorised Battalion</td>
<td>Light Brigade Group (3 Bns)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Light Battalion</td>
<td>Light Battalion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multi-Role Aviation</td>
<td>Multi-Role Aviation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battlegroup Artillery Regiment</td>
<td>Battlegroup Artillery Regiment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survil &amp; Tgt Acquisition Battery</td>
<td>Survil &amp; Tgt Acquisition Battery</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineer Regiment</td>
<td>Engineer Regiment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Command Support Regiment (+)</td>
<td>Command Support Regiment (+)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combat Service Support Battalion</td>
<td>Combat Service Support Battalion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force Support Battalion</td>
<td>Force Support Battalion</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ENDNOTES

1 One-shot capabilities are those units that exist in isolation without other identical units that can be used for rotation forces. One-shot capabilities cannot be rotated and must either remain deployed indefinitely or return without replacement.


3 1 RAR: 4; 2 RAR: 4; 3 RAR: 3; 5/7 RAR: 3; 6 RAR: 3; 1 AR: 3; 2 CAV: 3; 2/14 LHR: 2; B SQN ¾ CAV: 1; SASR: 3; 4 RAR: 4.

4 Complete Officer Position List, 30 Mar 2006.

5 This amounts to 303 positions.

6 The Land Command Army Personnel Establishment Plan 06 Working Group, which was convened on 18 August 2004, identified that, in 2006, Army would fall 15 per cent short of its requirement for Majors.
8 Complete Officer Position List, 30 March 2006.
9 The time-in-rank requirements are: three years for degree-qualified Lieutenants; four years for non-degree Lieutenants; six years for Captains; and five years for Majors.
11 Ibid, p. 119.
14 The desire to base a battalion in Adelaide for retention purposes is based on sound reasoning but runs the risk of causing a functional dislocation. We don’t need another Mechanised Battalion; we simply need to get more out of our Tank Regiment by making it an individually deployable entity in itself. We can do this by giving it its own infantry and support troops—by making the Tank Regiment and 5/7 RAR identical Combined Arms Battalions.
17 4 Brigade, 5 Brigade, two-thirds of 7 Brigade, 8 Brigade, 9 Brigade, 11 Brigade and 13 Brigade.
18 *From Phantom to Force*, p. 109.
19 Ready reaction force Company and a force protection Company group.
20 Complete Officer Position List, 10 Sep 2004.
21 Leahy, ‘The Australian Army Reserve: Relevant and Ready’.
22 *From Phantom to Force*, p. 189.
27 Issues relating to the geographical displacement of these Brisbane-based full-time units would be dealt with in the same way that the Townsville-based 3rd Brigade commands the Holsworthy-based 3rd Battalion.
28 1 x Tank Regiment, 2 x Cavalry Regiments, and 5 x Infantry Battalions.
The total number of tanks required would be 46 (four squadrons of 11 and 2 tanks for each unit headquarters). Army currently plans to acquire 59 M1A1 tanks. This will leave more than twenty per cent of the tanks for special equipment (SEQ), training and maintenance support roles.

SEQ Troop will probably be removed with the purchase of the M1A1 as, at this stage, no SEQ equipment is to be purchased.

From Phantom to Force, p. 114.

A $5000 per annum parade bonus per member, based on a force of 3000, would cost only $15 million a year; however, the capability it would deliver would make it money well spent.

THE AUTHOR

Captain Daimien Patterson graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon in 1997 into the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. Since graduation he has served with the 8th/12th Medium Regiment (Holsworthy), the 131st Locating Battery, the Army Recruit Training Centre, the 8th/12th Medium Regiment (Darwin), the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters, and the 1st Field Regiment. He served in East Timor as a Civil-Military Affairs Team Commander and as the Liaison Officer to the Fijian contingent. In Iraq he served with the British Divisional Headquarters in Basra, the US 4th Brigade Combat Team of the 3rd Infantry Division and the Headquarters of the Australian Joint Task Force 633 in Baghdad. He is currently posted to the School of Artillery as an instructor.
ARE WE A THINKING ARMY?

LIEUTENANT COLONEL JIM BRYANT

ABSTRACT

This article takes a critical look at the intellectual culture of the Australian Army, especially the lack of a culture of writing. The author observes that it is not that Army officers do not reflect and discuss what they experience, they just tend not to write about them. He argues that leaders at every level in the Army must contribute to reversing this trend.

Less than two years after the end of the First World War, the new German Army under General Hans Von Seeckt underwent a deep-set and far-reaching analysis of its battlefield performance in that conflict. Lucid, candid, and thoughtful, it is all the more impressive when it is remembered that this army was to number just 100,000 at its peak, with an officer corps not much bigger than our own. Similarly impressive was the process of rigorous post-combat analysis in the US Army after Vietnam under the guidance of officers such as William DePuy, which led to the emergence of creative and innovative ideas based on the re-examination in the West of manoeuvre and the operational art. Corresponding initiatives on the part of the United States Marine Corps (USMC) leadership elite in that period reflected a similar determination to embed a more intellectual and creative mindset. All of these initiatives bear testimony to the important process of intellectual renewal imposed by courageous and visionary leaders who were faced with what they believed to be sub-optimal combat performance.
The Australian Army has been fortunate—it has not been beset by such travails. Evidence of sub-optimal performance has not been as apparent here and, as such, there has been no compelling impetus for internal conjecture. Operations such as East Timor in 1999 were decidedly one-sided affairs. The issues in the prevailing post-operational literature seem to relate in the main to the logistical realm: to supply and transportation problems, to issues like stock visibility, and an inability to land adequate amounts of diesel fuel on a beach. I can’t help believing that this is just as well, not only because the sustaining of pointless casualties or the suffering of tactical defeat are of necessity a bad thing—of course they are—but because I don’t think we are all that good at looking at ourselves with a dispassionate eye and encapsulating needed improvements in written form. As a result, we have become too narrowly focused, unwilling to challenge prevailing orthodoxies, and increasingly content to let an ever-present media-spun triumphalism speak for us.

This is not to say that our army as an institution is a stupid one—far from it. Our special-to-corps and all-corps training courses are among the best in the world; our soldiers are well trained as individuals, and make cohesive and well-drilled teams. Our tactics, techniques and procedures (TTPs) appear pragmatic and based on salient experience. But something is missing somewhere above TTPs and below media-spun triumphalism and doctrine. It is the presence of written debate on how to prosecute operations. The life-blood of any institution that wants to improve and not simply recline in self-adulation, this debate is predominantly an officer skill and responsibility.

This is not to say that there isn’t debate on all manner of issues amongst the officer community. In weekend get-togethers around Townsville and Darwin, Service spouses collectively roll their eyes as intense and intelligent discussions rage around the BBQ about ‘where we are going’ and ‘what needs doing’ in our Army. These are reflected as much as possible in a number of on-line discussion forums hosted by professional and hard-working institutions at places like the...
Are we a thinking army?

Centre for Army Lessons. But, in the main, these important and decisive debates are not being extended by their proponents to a more formal collective level, where they can be included in broader organisational conjecture. This is because these debates are not reflected in written discourse. Without this information feed, no matter how good a leadership group may be, it is working in a near-vacuum, in an atmosphere uninformed by the views of the broader officer community. It is only within this process of self-examination and analysis based on experience, however, that the Australian Army can add the texture, colour and example needed to leaven the debate on what direction and orientation this army of ours should take. This short piece is an attempt to spur or inflame debate on this issue—thus its needlessly provocative title.

Why don’t officers write, read and engage in their profession at an intellectual level in the Australian Army?

Cultural factors

As I have already intimated, the answer appears to be that Australian Army officers do engage on a range of professional issues, some even read but hardly anyone writes. As such, at our worst the ‘blind lead the blind’ conceptually and we tend to inhabit a creative cul de sac. Part of this inactivity is no doubt cultural in origin: we see ourselves as ‘doers’, not ‘pontificaters’. We have a clear disdain for doctrine and ‘high-minded’ debate. To tweak George Bernard Shaw: we believe that those who can do; and those who can’t write. The process of encapsulating one’s thoughts and feelings on a professional matter, of committing those beliefs and convictions to paper and publishing them to be read and critiqued by others, is simply not ‘our way of doing things’. Any creative urge would best be manifested in other ways, perhaps via an MBA.

Systemic factors

Most Army officers anticipate little reward for the energy expended in writing, as such efforts are neither rewarded nor recognised by the organisation as having any intrinsic worth. A demonstrated ability to show evidence of wide reading and conjecture is not really reflected anywhere in an officer’s performance assessment record, other than in the section on professional reading in which most receive the customary inflated assessment.
SO WHAT IS THE STATUS QUO?

To hark back to an earlier observation, there are strong and important debates occurring currently at the corps, unit and formation level. These debates are manifested in many intelligent and astute records at Corps conferences and discussion forums on courses and organisational retreats. The problem lies in extricating such debates from these fora and at these levels and moving them into the mainstream military community where they can stimulate and excite further discussion, and so necessitate an organisational response. The only way to achieve this is through writing, through having those insights published, and encouraging others to read these discursive pieces and feel motivated and duty-bound to respond in kind. Clearly, this is also a requirement at the joint, coalition and inter-agency level. As the majority of officers are primarily oriented towards their own Service, however, it would be sensible to start at this point. Currently, there are two means through which written debate can be published in the Army: through the lessons learned system, and through submissions and publications that are internally sponsored and distributed. I intend to address each of these in turn.

THE AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE (ADF) LESSONS LEARNED SYSTEM

Lessons captured from current ADF exercises and deployments appear to me to reside primarily in a number of purpose-designed databases. The key problem is that the majority of sensible officers hate spreadsheets and databases with a passion and rightly so. As a result, important material lies largely dormant, maintained by a hapless captain or major so tasked. Given that many of these lessons-learnt data-bases reside on the Defence Secret Network (and are therefore unavailable to about half of the Army), the list of already reluctant would-be readers shrinks still further. Opinions and experiences should not reside purely in a mechanical box—an administrative tool that most resent spending valuable time contemplating. Opinions and experiences are dynamic—they should live and breathe—their expression involves clenched fists, spilt alcohol and a level of intrigue, pride, emotion and even fun.

On their return from Somalia in 1993, many from the 1 RAR Battalion Group of all ranks were interviewed on video about what they had learned from the deployment. This footage was shown and discussed in some subsequent specific-to-corps and all-corps courses. Interviewees were encouraged to be candid: criticisms
of the decisions of those above and around them were not toned down, noses were picked and profanities occasionally coloured the debate. For all its politically incorrect tone, these videos struck many involved as a great means of bringing the experiences of a group of individuals into the intellectual realm of the Army in its totality and in an immediate and intimate manner. This was not a dull ‘vanilla’ post-operational report that was duly stamped and filed on one’s G drive with the preparedness directives and the annual OH&S lecture, nor was it another entry in a stale database. Rather, with one ninety-minute tape (Beta, no doubt) the observer and syndicate participant felt the emotion of the human being at the other end of the camera—an equally blemished but well-meaning individual with motivations, skills and foibles. I have yet to see this process replicated. How then am I to learn about the operational realities experienced by the units and sub-units deployed to Afghanistan or Iraq under the current system? Must I subscribe to Defender?

INTERNALLY PUBLISHED AND SPONSORED WORKS

It is in the realm of internally published and sponsored works that the decisive operational, tactical and cross-corps discussions should take place, and where debate of this kind should be captured on the written page for the ADF’s leaders to ponder and gain insight. Many strategic journals still strike me as way too ‘highbrow’ for their own good. Invariably highly polished quasi-academic pieces pondered over by learned types, they can tend to be too intimidating to attract the contributions of many within the Army’s ranks. This is exactly the opposite of what should be happening. If we want to foster the mass of debate needed to move us forward, any half-literate sergeant, captain or major who bothers to put pen to paper should see his or her words in print. The value is in the ideas behind the words, not in their expression and the adequacy of their grammar. It is vital also for Captain X’s colleagues in the unit to read his or her piece and feel motivated to respond in kind (either because they disagree with what was said or feel ‘if Captain X can submit something, anyone can!’). It is only in this manner that a ‘critical mass’ of submissions can provide the ferment of ideas and debate needed to drive this organisation forward. These thoughts should not be interpreted as a criticism of any one person or organisation, indeed far from it. Nevertheless, it is vitally important that the Army has an opportunity to read the views of its members on the way forward.
SO WHAT IS REQUIRED? ONE VIEW

Stephen R. Covey is well known for his division of a business unit’s planning and response regime into quadrants. These are planning and responding for: the important and urgent, the important but not urgent, the not important but urgent, and the not important and not urgent. Leaving aside the obvious question of ‘who defines urgent’, the business manager’s challenge is clearly not only to classify the task at hand but to move the priority of response from the urgent sector to the important (well, at least some of the time). It seems to me that the Army needs to decide on the level of importance it attaches to the art of conceptualisation and debate amongst its officer corps, and then apportion resources accordingly. I do not believe that we have done this yet in a consolidated way. It is no good simply wringing one’s hands and lamenting that ‘officers just aren’t writing like they used to’, or continuing to insist that writing not be done during work hours (and by implication banishing the release of creative written energies to when the kids are in bed and even watching re-runs of *The Simpsons* is a challenge). If debate is important, then it merits a reallocation of resources. Here are some ideas on how this can be achieved.

PEOPLE

First, if we want written contributions to journals and debate, enthusiasm for writing needs to be ignited through role models and a peer network. While rank does not dictate value or influence, it seems to me that a major would be interested in what is observed and written by a peer, a lieutenant by a lieutenant, a logistician by a logistician and so on. Thus a plethora of articles, no matter how astute, by a bevy of grey-haired and overweight colonels will not arouse a single subaltern to turn on that dreaded technology tool after hours. Similarly, a litany of penetrating analyses by a phalanx of pimply infantry lieutenants on fire and movement is unlikely to arouse the 3 BASB Senior Non-Commissioned Officers’ Mess one iota. It will take peer networks to broaden the number of inputs—it’s that simple. This may mean having a representative from every rank from corporal to colonel resident at the Land Warfare Studies Centre, each with the task of getting their peers writing and submitting. To reiterate, this is all dependent on priorities. People are...
scarce and billets continually remain unfilled. However it may be useful in this context to conduct a straw poll of where a young captain would want to do: to think and write on the future direction of the Army or to be SO3 Nebulous at beige-world HQ?

Second, in the realm of personnel policy, we need to recognise and reward those who take the time and the risk (personally and professionally) to express their opinions in writing. Essay competitions at every course and joint activity could be mandatory. Some would advocate their inclusion as a promotion prerequisite. In most cases, essay topics need not be overly defined, allowing an officer to write on what interests him or her. Where essays are set, however, perhaps on a specific-to-corps course, they should most definitely not demand the millionth unique and penetrating analysis by a military officer on the leadership style of Patton, or on the unique energising aspects of the diarchy, but rather centre on real issues, addressing an aspect of the way this Army should prosecute operations in the future.

Third, we have conceded too much ground staff-wise at our Staff College and at the Defence Academy. The present structure of both institutions manifests the resounding belief that we are incapable of educating our own officers. Acknowledging that it is entirely ‘un-PC’ to forward this opinion, and conceding that the realm of military strategy should not be considered separately from national strategy for long, it does appear that if an officer wants to read, write and teach on military issues, they must resign it order to do so. I do not wish to discount in any way the excellent work of many officers at places such as Staff College and ADFA, but somewhere in the multitude of lecturers on military thought, military history, or strategy a cadet listens to in three years, at least a handful should be in uniform.

On a related issue, John Boyd felt that the orient stage in his OODA loop was the most difficult. It is clear that the demands of the Three Block War are going to make education (as opposed to training) more and more important in orienting the individual soldier and his or her leaders prior to deployment. Again, often the best person to encourage a young officer to think
laterally and deeply about his profession is another officer, albeit an older and more experienced one. Currently however, the Army tends to consider this tutelage purely in the tactical realm—how to site a machine gun or plan the ambush. But if education as much as training is becoming important in winning the war with Islamic fundamentalism in failed and fragile states, then the conceptualisation of combat as a process and a typology of conflict and societal discord can also be supplied by that older officer. It makes sense to broaden the scope and range of input of this critical individual, as opposed to denying his or her ability to teach it, and sub-contracting it out as we do within the prevailing system.

TIME

To recall Covey, it is important for a learning organisation to address more of the ‘important and not urgent’ quadrant at some point in its business cycle. In the same way that the need to be deployable was manifested in the material resources required to run and recognise AIRN standards a decade ago (PTIs to run BFAs, people to run range practices, the creation of additional entries in the dreaded PMKeyS, requirements for clerks to enter them etc.), so too a mechanism or format to receive and value intellectual contributions to the Army’s development must be created. Pay Thursdays could be when syndicate discussions occur in units and training organisations—an intellectual equivalent to ‘sporties’. Reviled at first, I’m sure, doubtless considered unnecessary and insulting (as the AIRN test was when it was first introduced), these could become part of Army culture if our hierarchy were willing to take the hits initially.

MONEY

As capability developers recognise in abundance, the military is benefiting enormously from technologies and intellectual innovations emerging from the predominantly civilian sphere. Why not pay to leverage discussion forums, assessment and structure in the various universities and think tanks that operate here and overseas for teaching Army’s people? A certain ‘swallowing of pride’ is important here; the mistaken belief that no mere civilian can tell us how to do our job will need to be dispelled. This is not the same as the almost complete sub-contracting of our core business as discussed earlier. Rather, it is the broadening of our capacity outside of formal courses to teach our people, in so doing perhaps eventually developing some uniformed academic expertise.
FINAL THOUGHTS

It is important that Army officers read and write about the way forward and the Army needs to do more to spur this. It is only in so doing that we will add the crucial layer of continuous debate, consideration and conceptualisation that are the hallmarks of first-rate armies. Some armies have done this in response to total defeat or sub-optimal operational and/or tactical performance. Von Seeckt and DePuy’s work are cases in point. But it is important to foster and encourage this spirit of inquiry now to develop a capacity for collective analysis for the bad times. Worthwhile debate is occurring within our Army and splendid work has been undertaken to capture it by many hard-working individuals in and out of uniform. These laudable efforts must be placed, however, in a broader framework and encouraged to reach critical mass in order to become self-sustaining. I do not see signs that this is occurring. One day, in some theatre near or far, young soldiers and their leaders are going to get ‘done over’—tactically and in a limited way—but nevertheless beaten, and the inefficiencies of their parent organisation(s) exposed in the process. It is, arguably, the primary function of an army’s officer corps to guard against this eventuality but, at the same time, to prepare for it. It is only through a carefully sponsored culture of dispassionate and networked self-examination and conceptualisation that this function can be met.

THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel James Bryant graduated from the Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA) in 1988 and the Royal Military College in 1989, before returning to ADFA to undertake an Honours degree in History. An infantry officer, he has served with the Royal Australian Regiment on operations in Somalia in 1993 and in East Timor in 1999. In 2005, Lieutenant Colonel Bryant was selected as the Chief of Defence Force Scholar. In 2006, he was appointed the Defence Liaison Officer, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. Lieutenant Colonel Bryant holds a Bachelor of Arts (Honours) in History, a Master of Arts (International Relations) and Master of Management (Defence Studies).
Generational Evolution in the Australian Army

CAPTAIN ERIN MAULDAY

ABSTRACT

This article examines the generational differences within the Australian Army. The author argues that Generation Y has experienced the Army’s highest operational tempo and that soon they will be able employ the lessons of that experience in command positions. He uses research and observations from generational studies to provide advice to the middle- and senior-level officers currently leading and mentoring this generation. The article concludes that as Australia’s demography shifts, Generation Y will have an increasingly important role to play in the Army’s future.

INTRODUCTION

Generational conflict has become the focal point for legions of social theorists and commentators in Australia today. The debate focuses on the emergence of a new younger generation of adults who are entering the workforce with a resounding impact. This new generation has been dubbed the ‘Y Generation’, or ‘Gen Y’ and even fashionably abbreviated to ‘Yers’. Bookstores around the country are now populated with books dedicated to the topic, such as Rebecca Huntley’s The World According to Y, Peter Sheahan’s Understanding the Y Generation,
or the more aggressively titled, *Please just f**k off it’s our turn* by Ryan Heath. These books have a common aim: to articulate the views of those who belong to Gen Y, and to justify their importance as they move into Australia’s workforce. Each of these writers argues the need for earlier generations to stand up and take notice of Gen Y and all that this younger generation stands for. They espouse a ‘you better watch out’ message for their elders, suggesting that organisations will suffer if the needs of Gen Y are not considered more closely in the future. The books and articles of Gen Y commentators, many of whom belong to that generation or who were born just prior to the generational boundary, go to great lengths to define what it is to be a ‘Y er’ including listing their prevailing strengths and weaknesses. But what they fail to adequately suggest is any strategy that earlier generations can adopt in order to better understand and communicate with Gen Y.¹

In the context of the Australian Army, this inter-generational communication translates as providing an answer to the question of how majors and lieutenant colonels can lead the lieutenants and captains of today. The question applies equally to warrant officers who seek to relate to and command the younger sergeants, corporals and privates who are advancing into junior leadership roles. While much has been written on the perceived problems with the Australian Army and the Australian Defence Force’s recruiting and retention strategy, there is a noticeable lack of practical information to equip commanders to communicate more effectively with their Gen Y subordinates.² This paper seeks to redress this deficiency through definition of the generations in the Army today, exploration of the main behavioural patterns of the emerging Gen Y, and some pointers on how to challenge this young generation so that its full potential can be exploited.

**DEFINING THE GENERATIONS IN THE WORKPLACE AND THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY TODAY**

In a study of large-scale, trend-based issues such as perceived generational conflict or evolution, it is necessary to make some rather generalised assumptions. This is unavoidable in seeking to make contained and defining descriptions of the generations at play in a society. It is generally agreed that there are three main generations in the workforce, and therefore also in the Australian Army today. I will examine the characteristics of these generations in the following sections.

**BABY BOOMERS**

‘Baby Boomers’ comprise the senior generation in the workforce at present. Approximately half the Boomer population is currently in retirement with the rest aged well into their forties. The Boomers are the children of the post-Second World
Generational evolution in the Australian Army

War baby boom, with birthdates from the mid-1940s through to the early 1960s. In the Australian Army the Boomers currently hold senior leadership roles from the rank of general through to colonels and the older lieutenant colonels, as well as warrant officer classes one and two. Baby Boomers have been described as being ‘raised in the “idyllic” 50s, roaming free on their bikes, with little experience of divorce.’ Later they championed social causes such as feminism, basic human rights and the sexual revolution. They entered a workforce in which jobs were ‘for life.’ It is primarily their sons and daughters who are entering the workforce today and populating the new Gen Y. Social commentators such as Bernard Salt are quick to point out that, as a result, the Boomer generation is likely to hand the baton of power in organisational management, not to the next generation after them—Gen X—but to the new Gen Y, because they have grown up closer to their image, in the conditions which have been created by the Boomers themselves.

Generation X

Rebecca Huntley describes Gen X as representing an age cohort born between the 1960s and the mid to late 1970s. Gen X members are therefore anywhere from 30 years old through to their early forties. In the Australian Army, members of Gen X mostly sit within the ranks of major to lieutenant colonel as officers, and warrant officer class two to senior sergeant within the other ranks. Gen X has been labelled the ‘Me Generation,’ by those who see them as too selfish and self-absorbed to commit to a marriage, children, economic planning, or even a permanent job. Gen X has also been characterised as ‘deeply pessimistic,’ a generation that ‘grew up fearing nuclear annihilation, unemployment and AIDS, with little confidence in the future of the world or [their] own [future].’ Some commentators have described Gen X as being the ‘thirteenth generation,’ as a reflection of the ill-fortune that has dogged this generation, particularly as they began to enter the workplace in the late 1980s during a time of economic recession when they were promised the world, like the generation before them, but eventually forced to fend for themselves.
As a member of Gen X, Huntley writes, ‘considering Generation Y from the point of view of a Gen-Xer, it is easy to be suspicious, judgmental and even a bit jealous’ because of the seemingly sheltered way that Gen Y has entered the workforce, as opposed to the challenges that Gen X faced.9

**GENERATION Y**

Social commentators variously describe members of Gen Y as falling into the age bracket of those who were born from the mid to late 1970s to the very early 1990s. This makes the oldest of the Gen Yers those who are about to turn 30.10 As these figures indicate, Gen Yers have been entering the workplace for almost a dozen years now. In the Australian Army, many are now middle to senior-level captains, or senior corporals to junior sergeants. Gen Yers grew up in an era of uncertainty and complexity, constantly changing technology and mobility. They have adapted to it quickly, capably, and are technologically savvy. According to Huntley, Gen Yers can be characterised as ‘optimistic, idealistic, empowered, ambitious, confident, committed and passionate. They are assured about their own futures and, in many cases, the future of the world.’11 Ryan Heath, (writer and member of Gen Y) describes Gen Yers as ‘global, responsible’ and living ‘24/7 lives’; the ‘most educated, skilled generation yet’; able to multi-task easily, both intensely individual but also keen to work in teams; and ‘not afraid to be contradictory’.12 Writer Don Tapscott describes the key features of Gen Y behaviour as including interactivity based on participation rather than observation; a tolerance of social diversity; a propensity for challenging conventions of authority; and acceptance of economic insecurity and career change as norms.13

**ANSWERING THE QUESTION OF ‘Y’**

At first glance, it may not be easy to recognise why it is more important than ever before to understand the behavioural traits of this emerging generation known as Gen Y. However, any study of the evolving nature of warfare and its implications for the Australian Army quickly demonstrates why this is so. History has documented the evolution of warfare from large, set-piece battles conducted mostly in a conventional sense, to smaller, more asymmetrical conflicts involving interest groups almost as much as nation-states. The ‘categorisation of conflict’14—illustrated in Figure 1—clearly articulates this point.
Figure 1 maps the fact that today’s conflicts are occurring with less scale and intensity, although they are not always of less duration than their forebears. Another clear indicator of the evolution of warfare lies in the size of Australia’s military commitment to wars and conflicts over the past century or so. The First and Second World Wars saw the mobilisation of Australian forces on a national scale, with divisional-sized forces deployed. In Korea, this was reduced to a brigade commitment and then to a task force for Vietnam. Somalia saw the emergence of a battalion group deployment and, although the commitment to East Timor was larger during the time of the International Force in East Timor, the nucleus of the Australian commitment to the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) and later to the Regional Assistance Mission in Solomon Islands (RAMSI) was again battalion group size. More recent operations in the Middle East have seen task groups deployed at more of a company or squadron group level. Smaller, more integrated forces are the norm these days. Warfare today is characterised by what Bruce Berkowitz describes as the ‘four key dynamics’:

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**Figure 1: The categorisation of conflict**

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... today’s conflicts are occurring with less scale and intensity, although they are not always of less duration ...
There are four key dynamics to the new warfare; asymmetric threats, in which even the strongest armies may suffer from at least one Achilles’ heel; information-technology competition, in which advantages in computers and communication are crucial; the race of decision cycles, in which the first opponent to process and react to information effectively is almost certain to win; and network organization, in which fluid arrays of combat forces can spontaneously organize in multiple ways to fight any given opponent at any time.\(^5\)

It is Gen Y soldiers and officers who will be called on to lead the Australian Army’s transformation to a more hardened and networked force—the transformation to which they have been committed by the leaders of today. A recent *Time Magazine* article argued that, ‘guns, tanks and planes were once simple to operate. Now, high-tech communications and weapons systems mean the military needs engineers, electricians and computer technicians just to move.’\(^6\) Gen Y is the generation that will take the Australian Army there. This implies that the consequences of getting it wrong and not attracting the right calibre of Gen Y soldiers and officers are far more serious than previously believed. Today, every Australian soldier on operations could make a decision which could become tomorrow’s news in the living rooms throughout Australia or the world. For this very reason, it is critically important that Gen X commanders understand the behavioural traits of their Gen Y subordinates.

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**GEN Y CAUGHT UP IN THE NOW**

Gen Yers have grown up with technology. The Internet and mobile phones are second nature to them. In a world in which email and text messaging have overtaken postal mail as the preferred method of communication, Gen Yers are accustomed to having immediate responses. This has resulted in a world which is faster and more connected, and in which Gen Y is leading the way. Yet this is a journey that will be littered with obstacles. In the Army, for example, the art of meticulous staff duties has fallen victim to technology which has imposed instantaneous means of communication such as emails and text messages as the preferred form of documentation. In a fast-paced world, it is inevitable that a greater work output will be required of this younger generation. In creating more work for itself, Gen Y is now provided with a plethora of choice which, while increasing this generation’s
situational awareness, has also contradictorily resulted in a lack of strategic foresight amongst many members of Gen Y. Gen X writer Douglas Coupland terms this ‘option paralysis’ amongst Gen Y members who have ‘the tendency, when given unlimited choices to make none.’

**GEN Y WANTS TO KNOW WHY**

Gen Y is a ‘nurtured’ generation. Yers have grown up familiar with parental warnings of ‘stranger danger’ and the importance of maintaining their self-esteem. Their Baby Boomer parents have gone to great lengths to ensure that, in this day of economic uncertainty, their Gen Y children finish school and then go to university. As a result, they are the most highly educated generation to date. A by-product of this feature is that Gen Yers are inquisitive and questioning. Gen Yers do not naturally accept orders unconditionally in the traditional military way. In particular, Yers expect their superiors to listen to their views, particularly when they do not agree with a specific course of action. The reality is that Gen Yers do not function well in hierarchical structures. They are much better suited to organisational structures which are flatter in nature. This is a contradiction that implies a looming clash. The implication is that, in the future, Gen Y soldiers and officers will expect to be given the opportunity to speak to their senior leadership group and voice their concerns on a regular basis. Additionally, they will expect their superiors to listen to and then address their concerns.

**THE MORAL DISPOSITION OF GEN Y**

Gen Yers have a different set of moral codes from their predecessors. Their world is not black or white but, rather, is full of uncertainties. Gen Yers have been taught that, in life, there are no longer absolute moral truths. One person’s right can quickly be another person’s wrong, and vice versa. As a result, Gen Yers have become more focused on current issues, as these are aspects of life that they can understand and manage. Instead of feeling guilty if they do not develop a plan for the rest of their lives at an early age, Gen Yers tend to be happy to ‘feel’ their way through life, moving between jobs and places far more often than previous generations. In the Australian Army, this does not mean that Gen X leaders should lower their expectations of their Gen Y subordinates. Yers can respond positively and effectively to discipline and, in fact, they thrive on the direction given by their seniors and
mentors. In previous generations, the process of making mistakes was considered inexcusable—a view the Australian Army has traditionally reinforced. However, having grown up in a positive and forgiving environment, Gen Yers consider making mistakes a valuable part of the learning process. This behaviour fosters openness and encourages new ideas amongst the members of the generation. A Gen Y subordinate who makes a mistake will expect a Gen X commander to address it immediately through direct feedback which is positive and constructive in nature, as this is the pattern with which most Gen Yers are familiar. Use of the reporting process and the conduct of regular counseling sessions provide the best opportunities for the provision of constructive feedback to Gen Yers.

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**GEN Y—THE OPERATIONAL GENERATION**

Gen Yers have been described as the ‘operational generation’ as many Yers have joined the Army in the last five or ten years and quickly deployed on operations, unlike many of their X and Boomer leaders who have either missed out entirely, or been on operations in more senior command or staff appointments. That the Australian Army is rich with a generation of ‘twenty-somethings’ who have led sections and platoons in the field in East Timor and other theatres is well documented. They have been in the highly privileged and fortunate position to put into practice what they have been taught in training. Through operational experience they have identified which doctrine works, and modified that which does not. The reality is that this is an opportunity that is rarely afforded junior commanders in a training environment given the constraints of time and money. Gen Y leaders have discovered that they can make an enormous impact on the international stage at a relatively early age. For a generation used to achieving operational outcomes, returning to a highly governed environment and working under older generation leaders who are not used to giving their subordinates such a freedom of movement can be a highly frustrating experience. For some, the answer is to move on to a world that appreciates their skill set—and often expresses this in dollar terms.
HOW TO LEAD GEN Y

Given the emerging behavioural traits of Gen Y, it should quickly become apparent that this younger generation could react negatively to poor leadership from Gen X and Boomer commanders who may not fully understand the young soldiers and officers they are leading. Interestingly, the most important solutions to these problems already exist within Australian Army doctrine. For example, the development of a consultative style of leadership within the Army’s mid-level commanders is one of the best ways to overcome discontent amongst subordinate Gen Y leaders. This style of leadership is one that will truly engage Gen Y subordinates in the decision-making process. Dan Fortune reinforces this concept in an article which suggests that individuals of this younger generation prefer a leadership and command style that is based on a ‘decisive transformational methodology’—also referred to as ‘mentoring’. He explains: ‘an important feature of mentorship is the role played by a situational style of leadership in which a leader concentrates on harnessing the abilities of his or her followers rather than simply issuing orders’—a truly consultative style of leadership. Australian Army doctrine terms this ‘mission command’ and defines it as ‘a system for conducting operations in which subordinates are given a clear indication by a superior of his intentions … however subordinates are allowed the freedom to decide how to achieve the required result.’ This approach engenders in Gen Y subordinates an increased trust in the leadership of the Gen X commander. This improved working relationship leads to better performance outcomes for both the individuals and the organisations they lead.

EMPOWERING THE OPERATIONAL KNOWLEDGE OF GEN Y IN A TRAINING ENVIRONMENT

Gen Yers also respond well to instructional roles in a training environment. Employing operationally experienced junior leaders from Gen Y to pass on their valuable knowledge and experience can also be of tremendous benefit to the Army. Better than anyone, Gen Yers know the lessons they were not taught themselves and how this affected them operationally. These are the most valuable lessons for Gen Yers to pass to the Army’s newest soldiers and officers. Gen Y members also have a valuable contribution to make to the development of realistic and relevant doctrine. Posting these young and bright soldiers and officers to training institutions, perhaps
with offers of pay incentives and more rapid career advancement, may yet prove the means to retain many of their number. More practically, within the Gen X/Gen Y command relationship, the enduring message from Gen Yers is that subordinates, for all of their strengths and weaknesses, bring to the table a wealth of newly acquired operational experience. For Gen X to overlook, ignore or feel threatened by this would be a mistake. Majors and lieutenant colonels commanding captains and lieutenants with operational experience must provide opportunities for them to be challenged and given a chance to continue to make a difference. One option to make best use of the experience of Gen Yers is to entrust them with the responsibility to become package master or subject matter experts within their company or squadron, or even the battalion and regiment to which they have been posted. In an infantry battalion, for example, this would mean giving a particular lieutenant with experience of working with the Security Detachment Iraq the responsibility for creating the Battalion Standing Operating Procedures for the conduct of urban operations at company level. This is a very effective means by which the Gen X commander, sitting above as the company or squadron commander, can assess the quality of a Gen Y subordinate’s work, adopt any valid suggestions and professionally dispute any questionable ones. A key point to remember is that Gen Yers, although keen for responsibility, acknowledge that they do not have all of the answers. More so than their Gen X older cousins, they respect and even crave feedback on their performance and on the direction in which they are heading.

**CHALLENGING GENERATION Y**

Understanding Gen Y and more effectively leading them does not mean pandering to their every whim or need, nor does it mean lowering standards. What is essential is to set challenges for the members of this young generation, and then allow them the opportunity to meet those challenges. The best way to lead Gen Yers is to employ the leadership tools which currently exist within the doctrinal concept of ‘mission command’. I have constructed an example based on a typical battalion scenario to illustrate this point.

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Gen Y members also have a valuable contribution to make to the development of realistic and relevant doctrine.
Generational evolution in the Australian Army

Officer Commanding Zulu Company—Major White

Major White is a 32-year-old Gen Xer who does not understand generation Y. He has just been posted as the Company Commander, Zulu Company and leads a young company of Gen Y soldiers and junior non-commissioned officers, most of whom have previously served on overseas operational deployments. His closest subordinates are his young lieutenants, all aged in their mid-twenties. As the company prepares for an upcoming training exercise, the platoon commanders develop training packages for their soldiers that include interactive learning, self-paced modules for slower learners as well as opportunities for section commanders to first develop teamwork amongst their organisations before coming together for platoon and then company-level training. Instead of asking for their input, Major White decides to issue a new company-level training program to replace the platoon-level programs already in place. The program is generic, lacking in detail and imagination. When a concerned lieutenant suggests an improvement based on his own previous operational experience, Major White ignores the substance of the suggestion and chooses to focus instead on the perceived insubordinate nature of his Gen Y lieutenant.

As a result, the morale of the company plunges and their performance suffers. When the company receives a poor report from the training exercise, Major White criticises the commitment of his Gen Y leaders and further limits their responsibilities by choosing to issue his orders directly to his section commanders so that his intent is ‘better understood’ by all. Six months later, one lieutenant has resigned, another has been censured for insubordination, and the third is on the next Special Forces selection course in order to ‘get out of the place’ as quickly as he can. The company has the lowest morale of the battalion and is not selected for any operational deployments. Major White cannot understand why his company is performing so badly. He believes that he is acting in accordance with the leadership models commonly used when he was a lieutenant and which he believed worked well.

The best way to lead Gen Yers is to employ the leadership tools which currently exist within the doctrinal concept of ‘mission command’.
OFFICER COMMANDING WHISKY COMPANY—MAJOR BLACK

Major Black is the new Company Commander, Whisky Company. He is also 32 years old, but has a better understanding of Gen Y. He also leads a company that includes a number of Gen Y subordinates. When he assumes his appointment, he issues his intent and allows his platoon commanders to develop their programs based around this. He reinforces the use of the Military Appreciation Process and finds that two of his lieutenants carry out their responsibilities effectively, while one fares poorly. When the latter lieutenant makes a bad decision as a result of poor judgement, Major Black corrects the behaviour immediately and issues increased guidance to that individual. When the subordinate continues to make mistakes, Major Black disciplines him further until the behaviour is corrected. At all times Major Black explains why the lieutenant is being disciplined so that he can learn from his mistakes. Meanwhile, the other two subordinates have demonstrated their capability by achieving good results. Major Black now trusts these two subordinates and gives them increased autonomy.

At one planning conference, Major Black issues his guidance, resulting in one of his subordinates, the ill-disciplined one, offering Major Black a suggested improvement to his plan. Major Black decides to modify his plan, producing a more successful outcome for his company. Later, when Major Black’s company is warned out at short notice for a deployment to a regional country in order to help restore law and order, Major Black issues immediate guidance to his subordinates by choosing to brief his entire company on the deployment due to time constraints. Far from feeling left out of the planning process, the lieutenants trust their commander, realising that he has sound reasons for his decision not to consult them this time. They do not complain about this development; they understand it, and carry on preparing their platoons for the deployment. The Battalion Commander has chosen Major Black’s company for the deployment because it was the best performing company in the battalion. When the company returns from deployment, there are two lieutenants due for posting. One of them remains in the battalion and is promoted to the rank of captain where he is able to begin offering his own mentorship to newly arrived lieutenants in his role as the second-in-command of a company. The other is sent to a training institution where he teaches new recruits, while receiving an additional instructor pay allowance.
EXAMINING THE DIFFERENCES IN LEADERSHIP BETWEEN MAJOR WHITE AND MAJOR BLACK

This is a practical example—hypothetical in nature and unsubtle in its depiction—which clearly highlights the difference between the leadership styles of the two commanders. That said, the prevailing tenets of these two fictitious leaders do exist within the body of leadership in the Australian Army today. The hope is that the majority of leaders follow in the footsteps of Major Black, who models his leadership style on the principles of ‘mission command’ and, in gaining the trust of his subordinates, does not lose this trust when he is forced to forego consultation due to time constraints. At the same time, as this example demonstrates, when the opportunity arises, Major Black listens to his subordinates and modifies his own plan with a better option that was suggested. Unfortunately however, there are still too many examples of Gen X commanders who follow the example set by Major White, who is unnecessarily autocratic in his leadership and fails to listen to his subordinates or offer them any chance to contribute in a meaningful way. When they try, he interprets this as their questioning his authority and reprimands the subordinates in question. Subsequent poor performance is blamed on the subordinates, which is exacerbated by an even more rigid adherence to an autocratic leadership style, a style that clearly does not produce the best performance from Gen Y.

CONCLUSION

This article provides Gen X leaders in the Australian Army with broad observations on their Gen Y subordinates so as to assist them to more effectively command their Gen Y juniors. It is clear that this emerging generation is different and does require special attention from its Gen X leaders. Gen Yers have a need for immediate and constant feedback. The ‘nurtured’ status of Gen Y, coupled with the fact that its members have grown up in the age of technology, means that Gen Yers are

The need for mentorship and an engagement in the principles of mission command … is now more pressing than ever.
used to finding their own way by searching for the answers on their own terms. Many have joined the Australian Army during a period of operational intensity and gained invaluable experience which they expect to use and reinvest in the system that trained them by mentoring the generation that follows them. A number of the suggested solutions in this paper are not new. The example of Major White and Major Black demonstrates this point clearly. The need for mentorship and an engagement in the principles of mission command, which includes both consultative leadership as well as the entrustment of Gen Y with a higher degree of responsibility, is now more pressing than ever. The benefit of making the effort far outweighs the impost. Those Gen X leaders who recognise and respond to this need will produce strong and cohesive companies and battalions, squadrons and regiments to further strengthen the Army of tomorrow.

ENDNOTES

1 Peter Sheahan’s book Generation Y (Hardie Grant Books, Victoria, 2005) does the best job with almost half his book dedicated to sections on managing and retaining Generation Y workers. There is practical advice in his book which earlier generations can use in attempting to become better leaders of Generation Y workers, although such advice still doesn’t neatly fit into a more rigid military environment.

2 An exception is Lieutenant Colonel Dan Fortune’s article, ‘Commanding the Net Generation’, in the Australian Army Journal, December 2003, Vol. 1, No. 2, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, 2003, pp. 103–10. This article is interesting and thought provoking in the way it offers an alternate approach to leading this young generation. It focuses on introducing management theories of an intuitive nature including discussions of leadership approaches such as mentoring, coaching and 360-degree reporting. The article’s only shortfall is that it focuses on the conceptual but lacks a detailed discussion of more practical aspects which can be given to mid-level commanders in an attempt to better lead their Generation Y subordinates. In all probability, the real value of this article would only be fully realised if a wholesale review of Army’s personnel management system was to occur. For discussion of the issue of retention as it relates to this debate, see Major Colin Lea, ‘Nurturing, Harnessing and Exploiting the Army Officer of the 21st Century’, in the Australian Army Journal, Summer 2005/06, Vol. 3, No. 2, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, 2005. Major Lea makes the central point that the current structure of career progression for Army officers, in particular its seemingly rigid adherence to ‘minimum time in rank’ requirements for junior to middle-ranking officers, does not favour the retention and advancement of the brightest of the next generation of Army officers.

Generational evolution in the Australian Army

4 Ibid.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., p. 8.
8 Ibid., p. 9.
9 Ibid.
10 Huntley believes that the real power base of Generation Y today is vested in those who are aged in their early to mid-twenties.
12 Ryan Heath, Please Just F**k off it’s our turn now, Pluto Press, Melbourne, 2006, p. xvii.
18 Fortune, p.105.
19 Ibid.
20 The Fundamentals of Land Warfare, p. 16.
21 A larger issue concerns increasing retention of Gen Yers by providing better and more rapid opportunities for advancement within the Army for this young and operational generation. As this issue lies outside the scope of this paper, it will not be given the more detailed consideration it deserves.

The Author

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This edition’s Retrospect article is drawn from the October–November 1949 editorial of the *Australian Army Journal*. It is, nonetheless, of enduring relevance. It poses the perennial question ‘… what sort of Army do we want and what sort of men do we want in it?’ Times have changed, most significantly to the extent that we need appropriately to include women in our inquiry.

Although the times have changed, the rigours, risks and privations of soldiering have not. In his memorable reflection on the unique nature of the profession of arms, General Douglas MacArthur eloquently reminded us that ‘Duty, Honor, Country’ constitute the creed of the soldier. These are timeless virtues. The characteristics of war are likewise timeless. It is violent, deadly and harsh.

Professional soldiers are men and women apart. They enter a contract of unlimited liability with their nation in that they may be required to die in the pursuit of their duty. Quite apart from the hazards of operational service, the demands of training, relocation and separation impose a degree of sacrifice on the soldier that has no equivalent in civilian reality. In an era of prosperity and individual empowerment, the chasm between the comforts of civilian and military life have never been greater.
Other than during the two World Wars, our Army has struggled to recruit and retain sufficient numbers of suitable people. Low unemployment, coupled with record prosperity, today creates a highly competitive labour market. Over time, we are constantly told this situation will be compounded by the adverse demographic trends of a lower birth rate and ageing population.

Earlier this year, the former Chief of the Defence Force, Admiral Chris Barrie, asserted that the Australian Defence Force would inevitably need to revert to conscription to avert a personnel crisis.

Was this the counsel of despair? Certainly, neither the Government nor the current Service Chiefs endorsed the proposal. A study of the deliberations of our Chiefs-of-Staff Committees over the past 50 years reveals a customary oscillation between arguments for improved service conditions and conscription as a panacea for personnel shortages.

Perhaps the conclusions of our editorial writer from 1949 warrant re-examination. He warned against the folly of simply improving pay and conditions. As he noted, generous conditions may attract ‘a bumper harvest of soft-handed, soft-hearted clock-watchers.’

His conclusions echo down the years. ‘It is simply not true that the ideal of community service is dead, not in this country at any rate. All over Australia thousands of men and women are engaged on voluntary, unpaid and, very often unrecognised service to the community.’ Australians take pride in our identity as a nation of volunteers.

Could it be that, Army in particular, does not place sufficient emphasis on the unique nature of service? Rather than seeking to attract young men and women through blandishments deemed necessary by advertising agencies, we need to emphasise tradition, sacrifice and service as the hallmarks of an Army career. The revival of Anzac Day, especially among the young, suggests that they grasp these intangibles. Perhaps we do not do them or ourselves credit by pretending the Army is just another job.

The Army is operating at a very high tempo. It is also undergoing a profound transformation under the rubric of the Hardened and Networked Army (HNA). Providing the hardware for the HNA will be relatively straightforward. But our success in finding robust, adaptable and compassionate men and women, capable of prevailing in the complex operational environment of the 21st century, will ultimately determine whether this initiative succeeds. It is perhaps time, as our editorial writer concluded, for an ‘… appeal for recruits couched in a loftier tone and on a higher spiritual level …’
SOLDIER: WHERE DO YOU STAND?*

This England never did, nor never shall,
Lie at the proud foot of a conqueror,
But when it first did help to wound itself.
Now these her princes are come home again,
Come the three corners of the world in arms,
And we shall shock them. Naught shall make us rue
If England to itself do rest but true.

Shakespeare—King John, Act V, Scene VII

Ever since the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima, millions and millions of words have been spoken and written around the theme that a war fought with these weapons will result in the sudden extinction of civilisation. The historian, of course, knows better. He knows that few civilisations and few nations have been wiped out by mechanical means. Civilisations and nations die, as a rule, from a disease of the soul, a paralysis of the spiritual force that gave them birth and sustained their growth. And he knows, too, that nearly all civilisations and nations that have fallen by the wayside were dying of this spiritual disease long before they had reached the highest point of their technological achievements.

Hair splitters sometimes argue that history does not repeat itself. They cannot, however, disprove the constant operation of the universal law that similar causes produce similar effects. Not that they haven’t tried of course. Ever and anon man, in his cups and his dreams and other seasons of maudlin vision, arrives

* This piece was published as the editorial to the Australian Army Journal, No. 9, October–November 1949.
at the exhilarating conclusion that the brilliant age graced by his own presence on earth has raised itself above the natural law. Grasshoppers, too, or those of them who drink or resort to sentimental novels and plays with happy endings, doubtless stage gallant little revolts in their hearts. But grasshoppers, like men, are always forced by the inexorable turn of the wheel of life back to the unpalatable truth that there is, after all, a very definite connection between the making of beds and the lying thereon.

Curiously enough, in these seasons of sad sobriety we, as individuals, always blame the other fellow. It is all the fault of the man next door. If he had only worked a bit harder, if he had only given a little to the service of the nation instead of devoting all his energies to the furtherance of his own selfish interests, we should never have gotten into this sorry mess. And the man next door, in the throes of his share of the hangover, is also blaming—the man next door.

Actually, you don't have to wait for the next crash to hear this sort of talk. It is all around you every day; it is a favourite topic of conversation with all of us. Ask any soldier, for instance, why the Army, in both its Regular and Citizen Force branches, is below establishment. He is pretty sure to tell you that it is because men no longer care a hoot about their country, that they have no thoughts, and don’t intend to have any thoughts, about anything except easy money and easy living, racing horses and racing dogs, beefsteaks and beer. He could be right. On the other hand it is at least possible that he would be nearer the truth if he said: 'The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars, But in ourselves …’ or words to that effect.

In the first place, what sort of an Army do we want and what sort of men do we want in it? Do we want regulars attracted by ‘conditions of service’, mere mercenaries selling their services for money alone? Do we want citizen soldiers anxious to earn ‘extra money’ in the service of their country, or to relieve the boredom of ‘spare time’ which we seem to suppose that active, virile young men possess in abundance? Or do we want men imbued with the highest ideals of citizenship and community service, men whose activities are not governed solely by the idea of pecuniary gain?

If we want mercenaries our problem is relatively simple. There are no manpower controls in this country. The labour market is free for all. We have only to raise the price and provide a sufficiently high scale of easy living through numerous ‘amenities’
and ‘concessions’ to gather in a bumper harvest of soft-handed, soft-hearted clock-watchers. And what sort of an army would these men make? Certainly not the sort of army that this country needs.

Too many people, without pausing to examine their own consciences, are ready to assert that patriotism is dead, that such vestiges of the ideal of community service still discernible are but fossilised remnants of an older and better age. It is so easy to say this, and so convenient too. It provides us at once with an excuse for failure and a sop to our conscience as we too surrender to the spiritual disease that ends in death.

It is simply not true that the ideal of community service is dead, not in this country at any rate. All over Australia tens of thousands of men and women are engaged on voluntary, unpaid and, very often, unrecognised service to the community. Indeed, public approbation is the last thing they seek. They do the job for its own sake, and they do it well. If people like this did not exist many the institutions we take for granted, and which contribute so much to the life of the community, would have collapsed long ago. And they are not all old folk. A surprisingly large number of young men, ideal types for military service, are putting enthusiastic efforts into some aspect of community work.

Why cannot we get some of these young men into the Army? Well, maybe these people are not so bored that they have spare time on their hands. Maybe they don’t want any extra money. Perhaps if we appealed to patriotism and idealism rather than the baser motives of self-interest we might gather some of them into our own fold.

That an appeal for recruits couched in a loftier tone and on a higher spiritual level will fall on many deaf ears may be taken for granted. But that it will yield an infinitely superior qualitative response is hardly open to question. And, having regard to the mission of our peacetime army, quality is much more important than quantity.

Better to say with King Henry at Agincourt, ‘We few, we happy few, we band of brothers,’ than to fill our ranks with men morally and intellectually incapable of fulfilling the tasks which will fall to them when the bottom drops out of the present uneasy peace.

At any rate it is worth trying. But before we try the Army must be very sure of itself, very sure that it is not suffering, individually and collectively, from that disease of the soul which is fatal alike to civilisations, nations and institutions. Let every soldier then look into his own heart. If he sees there anything less than the highest ideals of service let him be silent, let him not cast aspersions upon his neighbour’s motives.

[A]n appeal for recruits couched in a loftier tone and on a higher spiritual level will … yield an infinitely superior qualitative response …
RETROSPECT

Only the soldier who feels within himself the spiritual force of idealism and obeys its urge is entitled to esteem himself as something superior to the ordinary ruck of his fellows, only then is he truly dedicated to the most exacting, but at the same time the most exalted role a servant of the state can be called upon to play.

Let us cultivate this moral grace, let us nourish it with selfless devotion to the interests of the service to which we have the privilege to belong. Then, uplifted by the spirit of consecration, and dignified by the sense of responsibility and quiet pride that accompanies it, let us invite like-minded men, in language they understand and appreciate, to join our exclusive brotherhood.

Reviewed by John Donovan

It is possible to argue that this book need not have been written, for the events covered have been fully described in the official history. However, one must admit that World War II official histories do not adorn many bookcases these days, and it seems probable that the copies in libraries spend very little time in the hands of borrowers.

This book, then, joins others in the Army History series (and some published under other aegis, such as Peter Stanley’s book on Tarakan, and Peter Brune’s works on the Papuan campaign) that provide an important service by bringing Australia’s military history to the general reader. Such books also serve as at least a partial antidote to the limited academic study of military history in modern-day Australia.

To some degree, *On Shaggy Ridge* follows the C. E. W. Bean tradition, focusing on the men in the front line, with the activities of senior commanders and staff, and logistical matters, little more than ‘noises off’ as that charming theatrical expression goes. This is a strength—and one that confirms the book’s role in complementing rather than duplicating the narrative in the official history. However, while the focus on the men in the sections and platoons provides a solid understanding of the physical difficulties of the Shaggy Ridge battles, perhaps added depth might have lent a better context to the story.

The focus on the front line, however, does allow the author the opportunity to introduce some personalities who are not well known in Australia. Prominent among these is the American pilot Tommy Roberts, who decided to spend some leave in the front lines while awaiting conversion training in Port Moresby. His performance with the 2/16th Battalion (surely well above and beyond the call of duty for an airman) earned him a Silver Star. Ironically—and tragically—having returned from Shaggy Ridge, he died in an air crash just two days after his first conversion flight.
BOOK REVIEW  ~  JOHN DONOVAN

The book makes a number of references to the difficulties experienced by ‘out of state’ reinforcements in integrating into battalions with their own proud (but sometimes parochial) histories. The strength of the unit bond that resulted from the territorial recruitment of combat units has been highlighted often, including recently by Ian Kuring in his history of Australian infantry. One has to wonder, therefore, why this bond appears to have been ignored by the posting authorities in the latter part of World War II. Surely the unnecessary tension that this posting policy could have been avoided in time of war?

It is not as if the numbers were minor. As an example, Bradley notes that some 600 men came from the disbanded 16th Motor Regiment to the 2/16th Battalion. This effectively converted it from a West Australian unit to a New South Wales unit. Again, while Queenslanders from the 5th Motor Regiment went to the Queensland 2/9th Battalion, other Queenslanders from the 11th Motor Regiment went to the South Australian 2/10th Battalion, which also had a platoon mostly comprising men from Bungendore in New South Wales!

Still, the Adjutant General’s Branch was responsible for worse errors during World War II, such as the despatch of untrained reinforcements to Singapore and the botched formation of the 39th, 49th and 53rd Battalions. The question remains, however, as to whether these various actions were the result of indifference, indolence, ignorance or incompetence. The ruthlessness with which the war against Japan was fought is clear from this book. The reluctance to take prisoners and the casual treatment of dead Japanese soldiers would cause agitation in some quarters if repeated today. However, in the context of the times, and given the propensity of wounded Japanese soldiers to try to take someone with them if at all possible, the actions are fully understandable. Different times, different mores.

Bradley suggests that the extensive use of air power to both deploy and support ground troops in the Markham/Ramu Valley campaign heralded the future of warfare. Perhaps so—certainly it had its reprise in Slim’s campaign in Burma, and later with the development of air mobility in Vietnam. However, the recent campaigns in the Middle East could be seen as a reminder that circumstances dictate the relevant tactics, and flexibility must remain a military virtue.

Some tighter editing might have been helpful. As a very simple example, the Studebaker trucks in which men of the 2/33rd Battalion sat on page one had become Chevrolets by page two! Such minor issues do not, however, detract seriously from the quality of the book.

The Army History program has so far produced books covering the activities of the 7th Division (this volume, as well as indirectly in the biography of Lavarack), the 8th Division (Against the Sun), and the 9th Division (Alamein, Bravery Above Blunder, and indirectly in the biography of Morshead). Perhaps it is time for something on the 6th Division?
BOOK REVIEW


Reviewed by John Donovan

Since at least the 1930s, the friction between regular and citizen soldiers has remained an enduring element in the historiography of the Australian Army. This book sheds much light on that friction, while rehabilitating the reputation of Major General Arthur ‘Tubby’ Allen, one of Australia’s more notable citizen soldiers. It is a valuable addition to the work sponsored by the Army History Unit.

Were he alive today, Tubby Allen would be described as a member of the ‘aspirational class’. He came from a humble background, the son of an engine driver for the NSW Government Railways. After leaving school at age 14 to work as a messenger boy for the Postmaster-General’s Department, Allen rose through a combination of native intelligence, energy, personal study and hard work to become a battalion commander in the First AIF at the age of 24, partner in an accounting firm before reaching 40, and finally a major general who had led a division in two difficult campaigns before his 50th birthday. His health started to fail soon after the end of World War II and he died relatively young, probably as a result of his war service.

As Stuart Braga describes, while progress in Allen’s World War II military career came to an early end—at least in part because of the envy and class-consciousness of another officer—he left a notable military record. When World War II broke out, Allen was given command of the 16th Brigade of the 6th Division. That this division produced many of the leaders of the World War II Australian Army is a tribute to the quality of those who sacrificed career and family interests to join the Second AIF in the first days and months of the new war. While the process of expansion involved much winnowing of wheat from chaff, within two years Allen had risen to lead the 7th Division in two campaigns.
What Braga’s book also shows, as it recounts the tale of Allen’s service during World War II, is that the friction between regulars and citizen soldiers was not as clear-cut as it is sometimes depicted. There was indeed friction between regulars and citizen soldiers. This friction sometimes had a detrimental effect on operations, as it did prior to Bardia, when Stan Savige was excluded, apparently deliberately, from a major pre-attack conference, even though his brigade was to have a complex role in the operation. As another example, the relationships between Horace Robertson and citizen officers (and, indeed, many of his regular colleagues) were rarely anything but fraught.

But there was tension also between citizen soldiers, most notably in this story between Ned Herring on the one side and Allen and Savige, who were perceived by Herring to be his command and social inferiors, on the other. And there was also friction between the regulars (particularly, in this context, between George Vasey and Frank Berryman). On the other hand, there were times when there was a complete lack of friction between regular and citizen soldiers. Allen (at least initially) got on well with Vasey, who even noted that ‘civilian training has some advantages in the army.’

Ironically, given the record of friction between regular and citizen soldiers, Allen’s ultimate nemesis was Herring, citizen soldier and pillar of the Melbourne legal establishment. Herring resented, among other things, Allen’s promotion to major general ahead of him. Thomas Blamey, the regular turned militiaman, who shared responsibility for Rowell’s fall with Rowell himself, and who is often criticised for causing Allen’s fall, was willing to employ him again in Papua. Blamey wanted Allen to alternate command with Vasey. Herring, however, refused to have Allen.

Braga considers that this decision not to provide regular relief for Vasey may have contributed to the later decline in his health. It also probably led to unnecessary losses during the Papuan beachhead battles, as Vasey became tired. Herring once famously stated that he preferred ‘Vasey tired to Allen fresh’. Vasey (tired) launched a number of attacks at Gona and Sanananda that gained little or nothing, but left many casualties. It is hard to see Allen (fresh) not resisting the push to launch ill-prepared and poorly coordinated attacks. For the failure to rest Vasey and its consequences, Herring must take the principal share of blame, although Blamey could have insisted on the change.

One of the few to recognise Allen’s achievements in the Owen Stanley Ranges was Berryman, a regular officer with whom many citizen officers, including Allen, had clashed. Regardless of his other feelings, Berryman, who had also been Allen’s brigade major in the prewar militia, recognised Allen’s achievement. From his position at Army Headquarters in Melbourne, he sent his congratulations to a man who had just been relieved of his command for alleged failure to perform — showing both intellectual honesty and bureaucratic courage.
KOKODA COMMANDER

Braga suggests that Allen’s transfer to the command of Northern Territory Force was effectively a form of exile. However, it is only with hindsight that we see the greater context—that there was no longer a ground threat to the Northern Territory in early 1943. Seen in contemporary terms, this was an important command. When Allen took command, Northern Territory Force was a potential front-line area close to major Japanese concentrations, responsible for a third of the Australian landmass. Perhaps this was the best that Blamey felt that he could do for Allen, given Herring’s refusal to have him back in command of the 7th Division and Blamey’s apparent reluctance to override Herring.

Several officers emerge from Braga’s book with their reputations changed to greater or lesser degree. First, Allen receives the credit due to him for the re-capture of Kokoda and for preparing the plan that was the basis for Vasey’s victory at Oivi-Gorari. Second, while his military reputation remains impressive, Vasey’s personal reputation is diminished, first by his initial reaction to Herring’s reluctance to take over in the mountains: ‘I don’t want to get stuck in those hills … better jobs than that about’, and then by his readiness to take the credit for Allen’s efforts. Vasey himself had personal difficulties with the terrain of the Owen Stanleys, and was later to encounter the reality of Japanese defensive capabilities that had confronted Allen.

Blamey’s limited attempts to shield Allen from the pressure caused by the ill-informed views of MacArthur do not counterbalance his preparedness to allow the sacrifice of a subordinate rather than stand up to MacArthur when his own personal position was weak. Many officers at New Guinea Force and Land Headquarters were ignorant of the reality of events in the mountains, including low recovery rates after airdrops and the difficult terrain, to say nothing of Japanese stubbornness in defence. Blamey, as Commander of Allied Land Forces, should have searched out the truth.

Finally, Herring’s reputation as a person and as a military officer is diminished: his personal reputation by his apparent vindictiveness towards Allen and Savige; and his military reputation by his failure to understand, or indeed even to enquire into, the tactical and logistic problems of operating along the Kokoda Trail. Braga demonstrates that Herring’s skills on a conventional battlefield did not translate well to conditions in the mountains and swamps of Papua.

Braga discusses briefly the March 1942 ‘revolt of the generals’ in which Herring participated. This ‘revolt’ comprised an attempt to have Robertson, then still a brigadier, appointed commander-in-chief. Given that all three participants were probably aware of Robertson’s ambiguous attitude to the Greek campaign, an attitude that casts doubt on his character, one wonders what they could have been thinking of! Menzies’ statement that leadership is ‘cultivated by practical and varied experience of life’ seemingly held as true for Herring, the Melbourne QC, as it did.
for many of the officers of the small interwar army, about some of whom Kingsley Norris, then ADMS of the 7th Division commented ‘their general knowledge of the world around us was limited.’

There are a couple of minor issues in the book. It does not seem relevant, for example, to discuss the establishment of RMC Duntroon in the context of replacing British officers qualified at staff college, as Duntroon did not provide such training. Australian officers attended the staff colleges at Camberley and Quetta for many years to come. Gough’s first name was Hubert, not Hugh. I am not sure who comprised the ‘Australian Division Field Company Royal Engineers’ on page 103—perhaps they were from 2/1 Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, who supported the 16th Brigade at Bardia. In Vasey’s letters to his wife, Mackay’s first name is sometimes rendered as ‘Ivan’ rather than ‘Iven’, though it is unclear whether or not the error is Vasey’s.

It is interesting that both the Army and Air Force experienced command problems in World War II. In the Army, these problems stemmed from the appointment of Blamey as both Commander Allied Land Forces and Commander-in-Chief of the Army. His combined operational and administrative responsibilities both suffered from his excessive workload. In the Air Force, operational command and administration were divided, but the responsible officers had a personality clash, which prevented them from working together for the good of the war effort and the service.

Overall, this is a useful and comprehensive book. Indeed, upon reading on page 43 about Allen’s attack of paraphimosis in early 1918, this reviewer was reminded of the modern expression ‘that’s more than I needed to know’.

Reviewed by Colonel John Blaxland

Professor David Horner is a prolific writer and pre-eminent historian on Australian defence matters, having written a plethora of works that have significantly contributed to the store of corporate knowledge on the Army and the wider Defence organisation. Much of what he has written concerns higher-level command and military affairs, particularly such works as *High Command*, *Defence Supremo* and, more recently, *Blamey*. Horner’s books often bring together the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war to illuminate the complexities involved. In *Strategic Command* he takes us a step further along this path.

For those already familiar with Horner’s style and rigour, however, another hefty tome on mid-twentieth century Australian military affairs may appear intimidating—particularly as General Sir John Wilton was not a man known for his charisma or engaging style. Indeed, he was known as ‘Smiley’ for good reason. With *Strategic Command*, however, the reader is in for a pleasant surprise, as this is probably Horner’s best and most prescient work. The book is also rich in lessons on planning and conducting operations, on human nature and on the requirement for clear command and control arrangements and the clear enunciation of intent to minimise the risk of misunderstanding that can arise in the ‘fog’ of war. In his introduction, Horner lists compelling reasons for the study of Wilton who was:
arguably the most important and influential Australian Army officer in the second half of the twentieth century. During his tenure as CGS, the Army underwent its largest expansion since the Second World War, and troops were deployed to operations in Borneo and Vietnam. As Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee he set in place joint arrangements that have persisted to this day. When he was promoted to full general in September 1968 he was the first Australian Army officer to reach this rank since Sir Thomas Blamey.

Horner further explains that the value of a biography of Wilton lies in the opportunity it provides to explore some crucial issues in Australian military history. He lists the key issues as: Australia’s relationship with Asia and the development of its strategic and defence policies in the postwar period; the development of the Australian Army; and the challenge of high command.

In addressing these issues Horner sets the scene admirably in chapters one and two which cover Wilton’s early life and his experiences at Duntroon from 1927 to 1930. Chapters three and four describe his life post-graduation when he accepted a commission with the British Army, serving in India and, subsequently, with a mountain battery in Burma. He eventually returned to Australia with the Army’s Staff Corps—a return, writes Horner, due in large part to his desire to be reunited with the love of his life, Helen, with whom he conducted a long-distance courtship over eight years while in India and Burma. Horner makes it clear that she played a remarkable behind-the-scenes role in his life, and the weaving of Helen into the story goes a long way to explain why this book is so enjoyable to read. Horner’s clever interspersing of extracts from Wilton’s letters to his wife reveal a deeply passionate man.

The next few chapters (five to nine) cover Wilton’s wartime experience, commencing with his service as a gunner with the coastal artillery in Sydney before his promotion to Brigade Major Royal Artillery for the Australian 7th Division. In that capacity he performed impressively, planning the artillery support for the Syrian campaign in 1941. On promotion to lieutenant colonel and as GSO1 of the 3rd Division under Major General Stan Savige, Wilton’s role in training the division for jungle warfare was invaluable and his experience with pack mountain artillery in Burma paid dividends. Horner asserts that it was largely owing to Wilton’s drive that mountain guns played an important part in the Wau–Salamaua campaign in 1943.
Similarly instructive during this campaign was the failure of senior commanders to inform Savige (and Wilton) of the higher intent for the assault on Salamaua. Blamey intended the operation as a ‘cloak’ to draw forces away from the main effort intended for Lae, but did not explain this. His failure to do so misled Savige and Wilton as they planned an overzealous prosecution of their three-pronged divisional assault. Indeed, this obsession with secrecy resulted in a loss of trust in the higher commander (Herring) that would irrevocably damage his reputation where his subordinates were concerned.

Wilton’s experience with the American 162nd Regiment—that was tasked to ‘cooperate with’ rather than be controlled by the 3rd Division—in the advance on Salamaua served to highlight the difficulties inherent in loosely worded command and control arrangements. From then on, Horner observes, Wilton endorsed control rather than cooperation which was so dependent on personalities. Wilton was chosen to represent Australia on the Australian Army Staff in Washington DC and subsequently at Advanced Land Headquarters in Morotai as the war’s end approached. This chapter (nine) points to the importance of staff experience and the contribution of good staff work to the well-being of the Army.

In chapter ten Horner presents an interesting reflection on the Chifley Government’s aversion to defence planning alongside Britain and the challenge of planning for realistic contingencies in the face of government dislike of cooperative Commonwealth planning. The confluence of Wilton’s experience in India, Burma, the United States, New Guinea, the Philippines, and, after the war, Indonesia, along with his extensive tour of Malaya, contributed to his becoming a firm believer in the domino theory. His strong views on the need to combat communism in Asia were to shape Australia’s military strategy for the next twenty years. In reading about Wilton’s views today, there are interesting parallels in planning for Middle East operations while remaining actively engaged in South-East Asia.

Wilton was given command of the 28th Commonwealth Brigade in the latter stages of the Korean War and his exposure there, particularly to US Army helicopters, was instrumental in shaping his thinking, as ‘years later he would fight for the Australian Army to have its own helicopters.’ In addition, there were difficulties in rotating only three Regular Army infantry battalions into two battalion positions with the brigade in Korea (with 3 RAR personnel replaced individually for the duration of the war). This, according to Horner, led Wilton to later argue for a larger army, and for a policy of relief by complete units.
After Korea, Horner takes the reader through Wilton’s ‘rounding off’ experiences in the late 1950s. These experiences included Wilton’s time as Commandant at Duntroon (where he pushed for degree status for the College’s courses), as chairman of the Joint Planning Committee of Defence for the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO), and as a senior administrative staff officer in the Sydney-based Eastern Command. There Wilton ‘learnt a great deal about peacetime administration (as opposed to administration in the field) and rapidly formed the opinion that many of the procedures were unnecessarily involved and cumbersome and needed streamlining.’ One could argue that these opinions remain relevant today.

Wilton saw the significance of Thailand from his time in the SEATO planning staff, arguing that ‘if you want to hold South-East Asia, you need to hold Thailand.’ It was with this mind-set that he committed himself to his subsequent appointment, from 1960 to 1962, as Chief of the Military Planning Office for SEATO in Bangkok. This chapter (thirteen) provides a fascinating insight into a little-known aspect of Australia’s engagement in South-East Asia and particularly in Thailand. Horner points out that Australia was prepared for military engagement in Laos and was also prepared to commit Australian ground forces to defend Thailand if the need arose—an interesting concept given the recent reappearance of insurgency there.

The Military Plans Office was a joint and multinational staff and Wilton saw the advantages of a joint headquarters over the single-service focused arrangements then extant in Australia. Indeed, as Horner observes, Wilton’s experience gave him a superb background in the strategic situation in South-East Asia and in operating a joint headquarters. This would stand Australia in good stead in the years to come, particularly as during Wilton’s long tenure as Chief of the General Staff (CGS) and subsequently as Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee he would play a pivotal role in Australia’s Vietnam War. This was a war Wilton firmly believed in, even though he knew Australia could not make a substantial difference to the outcome.

Wilton became CGS when the Army was about to undergo its largest peacetime expansion and most intense operational commitment since the Second World War. It is with this in mind that Horner can confidently assert that ‘few have shaped the operational role of the Australian Army to the extent Wilton did between 1963 and 1966, and few have faced such complex challenges.’
Australia’s involvement in and gradual withdrawal from Vietnam that there is scope for Horner to have been more critical of Wilton. Horner admittedly describes Wilton as having ‘almost worshipped’ the American commander in Vietnam, General Westmoreland. Yet this fawning approach is not critically discussed and it came despite the now clear flaws in Westmoreland’s obsession with search and destroy missions—missions which came at the expense of the more static local security measures advocated by his British and Australian counterinsurgency advisers and the US Marines.

Once the American decision to commence withdrawal was made, Australia was slow to adapt its strategy and Horner holds Wilton partly to blame for this lag. Wilton’s positivist view of US capabilities came despite his extensive and challenging experience of working alongside US Army units in New Guinea and during the stalemate in Korea. Horner also concedes that Wilton shared a degree of culpability over what war correspondent Dennis Warner called the ‘greatest Australian mistake of the war’—the planting of a long and largely unguarded minefield in Phuoc Tuy province. Wilton could have chosen to, but did not, overturn the decision to proceed with its construction.

Apart from his pivotal role in Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam War, Wilton was a key advocate and driver in fostering the nascent Army Aviation capability. Horner observes that Wilton played a key role in the battle for a separate air arm for the Army, particularly as the Air Force did little to persuade the Army that it was interested in providing the support believed necessary for success in battle. Wilton’s approach to a separate air arm was complemented by a strong belief in the benefits of ‘jointery’ and of a single Department of Defence.

Horner concludes his study of Wilton with the acknowledgement that he is difficult to place in the pantheon of Australian generals for a number of reasons. First, Wilton was a professional soldier, whereas earlier famous generals were citizen soldiers, admirable for their ability to rise to the occasion. Yet as the Government’s requirement for professional forces available for short-notice deployments has increased, the need for professionalism has become paramount and this should be acknowledged with respect to any judgement of Wilton. Second, Australia’s commitment to Vietnam was controversial and Wilton was seen as partly responsible for this controversy. Yet, unlike in the United States, the Australian Army’s ethos was preserved through the experience and some credit should be given to Wilton for this result. Third, as the nature of war and of Australia’s commitments has changed, the capacity for commanders
publicly to demonstrate military prowess has diminished. Deciding the shape of Australia’s involvement in Vietnam required as much fine judgement as the nature of our commitment to the First World War. Sir John Wilton met this challenge for eight years during the tumultuous decade of the 1960s.

Strategic Command is a timely and significant work that should be read widely. It is an enjoyable and engaging account of a key player in Australia’s military experience, an account which has significant relevance for today.
RETHINKING CHINA’S RISE


Reviewed by Anthony Robinson

Too often strategic analysts and the business community focus on the ‘inevitable’ rise of China as an economic superpower, casting away any sensible analysis of a very complex nation with a rich and varied history. Simply by extrapolating linear trends it is possible to come up with a number of outcomes, most of which bear little resemblance to reality. In a new work Paul Monk avoids a number of pitfalls associated with current Chinese scholarship as well as the increasing tendency to make assumptions based on current statistics and trends.

*Thunder from the Silent Zone* is a first-rate treatise on both China’s and the Chinese people’s struggle to gain a voice in their own destiny. It is a thought-provoking and analytical work by one of Australia’s foremost essayists. The book challenges many of the received and fixed ideas which rule how many see, and subsequently deal with, both China and Taiwan. The ideas mooted by Paul Monk could have profound implications for Australian relations with both China and Taiwan and this is a book that should be read by all those with an interest in Australian foreign policy and international relations.

The intriguing title, *Thunder from the Silent Zone*, has its origins in a poem by one of China’s most famous and independently minded modern writers, Lu Xun (1881–1936). The phrase became a popular and striking piece of graffiti after the infamous Tiananmen Square massacre in 1989. It literally means ‘explosive anger within a repressed society’.
Paul Monk prefaces the book with a short and interesting history of his career in the Australian intelligence community. This history is liberally sprinkled with anecdotes regarding the author’s dealings with several Australian intelligence agencies.

Monk sets the tone of the book by dedicating it to ‘… the tens of millions of victims of communism in China: those executed, tortured, starved to death, set to forced labour, imprisoned, abused, and deprived of the most elementary human rights, all in the name of revolution.’ In his introduction, Monk continues this theme, stating that ‘the basic reality from which any reasoned assessment of the Communist Party’s dictatorship in China must proceed is that its history is heaped with the corpses of tens of millions of China’s people.’ He uses these and other points to challenge the very right of China’s ruling regime to legitimacy, based on its past and present history.

The book challenges, amongst other ideas, the prevailing view that China’s large population and spectacular economic growth over the past decade will continue and ultimately result in its contesting US supremacy in the region. Paul Monk quotes many influential leaders, including several Australian prime ministers such as Bob Hawke and Malcolm Fraser, who subscribe to this view of an ever-growing and increasingly successful China. He then systematically, and with analytical rigour, debunks this premise, stating that it is based on little more than linear extrapolations that ‘… assume benign outcomes across a large number of variables crucial to China’s possible futures, without critically examining any of them.’

The author goes further, stating that ‘… demographic, social and environmental problems of an increasingly grave nature …’ are signs and symptoms of a corrupt and despotic regime. These signs and increasingly obvious symptoms are often not comprehensively reported by mainstream Australian media.

Signs are emerging that support the author’s thesis that China’s so-called ‘peaceful rise’ is not an inevitable fact. A recent article in the Australian Financial Review by Desmond Lachman, Resident Fellow with US think-tank The American Enterprise Institute, stated: ‘this myth overlooks China’s fundamental political weaknesses. It also turns a blind eye to China’s economic feet of clay …’ The article goes on, almost paraphrasing Paul Monk, ‘Impressive as China’s past economic performance has been, it would seem to be a mistake to simply extrapolate the performance indefinitely into the future, as many in the media … seem to be doing.’

Paul Monk’s book has more to offer than an exposé of the many flaws of the Chinese Communist Party. The book also documents the past failings of the rulers of Taiwan. While Monk outlines the history of human rights abuses by the Kuomintang (Nationalist Party), he correctly makes the point that Taiwan now has a democratically elected government with a thriving opposition and free press, and perhaps more importantly, acknowledges its past faults.
This book also offers the thoughtful reader a history of Chinese human rights abuses. In addition, Paul Monk convincingly argues that the solution to the Taiwan Strait dilemma lies in China’s offer of *de jure* independence to Taiwan. The author makes the point that this would be of tremendous benefit to China, albeit not to the benefit of the ruling Communist Party. He offers Beijing a way out of the conundrum, asking the regime to make a paradigm shift in its thinking and declare that it no longer has an issue with Taiwanese independence and that the winner of this battle is 'Chinese civilisation', rather than any particular ideology. The 'one China' philosophy could then be understood as a broad Chinese Commonwealth, with Taiwan welcomed back as a little brother and off-shoot state, rather than being obliged to bow to Beijing’s sovereignty. The arguments supporting this thesis are well thought out and argued.

Paul Monk rounds his coverage with a chapter on Chinese films and poetry, lightening the potentially intense mood of the book. This is an excellent and informative read. It is fully referenced and has an extensive index.

**ENDNOTE**

Book Review


Reviewed by Lieutenant Colonel Miles Farmer, OAM (Retd)

Readers interested in the study of the battles on the Western Front in World War I will be familiar with the battle of Villers-Bretonneux on 25 April 1918—said by many to have been the turning point of the war. Be that as it may, it certainly won Brigadier General William Glasgow a well-deserved name for himself. At the outset I will say that this is an excellent book, enlightening, and enjoyable to read, despite the sadness of the casualty lists it includes.

The author, Peter Edgar, examines the ‘work’ of the 13th Australian Infantry Brigade from its formation in Egypt on 16 February 1916 through to its success at Villers-Bretonneux on 24–25 April 1918. He dedicates the book to his great uncle, Private Leslie Edgar of the 50th Battalion, 13th Brigade, who was killed in action at Noreuil on 2 April 1917.

The ‘Anzac legend’ and the varying views of the Australian soldier are considered, debunking many of the opinions of the ‘revisionists’. Without going into detail as to how the war came about, Peter Edgar provides a number of compelling reasons for Australia’s participation—this was not only in Australia’s national interest, but to ‘rid the world of would-be tyrants’.

The problems facing the armies on the Western Front are discussed against the backdrop of Waterloo in 1815, and Gettysburg in 1863, and an outline of the characteristics of the weapons and armaments of the times. Crossing ‘no-man’s land’ was common to all of the battles. The difficulties of applying fire and movement required new tactics which constantly evolved as the First World War progressed.
difficulties of applying fire and movement required new tactics which constantly evolved as the First World War progressed. Command and control was an ever-present problem.

To understand something of the qualities and experience of the officers and men who made up the 13th Brigade, Peter Edgar reviews the part played by the 3rd Brigade, the first to land at Anzac Cove. The chapter on the landing at Anzac Cove makes interesting reading, with brief sketches of some of the officers and men who were to make up the nucleus of the 13th Brigade, several later gaining command of its battalions.

Glasgow has a well-deserved chapter to himself. The importance of his training as a part-time soldier, his service in the Boer War and at Gallipoli, paints a picture of the man who formed, trained, and took his men into their first encounter with the Germans in France in August 1916. The 13th Brigade, 4th Division, had been formed from the 3rd Brigade and its battalions as well as a body of new reinforcements.

The brigade trained in Egypt before arriving in Marseilles, France, on 11 June 1916, then moving north to an area west of Messines. Within two months the brigade was engaged in the first attack on Mouquet Farm in August 1916. The author then takes the reader in some detail through the major battles in which the brigade took part—Noreuil, April 1917; Messines, June 1917; Zonnebeke; Dernancourt March–April 1918, and finally Villers-Bretonneux, April 1918. There are also detailed descriptions of many days spent in the trenches holding the line.

At this point it is worthwhile to look at maps in the book. Generally speaking they are good, although, in common with most books of military history, there has to be much turning back of pages to follow the description of a complex operation. Slim's book, Defeat into Victory, probably has the best placement of fold-out maps, allowing the battles to be followed easily. These days, the cost of printing no doubt prohibits such luxury. The acid test is whether the maps adequately support the action being described: my answer is 'yes, they do.'

There was usually some time for rest following the battles of World War I, and occasionally time for sport. Reorganisation was essential for the absorbing of reinforcements, and to make good the losses in officers and men. Then came training, and re-training at all levels, and in all aspects of preparing for the next operation. Peter Edgar shows how the brigade, through this attention to detail, retained its integrity and built on lessons learned.
Edgar also shows how Glasgow develops as a leader, with growing confidence in himself and his brigade. Thus he was ready to challenge the army and divisional plan, and timings for the counter-attack on Villers-Bretonneux. He is also shown to be fallible, when he orders a daylight move to fill a gap during the battle. Fortunately he has the good sense to accept the advice of two of his battalion commanders to wait until darkness. It was not long after this that Glasgow was promoted to Major General and given command of the 1st Australian Infantry Division.

In his concluding chapter, Peter Edgar answers the question on the Australian soldier which he posed himself at the beginning of the book—‘how effective was he and, if he was effective, how did he become so?’ He demonstrates how the earlier battles, including the landing at Anzac Cove, did not display anything of the control and cooperation of all elements of the brigade demonstrated at Dernancourt and Villers-Bretonneux. The constant training and the actual experience of battle turned the gifted amateurs of 1915 into the seasoned professionals of 1918.

The comprehensive endnotes and extensive bibliography reflect the wide-ranging and depth of research which Peter Edgar has put into his writing. The book is 290 pages long in a well-presented hardback. As I said at the outset, it is an excellent book, enlightening and enjoyable. I commend it, and hope that other readers will find it as interesting as I have.

ENDNOTE

1 Copies of this book may be obtained through The War Bookshop, tel: (02) 9542 6771; fax (02) 9542 6787; warbookshop@bigpond.com, cost: $45.00 (post free in Australia).
Defence of Australia and Forward Defence

Reconciling the Dialectic of Australian Defence Strategies

Colonel John Blaxland

I note with interest the debate over Michael Evans’s monograph, *The Tyranny of Dissonance* in the AAJ’s new ‘Forum’ section. I have also recently attended a briefing by Professor Paul Dibb on what he describes as the enduring relevance of strategic geography to Australian defence planning. In light of what are apparently opposite views, I can’t help but think that the antithetical perspectives presented are due for a synthesis that supersedes the old strategic dialectic between the two positions, namely ‘Defence of Australia’ (DoA) and ‘Forward Defence’.

In Defence of Strategic Geography

In a presentation at the Australian National University’s Strategic Defence Studies Centre (2 February 2006), Paul Dibb revisited the strategic debate as he sought to de-construct the recent December 2005 Defence Update (which he referred to by the acronym ‘DUD’). Dibb expressed the view that the ADO has responded to events with an ‘imperial cringe’ by acquiring an expeditionary force to do the
bidding of the United States. He argued that, while the current structure of Australia’s
defence forces provides options, it is nonetheless dangerous to have an amphibious
focus as a force driver. In his view, the focus on ‘expeditionary’ capabilities plays
into the hands of the United States, which would demand its use. Thus, he argues,
the alliance weakens our strategic geography. His views reveal a surprisingly
simplistic view of Australia’s ability to develop
strategy in pursuit of its own national inter-
est—a point Tom-Durrell Young makes very
clearly. Indeed, by placing primacy of concern
over the prospect of obsequiousness in defence
strategy towards America, Dibb seems prepared
to argue that Australian Defence capability
should be intentionally hamstrung to, in effect,
protect itself against itself. Such a view implies
that the Army, let alone the Australian
Government, can’t be trusted to exercise sound
judgement over the use of such forces. This view
surely borders on disloyalty.

**DIBB’S LESSER ROLE FOR THE ARMY**

Furthermore, Dibb continues to assert that the Navy and Air Force are more impor-
tant for the defence of Australia. His position is premised on the view that, unlike
the Navy and Air Force, the Army never participated in the Cold War stand-off with
the Soviet Union. Yet his position overlooks our involvement with the Soviet proxy
in Vietnam and Chinese Communists in North
Korea. It also overlooks the significance of the
Army as an integral part of a joint force team in
the fight for stability in East Timor, Bougainville
and the Solomon Islands. Indeed, his view is
unnecessarily inflammatory as, today, the
Army—alongside its Navy and Air Force
colleagues—seeks to operate collegially to derive
synergistic benefits not available to a force that
would pit one Service against another. Today, the
Army is as committed as the other Services to
viewing our capabilities holistically as part of an
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Services to viewing our
capabilities holistically
as part of an inter-
dependent team.
MOVING BEYOND THE DIALECTIC?

Dibb’s enduring stress on strategic geography (as the *sine qua non* of Australian defence) raises the question of why it should be a zero-sum game between geography and the other determinants of strategy. Surely Australia is capable of handling the complexity implicit in a nuanced and multi-faceted approach. With such complexity in mind, isn’t there a happy medium for our defence strategy with which we can all co-exist? Such a synthesis of the dialectic of Australian strategy (pitting the defence of Australia and its immediate environs versus the defence of our vital national interests further abroad) would acknowledge that many of the tasks set out under DoA have already been accomplished and are no longer contentious. These tasks include: the establishment of RAAF Base Tindal and the bare northern airbases; the relocation of Army’s 1 Brigade to Darwin; the establishment of the two-fleet Navy; the home-porting of more and more capable ships in the north; and the establishment of the Joint Offshore Protection Command, including its component parts. Australian defence strategy has clearly benefited from the period of focus on DoA and many of the concerns that resulted in an emphasis on defence of the north of Australia have now been adequately addressed. Indeed, it is because of the successful groundwork undertaken during the years when Australian strategy revolved around DoA that the ADF is well placed to move forward with the development of more robust capabilities to pursue Australia’s interests beyond the shoreline.

COMING TO GRIPS WITH AMPHIBIOUS AND EXPEDITIONARY FORCES

Having acknowledged that much of the DoA terrain has already been covered and is firmly in place, there is scope to recognise the crucial role that amphibious and expeditionary capabilities play in enhancing the direct defence of Australia as well as the pursuit of this country’s wider national security interests. After all, amphibious and flat-top platforms have played crucial roles in Australian military operations over many years. In fact, the deployment of HMAS *Melbourne* to Darwin after Cyclone Tracy illustrated the potential for ‘expeditionary’ capabilities to be used for the direct defence of the continent itself, as well as in response to other cataclysmic events in our region. Indeed, amphibious ships have been among the most taxed...
assets in the Navy’s inventory and the current amphibious ships are very capable, although their limitations are increasingly evident. The adage that ‘steel is cheap and air is free’ may seem glib, but the option for procuring larger LHD-like platforms shouldn’t necessarily dramatically increase construction and operating costs. And the increase in size would offer the ADF greater flexibility and the Government more options in the pursuit of Australia’s national interests—both for the direct defence of Australia and its regional and wider global interests.

THE ARMY AS PART OF THE JOINT TEAM

The acquisition of expeditionary-capable platforms and systems will further enable the ADF to improve its ability to operate jointly—as a single ADF team. Indeed, the security of the Australian homeland is further guaranteed by the refinement of its expeditionary capabilities. This has been demonstrated by the positive impact of Australia’s contribution in recent years in the Solomon Islands, Bougainville and East Timor. Surely we are better off recognising this and avoiding a destructive and adversarial approach to strategy.

ON COMPARISONS WITH CANADA AND NEW ZEALAND

Dibb drew a comparison with Canada and New Zealand, given their benign strategic environments, as not having the same imperative to focus on their immediate strategic geography. Indeed, Canada and New Zealand have retained warfighting capabilities that remain deployed in Afghanistan. Canada is also looking to model itself on Australia’s enhanced amphibious capability and is set to acquire two multi-role joint support ships and a dedicated amphibious ship in the next few years. The intention is to develop a capability not unlike that employed by Australia for INTERFET in 1999.

THE PROSPECT OF CONCURRENT THREATS

Dibb’s comparison of Australia with allies facing more benign strategic environments implies that Australia does not have the luxury of being able concurrently to defend itself and operate remotely in places such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Such a view implies that deployments far from Australia’s shore compromise Australia’s ability to defend itself against threats emanating from within its region. This view...
Defence of Australia and Forward Defence presents an unduly stark choice. Clearly, Australia faces no immediate conventional threat to its shores that might present the concurrent threats experienced in 1941. What is more, the ADF’s experience of operating as part of a coalition builds those skills required for challenging conventional operations, should these eventuate in our region.

**ON THE ALLIANCE**

Dibb argues that ‘the alliance weakens our strategic geography.’ This assertion is made with little substantiation. Indeed, the experience the ADF has gained overseas not only keeps our forces honed, interoperable, and ensures their access to the latest technology, but the contributions are as measured as any undertaken under the DoA rubric of self-reliance.

**GLASS HALF FULL?**

Dibb has argued that Australian strategy currently bears the hallmarks of confusion and incoherence, leaving us with a less capable hybrid. However, what he is describing is the glass-half-empty version of what is becoming a more flexible, capable, yet lean force that is adjusting to the times. Perhaps the day has come to recognise that DoA appears indistinguishable in current strategic parlance largely because it is now so deeply ingrained in the strategic culture that it is no longer a source of contention. Indeed, arguably, it has synthesised to form part of a more mature and inclusive strategy that incorporates aspects of DoA and Forward Defence. As Defence Minister Brendan Nelson made clear in a statement on 14 March 2006, ‘it seems to me that it is not one or the other. It is a little bit of each.’

**THE AUTHOR**

Colonel John Blaxland graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1986. He has served in a number of staff, instructional and intelligence postings, including as intelligence officer, Headquarters 3rd Brigade, as part of the International Force in East Timor. He is a graduate of the Royal Thai Army Staff College, was a Visiting Defence Fellow at Queen’s University and a War Studies PhD candidate at the Royal Military College in Kingston, Ontario, Canada. Colonel Blaxland currently holds a Defence appointment in Sydney.
DIARY

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For further information please visit the website at:

or contact Land Warfare Conference coordinator at:
Tel: +61 8 8259 5455
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E-mail: LWCC@dsto.defence.gov.au
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The editors of the Australian Army Journal welcome submissions from any source. Two prime criteria for publication are an article’s standard of written English expression and its relevance to the Australian profession of arms. The journal will accept letters, feature articles, review essays, e-mails and contributions to the Point Blank and Insights sections. As a general guide on length, letters should not exceed 500 words; articles and review essays should be between 3000 and 6000 words, and contributions to the Insights section should be no more than 1500 words. The Insights section provides authors with the opportunity to write brief, specific essays relating to their own experiences of service. Readers should note that articles written in service essay format are discouraged, since they are not generally suitable for publication.

Each manuscript should be sent by e-mail to <armyjournal@defence.gov.au>, or sent printed in duplicate together with a disk to the editors. Articles should be written in Microsoft Word, be one-and-a-half spaced, use 12-point font in Times New Roman and have a 2.5 cm margin on all sides. Submissions should include the author’s full name and title; current posting, position or institutional affiliation; full address and contact information (preferably including an e-mail address); and a brief, one-paragraph biographical description.

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All sources cited as evidence should be fully and accurately referenced in endnotes (not footnotes). Books cited should contain the author’s name, the title, the publisher, the place of publication, the year and the page reference. This issue of the journal contains examples of the appropriate style for referencing.

When using quotations, the punctuation, capitalisation and spelling of the source document should be followed. Single quotation marks should be used, with double quotation marks only for quotations within quotations. Quotations of thirty words or more should be indented as a separate block of text without quotation marks. Quotations should be cited in support of an argument, not as authoritative statements.
NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

Numbers should be spelt out up to ninety-nine, except in the case of percentages, where arabic numerals should be used (and per cent should always be spelt out). All manuscripts should be paginated, and the use of abbreviations, acronyms and jargon kept to a minimum.

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