



Army



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Serving the Nation



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Cover image: Australian Army soldiers from the 3rd Brigade prepare to deploy on Exercise Brolga Run 22 at Lavarack Barracks, Queensland.
(Source: Defence image gallery)

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Foreword

Anthony Duus, Director Australian Army
Research Centre

As we face a complex and dynamic security environment, it is more important than ever that we harness the power of academic research and analysis to inform our planning, strategy, policy and practice. As the world changes rapidly, we must be prepared to adapt and innovate to meet the highest strategic risks the Defence Strategic Review (DSR) and National Defence Strategy (NDS) suggest we may face: the threat of military coercion or a major conflict.¹

Since the release of the DSR, and the recent refinement of Australian priorities in the NDS, mobilisation has emerged as a priority research area² for the Australian Army Research Centre (AARC). Though neither document provides direction specific to mobilisation, both deliver foundational principles to underpin any endeavour to enact it. Notably the NDS emphasises the concept of national defence as the ‘coordinated, whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach that harnesses all arms of national power to defend Australia and advance our interests’.³ This approach necessarily entails fostering knowledge and engaging key audiences to advance national interests, policies and objectives. It is with this in mind that we are contributing a military voice to the public debate on mobilisation through publication of this themed edition of the *Australian Army Journal* (AAJ).

This edition of the AAJ contributes to a growing body of literature that reflects a divide between public perceptions of Defence and the internal work of the organisation. Much academic thought is inextricably tied to the open-source historical evidence base available. Media reporting is capitalising on the uncertainty of the wider international environment, stoked by conflicts like the Russia-Ukraine War and the Gaza conflict. While the articles within this journal do not seek to provide all the answers or contribute a wholly new perspective on mobilisation, they help to reinforce the importance of research and analysis in helping to solve contemporary problems facing Defence and broader Australian security interests. We are seeking to foster relevant debate, devoid of sensationalist or limited arguments, on issues like mobilisation.

We are asking our community to consider our future. What threats, opportunities and challenges might Army face in the next five years, 10 years and 20-plus years? How can Army prepare for an increase in operational demand? How can Army leverage its strengths and mitigate its weaknesses?

Government, Defence and Army are years into thinking through these strategic issues, but public commentary is necessarily constrained by the agreed principles by which government policy is developed. External thinking on these strategic issues is only just starting to crystallise. This, admittedly, reductive (and harsh) assessment of the state of affairs regarding research on issues of national defence is not designed to rehash calls for better engagement between Defence and the public (however well founded). Nor is it designed to highlight failings in either sphere as both face the difficulties caused by legislated security divides. Rather, my point is more nuanced: both Defence and academia must think more deeply on such issues because of their deep significance to Australia's national defence. For Defence, on issues such as mobilisation, standard planning processes will not suffice—the dependencies on factors beyond the organisation's (and therefore Army's) control are too great. Similarly, for comprehensive analytic thought, a singular discipline approach will not suffice—analysis of mobilisation is fundamentally interdisciplinary in nature, requiring cross-pollination not just within humanities schools but more broadly across science, technology, engineering and related fields.

It is with this in mind that we call for further academic debate, informed by a reliable evidence base that is oriented away from emotive problem-focused views of mobilisation towards interdisciplinary solutions, opportunities and concepts tailored to the Australian land force. By getting involved in this topic—be it by reading, researching, debating or writing—we can all advance the thinking and problem solving required to deliver land power in the national interest now and into the future.

As the final AAJ output under my tenure as Director AARC, this themed edition of the journal represents the culmination of our team's efforts to refocus Army's research outputs towards topics of most importance to our land forces. Themed journals are not new—last year's theme was littoral manoeuvre and was one of our most successful for some time. Next year we invite you to provide us with submissions for our next themed journal—'The State of the Australian Army Profession'. Our journals, and the work of the AARC more broadly, reflect the reinvigoration of Army's relationship with academia and confirm the value of providing a platform for military professionals, scholars, and policymakers to engage in critical discussions that enhance our profession.

Our work in rebuilding this community, as a collective, is not over. I encourage you to sustain your engagement with the AAJ, and the AARC more broadly. I also ask contributors to continue challenging conventional wisdom, questioning assumptions and offering fresh perspectives on the complex issues we, as Army, face. Thank you to the authors for joining us on this journey and contributing your voices to analysing the past, present and future of Australian land power.

Endnotes

- 1 Australian Government, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2023); Australian Government, *National Defence Strategy* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2024).
- 2 AARC research priorities for 2024 are mobilisation, quantum, autonomy and counter autonomy, littoral manoeuvre, and the profession of arms.
- 3 *National Defence Strategy*, p. 6.

Introduction

Hannah Woodford-Smith

In his 1979 book *Problems of Mobilisation in Defence of Australia*, one of Australia's most eminent scholars of security studies, Professor Desmond Ball, wrote:

In deterring enemy actions against Australia, as well as in military operations against that enemy, it is not the force-in-being or the current order-of-battle that is relevant, but the mobilised force with which the adversary would have to contend; the rate at which mobilisation proceeds with respect to any particular contingency is often the crucial variable ... To draw attention to the problems of mobilisation in defence of Australia is not to imply that Australia faces any foreseeable imminent threat to its national security ... However, this does not absolve the analyst from consideration of the possibilities. The defence planner, and the public at large, should be aware of the general problems of mobilisation, so as to assess and take the necessary insurance, not because the probability of extreme scenarios eventuating is high, but because forethought and planning could make such an enormous difference in the event Australia was to suffer any large-scale hostilities; indeed, the very existence of such planning and of event preparations for mobilisation might even deter the extreme scenarios from eventuating.¹

It is worth quoting Ball at length to introduce the subject of mobilisation in the context of the Australian land force. In the preface to this same book, Ball draws attention to the crux of Australia's strategic problem

set, and specifically to the issues of mobilisation. He eloquently highlights the strategic context in which contingency planning is a necessity as well as the scenario(s) under which mobilisation planning should occur. Planning responsibility is attributed to the government, to analysts, to defence planners and, importantly, to the public. Finally, in championing the reasons behind mobilisation planning, Ball validates the unique contribution these efforts make to national defence and to a strategy of deterrence. This introduction grounds Ball's original analysis in the present day and helps frame conversations about the challenges entailed in the national mobilisation, and opportunities we have to plan against them—not just internal to defence, but as a community of security practitioners and academics.

Strategic Context

The *Commonwealth War Book* of 1956 directs that, during the early stages of a war emergency, Army must 'make preliminary arrangements for the prospective extent of mobilisation and expansion of the Regular Army Field Force and its employment as an Expeditionary Force, in anticipation of the Government's approval'.² It is often within the extremes of this context that talk of mobilisation arises. It is a reality that has become particularly evident in light of the Russia-Ukraine War, with many North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and other European countries raising issues of mobilisation and implementing workforce solutions such as selective service in response to a deteriorating strategic environment across Eastern Europe.³ For example, in 2022, the UK commenced Operation Mobilisation to 'make the British Army ready for war in Europe', not with the intention of provoking conflict but to prevent it.⁴

Australia continues to experience the benefits (and drawbacks) of geographic distance and it is not imminently threatened by conflict—domestically or in the region. However, we are faced with the *prospect* of such a contingency in an environment where there may be no strategic warning for its commencement.⁵ Compounding this reality are a range of other factors shaping Australia's strategic environment, including increased geopolitical tension, advancements in technology, more capable systems, unpredictable climate events, and adversaries that threaten to disrupt current methods of warfare. It is a strategic context defined by uncertainty, and possibly high concurrent demand.

Contingency Planning

In situating this high risk, and uncertain strategic environment, lessons of history provide critical opportunities to learn and assess the types of scenarios that may necessitate Australian mobilisation (and the type of mobilisation referred to). National mobilisation of the military ‘in a time of war’ is not the only context within which the term is applied. The phrase is commonly used by police and, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, by health professionals too.⁶ It is a common term, with a broad and opaque application that, without appropriate contextualisation, can conjure up severe hypotheticals that often begin (rather than end) with population-wide conscription.

In my article ‘[Defining Land Force Mobilisation](#)’ in Volume 20 of the journal earlier this year, I defined defence mobilisation as:

the activity, or process, of transition between preparedness and the conduct of a specific military operation. It is the shift from the force-in-being (FIB) at a minimum level of capability (MLOC) to an operational level of capability (OLOC).⁷

Defined this way, not every mobilisation is a national endeavour. Indeed, national mobilisation in Australia has occurred only twice: in response to the First and Second World Wars. However, other contingencies (like the Vietnam War, Australia’s contribution to INTERFET from 1999 to 2012, and the 2019–20 Operation Bushfire Assist) have required Defence mobilisation at some level and must therefore be included in planning frameworks. Australia’s military history highlights three possible scenarios that are consistent with previous instances of mobilisation—some are more likely than others, whereas others are more dangerous. They comprise:

- Humanitarian assistance and disaster relief tasks domestically and overseas.
- Regional security/stability operations.
- Major conflict in the region.

At the time of writing, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is not committed beyond its current capability to any of these scenarios. Nor is Australia faced by an imminent threat from such scenarios (despite their inherent unpredictability). However, as Ball suggests,

planning against ‘extreme scenarios’, such as those in which Australia faces large-scale hostilities, promises an asymmetric advantage that could position this country to pivot quickly in response to a future threat event, or even to prevent its occurrence.⁸

Planning Authority versus Planning Responsibility

As Ball suggests, lacking an immediate threat does not absolve contemporary analysts or planners from assessing the possibilities of an insecure future. Rather, Australia’s uncertain strategic reality necessitates their attention and due examination. Indeed, consideration of major power conflict and mobilisation are not far from the minds of Australian Government officials and strategic planners. The terms of reference for the Defence Strategic Review 2023 (DSR) directed consideration of the ‘investments required to support Defence preparedness, and mobilisation needs to 2032–33’.⁹ Further, calls for proactive and whole-of-government planning approaches to national crises were invigorated by the demands placed on ADF capabilities and resources during (and after) the bushfire and COVID national emergencies in 2019 and 2020.¹⁰

In responding to this reality, the Australian Government released the DSR in 2023 and, in 2024, further refined Australian priorities in the National Defence Strategy (NDS). Though neither document provides direction specific to mobilisation, both deliver foundational principles that would underpin any endeavour to enact it. In particular, the DSR directed the largest recapitalisation of the ADF since the Cold War to support the transformation to an ‘enhanced force-in-being’ by 2025. Such transformation is occurring under the auspices of what the DSR termed ‘accelerated preparedness’—a concept that encompasses ‘additional investment from the Government and much more relevant priority setting by Defence ... to enhance the ADF’s warfighting capability and assure self-reliance in National Defence’.¹¹ Notably, the NDS also emphasises the concept of ‘National Defence’ as the ‘coordinated, whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach that harnesses all arms of national power to defend Australia and advance our interests’.¹²

Such direction is applicable to scenarios beyond what would necessitate a national mobilisation. However, during a national mobilisation, government and public commitment to a holistic approach to the defence of Australia and its interests becomes immediately amplified. Recognising the need for integrated effort is not new: national defence has never occurred in the isolated siloes of defence. But this aspect has been absent in public commentary on national security issues for decades. As the term ‘national mobilisation’ suggests, it is a whole-of-nation effort—one that depends on an all-encompassing approach to national defence, inclusive of the population base.

In this way, the planning authority rests with those tasked and resourced to manage strategic risks—those within government. However, as stated from the outset, there remains a responsibility to engage with mobilisation planning among the public at large.

The Public at Large

As Ball incisively points out, public discourse on mobilisation is equally important as defence and government planning on the matter.¹³ However, the prospect of further deterioration in Australia’s strategic environment has instigated a debate on mobilisation that, while necessary, is often unduly sensationalist. Conversations in the public domain often conclude in arguments about conscription,¹⁴ ‘frightening’¹⁵ and exaggerated threat assessments and urgent calls to mobilise elements of Australian society now (like our economy¹⁶). These highly sensitive and culturally nuanced topics, particularly mobilisation in extremis, demand delicate attention and strong academic rigour to ensure that assessments are logic based and that decisions concerning mobilisation are commensurate to the risk.

Such an approach is even more critical when discussing the impacts of mobilisation on Army. More than any other arm of the ADF, Army will be the benefactor (or inevitable recipient) of any rapid capability expansion that depends predominantly on humans, as well as on the equipment and support systems required to keep them safe. Herein lies the origin of this themed edition of the *Australian Army Journal* (AAJ). It represents Army’s contribution to an ever-growing body of literature that is so often about land forces but not from land forces.

AAJ 03-24—Army’s Contribution to Accelerated Preparedness

It is within this context that we launch this series of papers on mobilisation as Army’s third and final edition of the AAJ for 2024. A focus on mobilisation research represents both respect for our past as a military organisation and a hedge against possible scenarios in our future that are consistent with this history.

Setting the historic context for mobilisation, Jordan Beavis, Richard Dunley and Dayton McCarthy draw on Australian experiences prior to and during the Second World War. Beavis exposes a unique aspect of Australia’s approach to mobilisation during the Second World War. Specifically, he provides a detailed historical analysis of the mechanisms Army used and the approach it took to planning for the dispatch of a division overseas for war, ahead of the critical 1939 declaration.

Dunley similarly provides important insights on the niche (but no less critical) topic of the mobilisation of civilian capability during wartime, a theme which remains particularly relevant to the DSR-directed littoral-focused land force. His analysis of ‘ships taken up from trade’ highlights the enduring dependence on maritime transport requirements during wartime of both the economy (for shipping goods) and the military (for moving capability to and from theatre) and the inherent trade-offs made in balancing these demands.

Looking domestically at Army’s preparatory actions for home defence ahead of the Second World War, Dayton McCarthy discusses the foundations laid to expand the militia when it was fully mobilised from December 1941. Dayton’s insightful paper exposes the costs of concurrency Army experienced in attempting to revive a part-time force while raising, training and sustaining the expeditionary/deployed force. These lessons echo key risks to the current Army, and a tension the organisation faces in light of the DSR’s direction for Army Reserve brigades to ‘provide an expansion base and follow-on forces’ that (reading between the lines) is in support of deployed capabilities that are ‘able to meet the most demanding land challenges in our region’.¹⁷

Tom Richardson examines events that are closer in time, are often more emotionally fuelled, and have greater resonance within Australia’s cultural subconscious when remembering times of war. Richardson examines

the lessons that Army can draw from the National Service Scheme of the 1960s and 1970s, highlighting it as a mechanism for rapid force expansion but one that does not compensate for shortages in effective officers and experienced regular personnel. These shortages ultimately influence the training capacity of the Army organisation to transition civilians through basic individual and collective training cycles.

In discussing these issues further, Sean Parkes, Hannah Woodford-Smith and John Pearse present a current overview of Army scalability and the Army training enterprise. The authors do so with a view to traditional force expansion methods and the current operating environment. Importantly, they present possible solutions to traditional problems of soldier throughput, including leveraging technology and a dispersed approach to training.

Cassandra Steer similarly considers questions of mobilising capability in Defence, specifically regarding space-related assets. She suggests that Army should be cognisant of the risks associated with dependency on commercial assets, including the potential for poor-quality data and competition for a skilled space workforce. Steer calls for greater sovereign capability and engagement with research and industry sectors. However, many of these recommendations reflect broader changes in the strategic and political environment.

Two papers address this wider strategic context and introduce opportunities to enhance current policy settings to better enable mobilisation. In addressing Australia's historic defence policy environment and mapping it against current arrangements, Stephan Frühling, Graeme Dunk and Richard Brabin-Smith remind readers of a key recommendation in the Defence Efficiency Report of 1997: 'The Defence Organisation should be organised for war and adapted for peace'.¹⁸ The authors focus on planning considerations for Reserve forces, the role of civilian support, and the necessity for mobilisation systems to be exercised realistically.

Concluding the article contributions within this AAJ, David Kilcullen offers a framework for national resilience, comparing the experiences of Australia's allies and partners in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War and conflict in the Middle East. In particular, he finds that Australian national resilience and mobilisation efforts in this environment will require a more extensive, robust, well-resourced and whole-of-government approach. Realising this approach will demand continuing this conversation on mobilisation with a multidisciplinary and qualified audience.

As Tony Duus points out in the foreword, providing a platform to continue these discussions is one of the core values of a themed AAJ. It brings together the combination of experienced uniformed, academic and industry voices on a specific (and in this case incredibly complex and emotive) topic. Notably, however, none of the contributors have lived through a national mobilisation and very few have tangibly experienced the effects of force expansion on the Army. It is one of the inescapable facts in dealing with mobilisation practically and conceptually—it is assumptions-based and grounded in lessons learned by others.

In the penultimate contribution to AAJ 03-24, Shane Gabriel recounts his experiences in re-raising the 7th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment in December 2006. This thought-provoking and critical insight into a period of force expansion under the Enhanced Land Force Program is essential reading for anyone involved with, or interested in, growing an all-volunteer land force.

Finally, a transcript of the speech given by David Caligari and Zach Lambert to The Cove in October 2022 is provided to highlight the various factors that affect mobilisation. Themes covered include:

- the four stages of mobilisation
- the phases of unit readiness
- fundamental inputs to capability across the four stages of mobilisation.

The AAJ concludes with a series of book reviews on key topics that underpin the Army profession, broadening our collective knowledge base and understanding of our core business.

The contributions to this edition are only the start of the conversation. They are broad in nature, generally historically focused, and draw on findings from the experiences of our allies and partners. It is with this in mind that we call for further academic debate that is oriented away from emotive problematisation of mobilisation towards interdisciplinary research tailored to the Australian land force of the future. It is our whole-of-nation responsibility to constructively contribute to this debate and further the efforts of those tasked with defence planning. In the words of Desmond Ball, doing research or planning on issues such as mobilisation allow us to ‘assess and take the necessary insurance’ that ‘could make such an enormous difference’ should we ever be faced with a threat so extreme as to necessitate its realisation.¹⁹

About the Author

Hannah Woodford-Smith is the Director of Woodford Group and delivers to Army focused research related to future warfare. She specialises in and leads Army's research and planning on issues of land force mobilisation, utilising her background in open-source intelligence, strategy, industry and academia. Hannah has provided support to deployed operations, Army Headquarters and other government organisations. She has previously published on cybersecurity and international relations, and is an Adjunct Associate Lecturer at the University of New South Wales.

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- 18 Defence Efficiency Review, *Future Directions for the Management of Australia's Defence: Report of the Defence Efficiency Review* (Canberra: Department of Defence, 1997), p. E-2.
- 19 Ball, *Problems of Mobilisation in Defence of Australia*, p. 7.

Without It We're STUFT: Australian Military Logistics and Ships Taken up from Trade

Richard Dunley

On 18 August 1914, two weeks to the day after the outbreak of World War One, troops from the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) embarked on HMAS *Berrima* for operations against the German colonies in New Guinea. Like the troops, the ship had been rapidly converted from civilian use. *Berrima* was a P&O liner which had been requisitioned by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and taken in hand by the dockyard at Cockatoo Island on 12 August. Five days later she was commissioned as a combined armed merchant cruiser and troop transport to support missions in the Pacific. *Berrima* would transport the troops of the AN&MEF to New Britain in one of the first overseas deployments of Australian Commonwealth soldiers.¹ Eighty-five years later, in May 1999, the RAN chartered a fast catamaran ferry from the Australian firm INCAT in order to supplement the service's limited sea lift capability. She was commissioned as HMAS *Jervis Bay* the following month and played a critical role in supporting Australian Defence Force (ADF) operations in East Timor as part of the Interfet mission.² At every stage in between these two events, chartered or requisitioned civilian vessels have continually played a critical role in transporting Australian forces to where they have needed to go and ensuring they can fulfil their missions, by providing logistical support, both overseas and within Australia. Ships taken up from trade (STUFT) have been a vital, if rarely recognised, factor

in facilitating Australian military operations throughout the 20th century and will remain so in the 21st. This article briefly explores the history of civilian vessels supporting Australian military operations, considering how this process was managed and where the challenges lay. It will go on to look at how, by the mid-20th century, the Australian Government had in place significant measures to ensure that this critical input to capability would be there when required. This past experience will then provide the context to consider the difficulties facing the Department of Defence and the Australian Government in rebuilding this vital resource.

First World War

Prior to the First World War there was very limited preparation for the task of transporting Australian troops overseas. The Defence Act of 1903 gave the military the power to requisition vessels when required, but no further processes had been put in place.³ The absence of any detailed planning framework had obvious drawbacks. On 3 August 1914, the Commonwealth Government offered the British an expeditionary force of 20,000 men. It was not until two days later that Commander Walter Thring, Naval Assistant to the First Naval Member of the Naval Board, called the military authorities to ask if they needed the RAN to 'prepare a scheme for taking up transports'.⁴ To meet the challenge, a committee was formed, made up of naval and military personnel, supplemented by expertise in the form of the Commonwealth Naval Ship Constructor and representation from the shipping industry. Through the war much of the work was carried out by Commander AC Dunn, who served as Transport Officer in Sydney.

The requirement to rapidly dispatch the first contingent of the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) for service overseas involved a pressing need for shipping. Over the course of the latter part of August and early September 1914, the committee examined as many ships calling at Australian ports as possible, and identified 28 vessels which were immediately taken up. At this stage they could count on the 'cordial co-operation' of the shipowners and their representatives in Australia.⁵ Many of these vessels were on the migrant routes, but they still needed significant modification to make them suitable for transporting troops:

In nearly every vessel the whole of the passenger accommodation had to be gutted, and often the electric wiring and water-supply systems had to be dislocated and renewed; further, the galley and lavatory accommodation needed much enlargement.⁶

The vessels taken up to transport horses required even greater modification. Given the limited facilities in Australia at the time, and the complete absence of prior preparation, the conversion of vessels was undertaken with extraordinary speed. By 27 September 1914, all of the conversions were complete, and 21,529 men and 7,822 horses were embarked on a fleet totalling 237,885 tons. The conversion process was further enhanced as the war progressed, and by the middle of 1915 it was possible to fully equip an 11,000 ton steamer to carry 1,500 troops inside 60 hours.⁷ Due to the duration of a round trip to Europe and back, it was necessary to continue the process of taking up and converting further vessels in order to transport the newly raised contingents of the AIF to the various fronts. Overall, the Transport Branch of the Navy Department took up 74 transport vessels between 1914 and early 1917, and these shipped 337,000 men and 27,000 horses from Australia to the European and Middle Eastern theatres.⁸

A useful supplement to the British and Australian vessels requisitioned by the Commonwealth Government came in the form of 28 German and Austrian vessels that were interned in Australian ports on the outbreak of war. Although these should have come under the technical control of the Admiralty in London, they were handed over to the Commonwealth Government for use as part of the Australian war effort. The majority of these vessels were ill suited to troop transport duties and were instead used to supplement commercial shipping in the region. However, six of these vessels, including the SS *Pfalz* (the ship on the receiving end of the first shots fired by the British Empire in the war) were used for trooping. This additional pool of shipping was comparatively small but was nevertheless very significant given the scarcity of Australian flagged and controlled tonnage, a point that would become more notable as the war progressed.⁹

By the end of 1915, it had become clear that the conflict would be won by the side that could mobilise and deploy the greater resources. Accordingly, shipping was recognised as one of the most, if not the most, critical aspects of the Allied war effort. As a result, the British Government took a series of steps to increase their control over shipping and to focus it on strategically critical routes. Australia, like most of the rest of the world, relied very heavily on British shipping, and therefore these measures had profound effects on the Australian economy.¹⁰ Most of that impact fell on

trade, and therefore lies outside the scope of this article. Nevertheless, these pressures did affect the ability of the Australian Government to use shipping for military purposes. From the outset of the war, ships that were transporting Australian forces to Europe were frequently then taken over by the Admiralty in London for what they saw as more pressing imperial needs. As a report from the Navy Board Transport Branch noted:

When reinforcements are urgently required or a new expedition is launched at short notice, all considerations beyond the military necessities of the moment must be disregarded, and any and all ships within reach have to be requisitioned. At such times the Commonwealth transport service suffers, unexpected delays result, and prearranged plans are seriously disorganised.¹¹

This was particularly galling as these ships had been requisitioned by the Australian Government and converted at some expense to adapt them for trooping duties. Such actions by the Admiralty in London also forced the Navy Board to take up new vessels in Australian waters, which tended to further deplete the merchant fleet in the region. To try to ease these challenges Herbert Larkin, formerly of the Australasian United Steam Navigation Company, was attached to the High Commissioner's Office in London as the Commonwealth Shipping Representative. Larkin fought the good fight, but his success was limited. Ultimately, it was difficult to argue against claims by the War Office or Admiralty in London of the essential military necessity of utilising specific vessels. Equally significant was the fact that the vast majority of the vessels taken up by the Australian Government were in fact British as opposed to Australian. This meant that the Commonwealth had very little leverage in its disputes with London, something that would be a recurring theme.¹²

The Transport Branch was further challenged by the increasing centrality of shipping to the war effort, and the resultant efforts by belligerent governments to control it. While shipowners were generally very obliging at the beginning of the war, this did not last. As the supply of shipping tightened and freight rates rocketed, shipowners increasingly complained about their vessels being taken up for war service, often at now uncompetitive rates.¹³ Furthermore, efforts by the Australian Government to use military transports to ship general freight (where they had capacity) were seen as undercutting their legitimate business. British shipowners therefore complained to the Admiralty, the Board of

Trade and eventually the British Prime Minister, arguing that Australian requisition of British ships was illegal. A compromise was eventually reached whereby the shipowners would be able to load paying freight in certain circumstances on requisitioned vessels; however, before this could be properly implemented it was overtaken by events.¹⁴

Following the German declaration of unrestricted submarine warfare in February 1917, the British Government decided to requisition all vessels operating between Britain and Australia. Initially this decision excluded those ships already taken up by the Australian Government, but from June the decision was extended to include such vessels, with the process of transfer being completed by the beginning of 1918. This development had a profound effect on the management of Australian military transportation. The key role of the Transport Branch shifted from directing the take-up and conversion of vessels in Australia to being a lobbyist in London 'to secure from the Ministry of Shipping accommodation both for reinforcements proceeding from the Commonwealth and for invalids and wounded men who must be returned to the Commonwealth'.¹⁵ This process ran relatively smoothly, and in some respects removed some of the inconsistencies produced by the Australian requisitioning of British shipping. It nevertheless highlighted the degree to which Australia was absolutely reliant upon British shipping, and the challenges of securing necessary tonnage for one's priorities, even from one's closest allies.

Second World War

The importance of shipping to the British Empire was well understood prior to the First World War, but governments took relatively few active measures to support it. The experience of conflict taught governments that they could not simply rely upon private enterprise to provide the facilities necessary to ensure national security. This challenge, however, was generally viewed through an imperial, as opposed to a purely Australian, lens. Throughout the interwar period, organisations such as the Imperial Shipping Committee (where Australia was represented by the High Commissioner) met to discuss both the economic and security challenges associated with shipping, and potential government action. As the British Government told the 1937 Imperial Conference, 'the importance of maintaining in peace time a Mercantile Marine which will be adequate to war-time needs requires no argument'.¹⁶

On the outbreak of World War II, the Australian Government raised the 2nd AIF for potential service overseas. In November 1939, following some debate, it was decided to send the first contingents to the Middle East. In many respects the requirements for military transport in the early years of the Second World War mirrored those in the First World War, being primarily focused on the oceanic transportation of troops. The arrangements for such transportation clearly drew directly from First World War experience, with little evidence of the extemporised solutions of 1914. Instead the entire process was far more centralised, with both British and Australian organisations working within the framework set out in the Regulations for His Majesty's Sea Transport Service.¹⁷ The plans for the transport of Australian troops were made by the Director of Sea Transport in London, who officially requisitioned the ships and allocated them to the task. A number of the ships were in ports in Australia or the wider region, and so the Transport Committee operating under the Navy Board in Melbourne undertook the task of actually taking some of the vessels up and managing their conversion. Initially:

[the] fitting out was done in such a manner as to cause the least possible damage to, and dismantling of, the ships' fittings. There was virtually no 'gutting' as there was in 1914–18.

This situation would change with the exigencies of war, but it ensured that the first Australian troops sent overseas went in style.¹⁸

While the provision of shipping for military transport ran relatively smoothly in the opening years of the war, problems rapidly developed elsewhere as London began to pull tonnage away from Australian trade in response to an overall shipping shortage. The Australian Government pressed the British to get more ships, highlighting how 'on [the] outbreak of war, Australia was entirely dependent upon British and foreign shipping for overseas trade, principally [the] former'.¹⁹ The withdrawal of this tonnage had a significant effect on the Australian economy because its key export commodities were left piling up on the dockside for a lack of ships. However, as Prime Minister Robert Menzies discovered when he visited London in April 1941, the trouble was that there was little scope for a change of policy given the limited tonnage available and the critical nature of other demands, including military logistics and food supply to the UK.²⁰

From the beginning of 1942, shipping worries focused on Australian exports were replaced by rather more pressing concerns. Specifically, the rapid Japanese advance into the Pacific and South-East Asia threatened all of Australia's critical lifelines, while the entry of the United States into the war served to further restrict the availability of shipping. This development primarily impacted trade (which in such times is better framed as maritime supply) rather than military transport; however, these issues obviously intersect. Overall tonnage shortages, most notably the shortage of tankers, had major implications for the supplies available for military operations. Limitations on shipping also helped to shape the scale and timeframe of the redeployment of Australian forces from the Middle East.

The shift of focus of the conflict into Australia's near region had other, even more profound, implications for the use of shipping as military transport. A key factor in this was the development of Australia as a base of operations, not merely for Australian forces but also for those of its American allies. From early 1942, it became apparent that northern Australia would be a key launch pad for American forces, but as the US Army Logistics Official History noted, there was very little there in terms of facilities and support:

*Darwin was an isolated outpost in Australia's back country, its facilities primitive ... Practically all the supplies, equipment, and construction material, together with the troops required to set up and defend the base, would have to be brought in by water.*²¹

The same story was true throughout northern Australia, with the joint US and Australian military build-up in the region being very heavily reliant on coastal shipping to provide all of the key logistical support. The importance of coastal shipping was further reinforced by the limitations of port facilities in the South West Pacific theatre. Throughout much of the initial period it was only the major Australian cities, especially Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, that had sufficient infrastructure to support large quantities of ocean-going shipping. Smaller vessels were therefore essential to move supplies further north. The situation did improve as facilities were developed in Townsville, and later in New Guinea itself at places like Oro Bay, but this took time.²²

The shortage of smaller vessels capable of supporting operations in northern Australia and New Guinea rapidly developed as a critical bottleneck holding back the Allied shift to the offensive. As General Douglas MacArthur told the leading Australian official in charge of shipping in April 1942, '[W]e wish to impress upon you that no supply or tactical operation can be executed or even planned unless the vessels of the descriptions made are available to us'.²³ MacArthur repeatedly pressed his superiors in Washington for more ships, but he was bluntly told 'to make all possible use of Australian shipping'.²⁴ In a period when the shortage of shipping was the critical factor inhibiting Allied operations across the globe, planners were invariably engaged in a task of 'robbing Peter to pay Paul'.²⁵ Given this environment it is hardly surprising that Australia, as the junior alliance partner and largely locked out of the discussions over the global allocation of tonnage, struggled to make its voice heard.

Through 1942–43 there was an ongoing battle for control for coastal tonnage in Australian waters among a variety of organisations. Issues first developed in respect of the control of 21 Dutch vessels that had fled to Australia following the fall of the Dutch East Indies. The Ministry of War Transport in London, the War Shipping Authority in Washington and the Shipping Control Board in Australia all sought to claim this prize, with the debate quickly descending into a stoush by telegram. General MacArthur, who insisted that these vessels were essential to his operations, was furious at the back and forth, but did eventually secure control of the ships.²⁶ In response to American demands, the Australian Government had handed over a further 23 coastal vessels for service with the US military. This was on top of 61 vessels that had been requisitioned by the RAN, both to support Australian military operations and for a diverse range of more directly naval purposes.²⁷ These demands had severely impacted the tonnage available for shipping requirements that were not purely military in nature. Australia's geography, and the paucity of land transport, ensured that coastal shipping was an essential part of the economy, both to support civilian life and to pursue the war effort. In the middle of 1942 MacArthur pressed again, asking for an additional 42 small Australian vessels. The Australian Shipping Control Board pushed back, using its channels to Washington and London to highlight the plight of the wider Australian economy.

In view of the general inadequacy of our shipping tonnage it is not possible for us to provide all the ships stated to be necessary for military purposes. In fact, unless we receive substantial additions to our coastal fleet from overseas sources the present desperate situation will deteriorate to such an extent as to most seriously jeopardise our whole war effort.²⁸

These rebuttals did not stop the transfer of the vessels to the Americans, following a direct appeal from MacArthur to the Prime Minister, John Curtin. The board did, however, secure some concessions in terms of how the Australians could use ocean-going tonnage—particularly British—when in Australian waters.²⁹ The impact of the military shipping requirements on the wider economy was severe. By the end of January 1943, only 114 vessels, with a gross tonnage of 194,706, were left for civilian coastal cargoes, compared with a pre-war level of 231 ships totalling 434,327 tons. This deficit caused real problems, especially for the iron and steel industry and the railways, both of which were reliant on shipping for supplies of bulk goods like coal.³⁰

The situation did slowly improve through 1943 as a range of new shipping construction projects and developments in facilities eased the pressure slightly. The growing number of American merchant vessels eased the demand for coastal tonnage, while improvements in port facilities enabled ocean-going tonnage to bring supplies much closer to the front in New Guinea. Eventually the tidal wave of American production of amphibious craft would obviate the need for requisitioned vessels, but in the shorter term new construction of both landing craft and other smaller vessels in Australia helped bridge the gap. These vessels were supplied to both Australian forces and the Americans through a reverse lend-lease arrangement.³¹ Improved organisation also helped. Prior to the extension of the war to the Pacific the Australian Government saw little need to exert direct control over shipping, as overseas shipping was controlled by London, and the coastal trade had been little impacted by the conflict. The bureaucratic machinery developed in the interwar period was thus never set in train.³² This step was taken following the entry of Japan into the war, but the arrival of the conflict on Australia's doorstep and the resultant interest of its allies in local shipping ensured that there remained a multiplicity of organisations with competing interests and claims. In July 1942, Curtin told a conference in Canberra:

The Government wishes to have one person or authority to see that all shipping available to Australia and the allied nations operating in Australian waters is being put to the best and fullest use.

It took some time for this desire to be achieved, with an Australian Department of Supply and Shipping being established in October with a Director of Shipping, Sir Thomas Gordon. By April 1943, a British-American-Australian Shipping Committee had been established with representation from the British Ministry of War Transport, the American War Shipping Administration, the Australian Shipping Control Board, the United States and Australian armies, the RAN and the Royal Australian Air Force. The existence of this committee served to reduce, although not eliminate, the tensions over shipping in Australia and greatly enhanced coordination. It was no magic bullet, but when combined with the additional available tonnage it slowly relieved the pressure on both military logistics and the civilian economy.³³

The Australian Army was just as reliant on vessels taken up from civilian use for its water-borne logistics as were its American allies. As the forces of the 2nd AIF returned from the Middle East it became evident that they would need a wide range of small vessels to operate effectively in northern Australia and New Guinea. The problem from the Army's perspective was that, in the words of a senior officer involved, 'the Navy', who were responsible for the acquisition and crewing of all vessels, 'were quite incompetent in their efforts'. It was eventually agreed between the two services that 'the Army should provide and operate small craft up to 300 tons deadweight'.³⁴ The next problem came in the form of procuring such craft. When the Army began a survey of the small craft available in Australia, it quickly came to realise that the Navy had requisitioned many of the most suitable vessels on the outbreak of war, and the US Army had acquired many of the rest earlier in 1942. The result was that the Army ended up requisitioning a diverse range of vessels—from ferries to yachts, to schooners and fishing trawlers. These vessels performed an equally diverse range of roles, from the transport of supplies to the direct support of amphibious operations, and even as floating workshops. All were operated by the Australian Water Transport Groups of the Royal Australian Engineers. By the end of April 1943, the Army was operating 348 small craft, almost all of which had been taken up from civilian use. This extraordinary mobilisation was vital in helping Australian forces to

stabilise the situation in New Guinea and begin to shift to the offensive. For example, the maritime logistics during the Battle of Milne Bay were provided by an ad hoc unit with 36 small craft including 19 luggers requisitioned from Thursday Island.³⁵ The diverse nature of the force posed its own challenges, most notably in terms of maintenance. No two vessels were the same, and keeping them serviceable and providing spares proved a perennial challenge, but one the engineers generally managed to overcome.³⁶

From the autumn of 1943, supplies of new purpose-built small craft began to come on stream. These were ordered from a wide range of Australian firms, from traditional shipyards through to the Ford and Holden car factories. Initially these vessels augmented the requisitioned civilian craft, but throughout 1944, as the trickle turned into a flood, the Army began to return some of its eclectic early fleet to civilian use. We do not have any data on the specific contribution of requisitioned vessels, but the contribution of all Army small watercraft to the war effort in the South West Pacific was remarkable. Over the period between January 1942 and June 1945 they carried over one million tons of cargo and nearly 1.5 million men in 141,319 voyages covering three million kilometres.³⁷ Despite this remarkable record, the best-known ships taken up from trade that supported the campaigns in the South West Pacific were operated not by the Army but by the RAN. The liners *Manoora*, *Kanimbla* and *Westralia* were initially taken up by the RAN (and Royal Navy) as armed merchant cruisers. By 1942 this role had largely become redundant, and the decision was taken to convert them into amphibious assault ships. All three were heavily modified and recommissioned as Landing Ships Infantry.³⁸ In this guise they played a critical role in supporting Australian Army amphibious operations in New Guinea, Borneo and the Philippines through to 1945.

Post War

The postwar years saw a continuation and expansion of the trends that had, by this stage, been evident for some time. Shipping was seen as a critical aspect of national security, something that encompassed both the requirement for supply from overseas and the need for transport as a facilitator of military operations. This in turn meant that there was an almost universal acceptance that shipping was a resource which

governments needed to foster in peacetime and be prepared to control in wartime. As was set out in documents to accompany discussion of a North Atlantic Treaty Organisation-led Defence Shipping Authority:

*The coming of total war has required (i) the close integration of all demands for shipping, (i.e. civil and military) to ensure economic use, and (ii) the establishment of a central agency, which is itself not a bidder for shipping to co-ordinate impartially demands, priorities and allocation.*³⁹

Throughout the 1950s, Australian Government transport policy was consistently shaped with defence requirements in mind. In October 1953 the Department of Shipping and Transport requested information on potential defence requirements so as to help shape their policy. The Defence Committee responded that, due to the generally benign strategic situation, transport must 'be considered from the point of view of equipping this country as a main support area rather than for the local defence of the Australian continent'. The committee went on, however, to observe that in regard to sea transport:

*there is an additional factor in that many of the vessels available in peace are physically requisitioned for a large range of warlike purposes. It is therefore important for the defence aspect that sea transport should be maintained in a healthy condition.*⁴⁰

A consistent theme emerged throughout defence engagement with government departments involved in transport policy:

*[T]here will be a requirement for sea and air transport to be available on the outbreak of war for the movement and maintenance of our forces overseas. It is important therefore that sea and air transport suitable for this purpose should be fostered and maintained in peace.*⁴¹

This requirement went beyond the ships themselves, and the Defence Committee emphasised that 'it is essential, for defence requirements, for Australia to possess a merchant shipbuilding industry on an adequate and efficient basis'. The purpose of such industry was not just to support naval requirements but also to build and maintain the ships necessary 'for the carriage of troops and essential goods in time of war'.⁴²

The post-war period was characterised by an acknowledgement from both the Department of Defence and the wider government that Australia was, and would likely remain, reliant on foreign owned and flagged shipping, at this stage still overwhelmingly British. However, there was an expectation that Australia would need to be able to meet its military transport requirements from its own coastal fleet. In April 1956 the Department of Defence set out its likely shipping requirements in the event of a crisis in order to inform the Department of Shipping and Transport 'in its planning for the Australian Coastal Fleet'. These defence plans set out the forward deployment of a large force, including the dispatch of over 128,000 men to Malaya, as well as Air Force and Navy personnel and equipment to Darwin, Manus Island and Nauru. The shipping requirements for stores alone for Malaya in the first six months amounted to nearly 1.5 million tons. Beyond this, defence planners estimated that they would need over 3.6 million tons of interstate shipping capacity in Australia in the first six months of a major war. Much of this domestic requirement may have replicated or replaced peacetime shipping of goods (for example, iron ore), but it gives an indication of the scale of defence requirements for civilian shipping.⁴³

These preparations for a future conflict were never tested in full. Australia did, however, take up two civilian vessels, MV *Jeparit* and MV *Boonaroo* to support operations in Vietnam. Although far less famous than HMAS *Sydney* in its role as the 'Vung Tau ferry', these two merchant ships taken up from the Australian National Line (ANL) played an important role in supplying the Australian forces in Vietnam. *Jeparit* completed 43 trips to Vietnam carrying a range of equipment, including the Centurion tanks that were deployed to the country. The smaller *Boonaroo* made the trip twice. Both vessels were initially chartered, but for short periods of time were taken over and commissioned into the RAN to overcome issues with securing crews due to opposition to the war from the Seamen's Union. Despite these issues, the wider logistics support for the war proved very effective and was a notable development. As historian Jeff Grey remarked:

*it demonstrated, for the first time, that Australia was capable of transporting, maintaining and reinforcing a sizeable ground and expeditionary force at a distance and for a considerable period of time, with and from its own resources. Australia had not done this before, and has not needed to do it since.*⁴⁴

Over the later Cold War period, the shift from a 'Forward Defence' to a 'Defence of Australia' doctrine—when combined with the absence of any significant threat—ensured that the focus on civilian transport as a facilitator of military operations faded. While experience from the two world wars had led to a widely held understanding that government needed to take active measures to ensure that civilian transport would be available for defence purposes in times of crisis, this sentiment faded. The free market reforms of the 1970s and 1980s saw widespread deregulation and privatisation in order to rationalise industry and promote growth. The shipping industry was no exception to this development, with deregulation and the winding-down and eventual sale of ANL, the government-owned shipping line.⁴⁵ There were clearly some concerns about this shift. In 1984, an inter-departmental working group was established to explore the coordination of maritime resources in crises or conflict.⁴⁶ The origin of this committee is unclear, but it possibly stemmed in part from the attention given to this topic following the Falklands War. It does not appear, however, that anything specific came from this renewed attention.⁴⁷ The free-market reforms instigated some 50 years ago have undoubtedly made much of the modern Australian economy more efficient. Nevertheless, a strong argument can be made that this efficiency has come at the expense of resilience in multiple ways, one of these being secure access to transport in time of need. For the past 30 years at least, there has been an expectation that shipping will 'simply be there' when needed. The experience of the past suggests that the continuing confidence in such assumptions is unwarranted.

Continuing Importance

Prior to the 2022 federal election, the Labor leader Anthony Albanese committed to establish a strategic fleet of Australian ships to help ensure national security and economic sovereignty.⁴⁸ At the end of 2023, the report of the Strategic Fleet Taskforce was released, recommending that the Australian Government take substantive action to both establish a core fleet of 12 Australian owned and flagged vessels, and incentivise a wider regeneration of the industry. We are still waiting to see if the government will acknowledge the true extent of the problems created by Australia's near total reliance on foreign owned and flagged shipping and act on the taskforce's full recommendations.⁴⁹ While the significance of the taskforce's report has generally been viewed through the lens of

economic security, taskforce members were clearly deeply aware of the potential importance of Australian-controlled commercial shipping for defence purposes. They identified 'three prime strategic purposes of the fleet', one of which was 'to support the Defence Forces'. The taskforce also proposed, with specific reference to vehicle and freight ferries, that 'the Government consider whether Defence can ensure those ships can be supported even if not fully commercially self-sustaining'.⁵⁰

The importance of civilian shipping to Australia's national security has also been recognised within recent defence documents, with the establishment of a 'civil maritime strategic fleet' being specifically referenced in the government's response to the Defence Strategic Review (DSR).⁵¹ This capability has, however, largely been discussed in the context of the need to enhance economic and supply chain resilience, with comparatively little said about the role of civilian vessels in supporting military operations. Despite this, an examination of recent strategic statements, including the DSR and the National Defence Strategy, reveal two broad areas where vessels taken up from trade are likely to be essential in supporting operations by the Australian Army in the event of a major conflict in the Indo-Pacific.

The first area stems directly from the DSR directive that the Australian Army is to reimagine its role and be 'optimised for littoral operations in our northern land and maritime spaces'.⁵² In order to support littoral manoeuvre, there is to be a major expansion in Army watercraft through the acquisition of both medium and heavy landing craft. This growth in the ADF's amphibious capability is welcome, but in the event of major conflict it will be insufficient to support forces deployed at scale. In littoral operations, maritime logistics remain almost as important as they were during the Second World War. For reference, in 1999, 93 per cent of all of the equipment deployed from Australia to East Timor as part of Operation Stabilise went by sea.⁵³ The challenge of maritime logistics is not unique to the Australian Army. The US Marine Corps, whose Expeditionary Advanced Base Operations concept is remarkably similar to the Australian concept of littoral manoeuvre, is struggling with the same problem. In the event of crisis, both forces will have to rely heavily on a range of capabilities to meet the challenge, and requisitioned civilian craft is going to be one of them. Similar to the experience from 1942 onwards, Australian Army operations are likely to require large numbers of small craft taken up from

a range of civilian uses. In particular, these vessels are likely to be essential in resupply and sustainment tasks, leaving the specialist grey hull craft (whether operated by the Army or Navy) to focus on offensive operations and the frontline manoeuvre elements of littoral manoeuvre. Many of these civilian craft are likely to be significantly smaller than those that have been the focus of recent discussions instigated by the Strategic Fleet Taskforce Review and there is potential to draw on vessels employed in a wide range of Australian maritime industries. Work boats, resupply vessels and other craft supporting industries as diverse as hydrocarbons, aquaculture and offshore renewable energy could be exploited for this purpose.

Beyond Army's focus on littoral manoeuvre, a key theme within recent defence policy pronouncements has been the significance of northern Australia as a base of operations, not just for Australian forces but also for American ones. As the National Defence Strategy states, the ADF needs to shift its posture to 'deliver a logistically networked and resilient set of bases, predominantly across the north of Australia, to enhance force projection and improve Defence's ability to recover from an attack'.⁵⁴ Logistics have long been one of the key challenges of conducting operations in northern Australia. While transport and infrastructure connections have improved considerably since the Second World War, they remain thin and would be stretched to breaking point in the event that northern Australia were to become a major base for operations. Most significantly, maritime logistics offer unmatched flexibility and resilience. The sea cannot be targeted by enemy forces in the way that rail bridges or pipelines can, and large quantities of material can be moved by ship to remote locations that are unconnected to major land-based transportation networks. For this reason alone, maritime transport will remain a critical component of any effort to deploy, maintain and sustain large-scale forces in northern Australia. The shipping requirements to support this type of function are likely to involve larger vessels than those more directly focused on supporting littoral manoeuvre, but will still be well short of the capacity required to maintain Australia's economic and supply lifelines across the oceans. Exploiting the vessels employed on the (still) very significant Australian coastal shipping trade appears to be the most obvious way to fill this role, although any attempt to requisition vessels for military purposes will inevitably impact the wider economy. By far the greatest challenges, however, will come from the collapse of Australian owned and flagged coastal shipping, which means that the vast majority of cargoes shipped around the Australian coasts in peacetime are carried in vessels that will not be available to the Australian Government in wartime.⁵⁵

Contemporary requirements for civilian shipping to support military operations align closely with previous Australian experience, most notably during the Second World War. Thus, the examination of previous efforts to take up civilian craft is instructive, offering insights into the nature of the challenges, and potential solutions. The first point to take away from this historical context is that civilian shipping has always been a vital asset in significant conflicts and has rarely been sufficient to meet the demands of the defence forces. With all the modern focus on military assets, and requirements for new high-tech platforms, it is easy to forget the vital role played by mundane civilian technologies and equipment in facilitating military operations at all levels. The second point relates to the control of civilian shipping. One of the issues frequently raised in current debates around shipping and economic security has been the paucity of Australian owned and flagged tonnage. This situation is less novel than is often made out. Throughout the first half of the 20th century Australia relied very heavily on foreign owned and flagged shipping. This dependency caused major issues in wartime, especially in the First World War and early parts of the Second World War, when Britain pulled its shipping off the lengthy Australian trade routes. The major difference between then and now, however, is that in previous conflicts the countries controlling global shipping were Australia's allies. This did not mean that the leaders in Canberra and Melbourne did not frequently feel hard done by; they did. However, the nature of the alliance relationship ensured that Australia at least had a voice in the management of global shipping. Comparable influence is likely to be far more challenging to achieve in any modern conflict, as Australia's allies, including the United States, will themselves be scrambling to gain control over shipping for their own purposes. Nevertheless, past experience reinforces the critical importance of getting a seat at the table where control over global shipping is discussed; without this, Australia is likely to struggle to access sufficient shipping either for its essential supply or for military purposes.

The third point that arises from a survey of previous experience is the necessity of conversion. In the past, it was very rare for civilian ships to be fully equipped to undertake wartime work. Through both world wars, shipyards in Sydney and Melbourne undertook major conversions of civilian vessels ranging from huge liners to small ferries. Given the trend towards greater specialisation in shipping, military access to civilian shipyards is now likely to be more, not less, important. The capacity

of the Australian shipbuilding industry to carry out short-notice military work at scale is highly questionable, especially given the competing demands of naval construction, maintenance and repair work. This challenge serves to reinforce the importance of careful planning, including the identification of likely vessels to be requisitioned and assessment of necessary modifications well before the outbreak of war. Such planning was a commonplace practice in the first half of the 20th century but it appears to have been abandoned through the long years of peace.

The fourth key point stems largely from Australia's Second World War experience. Here, arguably the greatest challenge was managing the competing demands on limited resources. The demands made by American forces based in Australia served to compound existing tensions between the use of civilian shipping to support military operations and its use in the completion of other important work related to the war economy. In the 21st century, as in the 1940s, basing large numbers of American troops in Australia will place significant additional demands on Australian civilian logistics, including shipping. In the event of a national security crisis, it will be critical to manage these challenges in a way that does not undermine the wider war economy. In the Second World War it took over 18 months to form an effective Allied coordination body for shipping in Australian waters. It seems essential that such delays are not repeated in the future.

Finally, and perhaps most important of all, is the lesson that was slowly learned over the course of two world wars: if you want civilian shipping to be there to support the defence forces in war time, it is essential in peacetime to both support the industry and put in place systems which can be used in the event of conflict to control and manage it. Hard experience taught previous generations of policymakers that you could not simply rely on ships, structures and people being there when you needed them. There are signs of a renewed awareness of this reality, but there remains little indication of substantive action. If Defence intends to take up civilian shipping and to exploit civilian maritime logistics infrastructure in wartime, then it needs to drive a wider conversation across government about how such capability can be fostered in peacetime. These conversations are difficult, but one only has to look at the planning of the early Cold War period to see that those who had already experienced major conflict instinctively understood that ensuring national security was a far larger task than could be achieved by Defence alone.

About the Author

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Contemporary Plan 401 – Mobilisation Planning Requirements for the Land Domain Training System

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Introduction

Prior to the Second World War, significant planning for land force expansion and broader mobilisation was undertaken by both the Australian Government and the Army. The *Commonwealth War Book* provided whole-of-government guidance for actions required prior to and during the outbreak of a major conflict, including specific direction to Army. It stated, that the implementation of Army's plans prior to war are to begin with 'the mobilisation and expansion of the fixed machinery for administration and training'.¹ Army's own plans for expansion were consistent with this guidance. Its 'Overseas Plan 401' stated:

*the object of these orders is to ensure that there shall exist for use in time of emergency, a considered plan for the enlistment, concentration, equipping, training and despatch of an expeditionary force for service overseas.*²

Importantly, both documents emphasised the criticality of improving operational and command and control (C2) structures, and of remediating the long lead times that had previously characterised capability and infrastructure development efforts.

For Army, people are at the centre of everything. People form the basis of Army's contribution to the integrated force—the backbone of the land domain contribution. Army must maintain the necessary range of military skills, tactics, C2 and operational procedures to staff the integrated force, assuring combat proficiency, and to grow new capability during expansion. However, domain mastery takes time. Building and maintaining Army's profession of arms is a collective and enduring effort. Staffing an expanded training system is burdensome to the field force. Indeed, military and national mobilisation requires a broad view of training. Planning a training system for major conflict must consider the preparation of soldiers (the individual human capability contributed to war), the sustainment of units deployed on operations (as both replacements and reinforcements), and the care of personnel upon conclusion of duties.

This article takes a historical perspective on the Australian Army's mobilisation efforts in the past to highlight opportunities to adopt similar methods for the future force that are in line with national education and population constraints. It also assesses the shortcomings in guidance related to expansion of the training system to ensure we can adapt when, and if, required. To do so, the article first provides an overview of current training demands in the land domain. This is followed by an examination of historical approaches to mobilisation planning specific to the Land Domain Training System (LDTs), which highlights necessary considerations for implementing an expanded system. Next, the article reflects on hard-won lessons learned by Australia during several historical efforts to mobilise the force in response to impending crisis. The article concludes with a summary of recommendations for the future LDTs so that it can more effectively scale in response to Australia's increasingly uncertain strategic demands.

Operational Demand and the Issue of Time

The Defence Strategic Review (DSR) confirms the findings of the 2016 Defence White Paper that Australia no longer benefits from a 10-year strategic warning time for conflict. In response to this environment, the document includes an 'urgent call to action' for 'higher levels of military preparedness and accelerated capability development'.³ Specifically, the DSR directs Defence to undertake 'accelerated preparedness' across key interest areas including workforce, supply, infrastructure, distribution

and posture.⁴ Accelerated preparedness is conceived as all actions that enhance our warfighting capability and self-reliance in national defence.⁵ In this sense, accelerated preparedness extends beyond Army and Defence, representing a whole-of-nation effort. Within the scope of this article, however, the concept of accelerated preparedness is constrained to mechanisms and activities that tangibly increase Army's preparedness and therefore enhance the combat proficiency and survivability of land forces.

In considering this broader environment, government recognises that Defence planning must be aligned to a variety of strategic contexts across different time horizons. Three historically consistent scenarios that reflect possible future operational commitments for the ADF, and specifically the land force, are humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) tasks domestically and overseas; regional security/stability operations; and major conflict in the region.⁶ These commitments span the entire cooperation–competition–conflict spectrum, and represent various land force operational demands. However, if the requirement for a land power contribution is protracted, or if multiple operations are to be conducted concurrently, government would require a national defence capability that exceeds the capacity of the standing Army.

To differentiate between the types of operational demands, and their links to surge or force expansion, it is important to understand the various stages of mobilisation. Surge is the ability to mass a response to a short-notice requirement within current resources.⁷ Expansion, however, is an increase in defence capability by scale and/or scope by provision of additional resources, often through mobilisation.⁸ Extant Army doctrine outlines four phases of mobilisation, the first two of which align with surge, and the final two with expansion:

- Stage 1: Selective defence mobilisation
- Stage 2: Partial defence mobilisation
- Stage 3: Defence mobilisation
- Stage 4: National mobilisation.⁹

Stage 1 does not have a major impact on the current force or the LDTS. Army's standard preparedness levels enable responses for operations that are incorporated within Stage 1, like Operation Sumatra Assist¹⁰ and the military deployment to Papua New Guinea in response to

the landslide in Enga Province on 24 May 2024.¹¹ Stage 2 is similar to the initial stage in that it occurs within extant resourcing. However, Stage 2 entails the sustainment of operational commitments, which places stress on the ability of the LDTS to generate ready forces for supplementation, either through readying Reserve elements, rotating deployed units or reinforcing those on operations. An example is the changes made to Army during the Afghanistan and Iraq era under the auspices of the 'Enhanced Land Force'¹² and Plan Beersheba.¹³

Stages 3 and 4 require the continuous maintenance of the whole ADF on operations—with concurrent plans to reinforce the ADF—necessitating a significant expansion in defence capability such as through a call out of Reserves and/or conscription.¹⁴ An example of Stage 3 commitments was the Australian contribution to the Vietnam War. Rapid expansion of the LDTS was required to ready Reserve elements and staff for expanded operational commitments.¹⁵ Specifically for the Vietnam War, the Australian Government directed that Army plan to expand the land force by more than double—planning that was predicated on growth within the training establishment (in both workforce and infrastructure) to increase soldier throughput, and that required a shift in training continuums.¹⁶ Stage 4 is unique in that it represents a whole-of-nation response, where government coordinates a national effort to enable 'profound' increases in capability for the defence of Australia. The LDTS within both Stage 3 and Stage 4 functions in an entirely different manner due to the intensity of operational commitments, changes to risk tolerance of government, and fundamental shifts in the structure of Army's order of battle.¹⁷

In an environment characterised by strategic uncertainty, Army's challenge is not the act of mobilisation itself—that is a government-led activity. Rather, as demonstrated by the role of the LDTS at each stage of mobilisation, Army's challenge is its ability to prepare additional and resilient land capability for the integrated force in line with the operational demand. This includes remediating workforce challenges, addressing infrastructure constraints and resolving issues of supply. This challenge is more acute for an LDTS tasked with force expansion. Such stress on the LDTS, however, is ultimately fuelled by time constraints. If, for example, it was believed that Australia would face the prospect of major power conflict in 20 years (at a known point in time), government and Defence could steadily expand Army's workforce in line with available resources and funding.

However, due to the aforementioned reduction in strategic warning time and advances in weapons systems and technologies that reduce the benefits of geographic distance, the Australian Government is making decisions in real time about the capability and employment requirements necessary to achieve national defence (force application¹⁸). As the immediate focus is on remediating current identified capability gaps, these decisions are being made without widespread acknowledgement of the integral role that the force generation system plays in establishing and sustaining the ADF's operational demand in the longer term.¹⁹ This reality highlights two key considerations: 1) Army should be planning for some level of expansion in capability; and 2) the force generation system, including training, must become a central strategic planning consideration if Australia is to deliver future capability at the point of need, and at the time of need.

Army's Current Training Demands

The LDTS is an element of the force generation system that supports Army to deliver land capability to meet its evolving operational needs. The LDTS enables land force contributions to the integrated force by delivering trained personnel able to deploy on operations. In achieving this, the system is designed to meet fluctuating strategic demands and operational objectives. The Deputy G7²⁰ Army, within Headquarters Forces Command,²¹ broadly defines the LDTS as the strategy-led, integrated by design, scalable, sustainable, agile and threat-centric force generation system designed to address all of Army's education, training and doctrinal requirements. The LDTS enables both individual and collective training, in order to ensure that each person and team is capable of delivering land power, as (and as part of) the integrated force. The LDTS's role in enabling Army to scale is critical to notions of mobilisation and expansion. Scalability is the ability to deliver acceptable performance as demand grows.²² In this regard, the LDTS acts as the mediating factor in Army scalability as it influences the quality of the land force's combat power, as well as the actual delivery of capability (people) to the integrated force. Put simply, the LDTS determines soldier throughput and quality of skill. If additional soldiers are required to meet increased operational demands, resulting in force expansion, the LDTS will ultimately determine how far Army can grow.

In addition to the LDTS, other critical factors also affect Army's capacity for force generation. Traditional workforce constraints such as the availability of qualified/trained personnel, time and infrastructure impede soldier throughput within the LDTS.²³ Further, changes to Australia's strategic environment are challenging traditional notions of how training in the land domain should be conducted. For example, rapid changes in capability (such as the introduction of a littoral manoeuvre capability, evolving exercise demands based on changes to force generation cycles, and the organisation's dispersed geographic disposition) constrain Army's capacity to expand training efforts in a manner that assures quality and quantity in throughput.²⁴ Further information regarding these specific constraints is discussed below in the review of Australia's history of mobilisation and expansion.

Contemporary operational requirements also demand higher standards of professional military education and technical expertise at the individual and collective level. Innovative and adaptive thinking, leadership, and the ability to effectively operate in teams, are skills that are built over time and are central to Army's unique contribution to the integrated force and the achievement of its capability edge.²⁵ Further, land domain capabilities are increasingly complex and depend on a range of networked technologies that require specialist expertise. Growing this workforce requires long lead times and highly capable trainers with their own depth of experience.²⁶ Shifts to minimum viable capabilities, as directed in the DSR,²⁷ must be approached cautiously for the maintenance of skills requirements of specific trades. Similarly, it is also important to consider the relevance of ongoing operational demands combined with the time required to build deep domain and defence mastery—a point that is exacerbated in leadership structures of both officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs). It is therefore necessary to look to history for explanations of Army's current training system and elucidate the possible demands of the future force, including possible expansion.

Lessons for Land Domain Training During National Mobilisation

It is a well-known idiom, especially in the context of strategic learnings, that exact events may not be repeated, but history does rhyme. A lesser known forewarning from George Santayana is perhaps even more appropriate in the context of mobilisation and training land forces: ‘those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it’.²⁸ The current LDTS represents the culmination of lessons learned since before Federation, with Australia’s military personnel first committed to conflict (in Sudan), followed by expansion of its land forces through a universal training scheme soon after.²⁹ Indeed, over the years, Australia has earned a high reputation for its land force training, successfully building international partnerships (particularly in the immediate region) and establishing the capability credentials of the Australian soldier.³⁰ The Australian Government’s review of Army in 2004 found that ‘the single most impressive aspect of the Army has been the level and depth of training we have seen amongst its members’ due to the ‘training standards and professionalism of the Army’s soldiers and officers’.³¹ The current LDTS has its genesis in hard-won lessons derived from critical junctures in Army’s evolution and Australia’s cultural military history, most notably related to the First and Second World Wars. This section outlines the strategic-level lessons learned from Army’s experience in planning to expand the training system and decisions made in execution, specifically for the Second World War, which remains Australia’s most recent experience of national mobilisation.

Contingency Planning—Overseas Plan 401

From 1933, the Australian Government began reinvesting in all services in preparation for a major conflict. This was initially triggered by the British Government’s discontinuation of the ‘Ten-Year Rule’.³² In particular, a *Commonwealth War Book* was prepared by the Department of Defence to provide ‘in a concise and convenient form, a record of all the measures that are involved in passing from a state of peace to a state of war’.³³ Further, by 1939, Army had established its own, aligned, mobilisation plan (‘Plan 401’) to raise, train, and sustain an expeditionary force of up to one division (with associated enablers). This force later became known as the 2nd Australian Imperial Force (2 AIF).³⁴ The organisation also maintained

plans for limited or general mobilisation, to concentrate a field army of six divisions between Newcastle and Port Kembla for defence against an invasion.³⁵

Plan 401 is principally a recruitment-focused document, detailing the flow of individuals through the various gates and necessary administration requirements. However, there is provision for staffing and training as well as for the force structure that may be required.³⁶ Military authorities used existing pre-war military structures to organise and train volunteers. Additionally, these structures enabled the baselining of personnel constraints, particularly for the employment of the staff corps (permanent force) and delegations to recruit training depots (RTDs). The experience of First World War veterans and of the permanent cadre had to be apportioned appropriately between the field force and the training establishment. Establishments for these RTDs were provided by Plan 401, with each military district commandant empowered to appoint officers, NCOs and soldiers to these establishments for a maximum of three months without the need to meet usual selection standards.³⁷

Additional training was generally divested to units to complete in location; there are minimal historical records of course content or approaches to training. Plan 401 states:

*It will be a primary responsibility of Commanding Officers to ensure that the training of their units to fit them for service in the field is preceded with at once upon lines which will ensure the desired result with the least possible delay.*³⁸

Importantly, it was the responsibility of these commanding officers to deploy on operations with their trained personnel—elevating the needs of effectively training the leadership cohort, and to ensure they were capable of accepting greater (or higher) duties when and if necessary. Training instructions were to be provided by the general staff, with subordinate instructions left to be developed by the military districts (a breakdown of military districts is at Figure 1: Military districts).³⁹

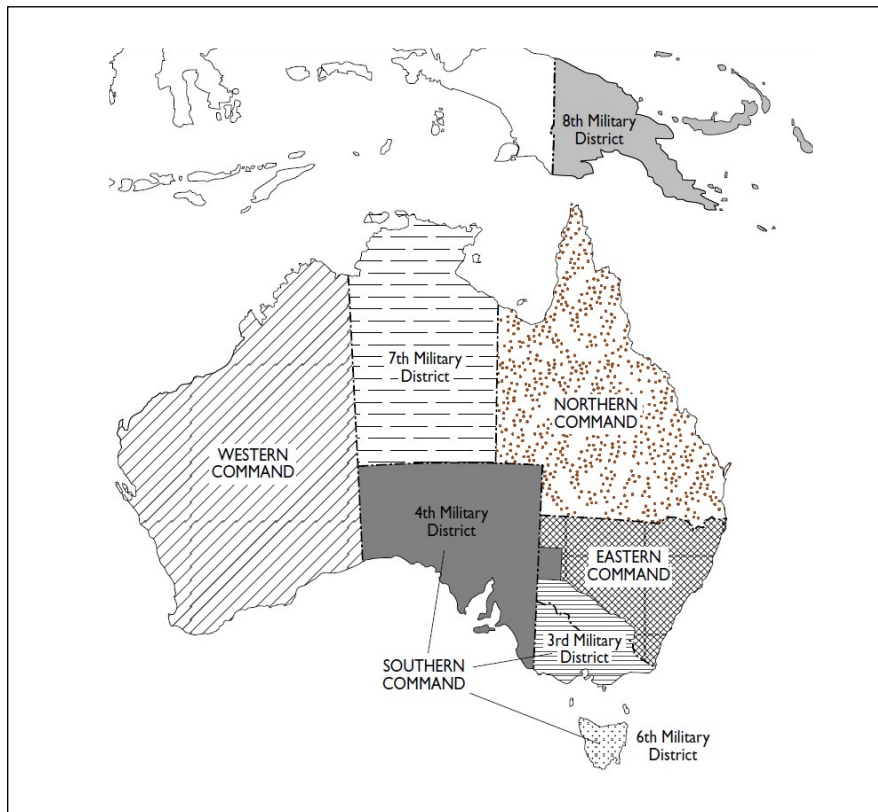


Figure 1: Military districts⁴⁰

Overall, this type of planning demonstrates to the contemporary Army the necessity to consider the range of national defence contingencies that Australia may face—including the threat of major conflict. Within its planning, Army must forecast the type of establishment that might be required—particularly if force expansion is required. In particular, it is important to balance factors such as the apportionment of existing, and well-trained, personnel during expansion; the demand for *credible*⁴¹ land power; and the demand for qualified instructors in training establishments. Plans must also extend to detailed training instructions, at unit and headquarters levels, that are effected through formalised mission command structures that account for the temporal and geographic needs of Army. Finally, planning should position training and recruit-holding areas close to population centres across Australia to provide greater attraction and retention benefits to help grow and maintain Army’s people capability.

Generating Land Capability—Training as the Mechanism for Force Expansion and Sustainment

Prior to the commencement of the Second World War, the sustained expansion of the Army from 1938 saw increases to 2,266 permanent and 80,000 Citizen Militia Force (CMF) personnel.⁴² By the end of the war, nearly 726,800 personnel had enlisted in the Army.⁴³ Using Plan 401, in 1939, the 6th Division was raised on a territorial basis, with units recruited from each state on a population-proportional basis (for example, New South Wales and Victoria each provided a brigade, while Queensland provided one-and-a-half battalions, Western Australia a battalion, and Tasmania half a battalion).⁴⁴ In December 1941, following the declaration of war by Japan, Army effectively conducted a second force expansion program,⁴⁵ with significant changes in organisational size, structure and C2.⁴⁶ Of note, the requirement for rapid expansion, combined with the protracted nature of the Second World War, meant that Army's training system was the key determinant in generating *credible* land capability and rapidly expanded the force.

The centrality of the training system to Army's capacity for force generation was most evident in the constraints placed on force expansion by the inexperienced and hollow nature of the CMF. Notably, in 1920 it was recommended, based on experiences of the First World War, that the standard for initial training be no less than 13 weeks⁴⁷ to render someone fit for combat.⁴⁸ However, the professional standards expected by Army were not maintained, due to variability in service obligations and low attendance rates during peacetime. Specifically, CMF personnel did not spend significant time in training. At times, CMF personnel were only required to attend training for 16 days per year, and even this period was not always attended in full.⁴⁹ According to reports at the time, the standards of training were 'not more than enough to produce a partially-trained soldier' and would not be sufficient to staff an establishment spanning the planned new divisions.⁵⁰ However, standards of training were raised upon the outbreak of the Second World War, with the 6th Division benefiting from an extensive (though unintended) 15-month training period and training in theatre with partner forces such as the British. This length of training is one of a few factors that are widely credited with 6th Division's success⁵¹ on its first operation in the Middle East.⁵²

By October 1942, Army had reached its peak mobilised strength, with an establishment of 541,000 but an actual strength of around 519,000—split across both CMF (with service obligations on Australian territory that were extended to Australian-governed territories such as Papua New Guinea later in the war) and the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) (for service obligations overseas).⁵³ As the pool of eligible and interested recruits of military age and physical fitness shrank rapidly after the first 12 months, growing a force of this size depended on the introduction of selective service. Further, in 1942, at Army's peak commitment, a monthly recruitment rate of 8,000 was required to maintain 2 AIF.⁵⁴ By 1943, when plans were being made to reorganise Army to nine divisions, 'wastage'⁵⁵ for operations to defend Australia and Papua New Guinea was assessed at about 11,800 per month.⁵⁶ Demands were so high that recruitment from previously restricted populations was encouraged. These populations included regional partners (then Australian offshore territories) such as Papua New Guinea for recruitment into infantry battalions,⁵⁷ and Australian women, initially for recruitment into the Auxiliary Force.⁵⁸ The result was that Army had a significant number of recruits to sustain the operational demands on its forces.

Army was tasked with upskilling civilians and CMF personnel to a standard deemed ready to operate in garrison, field or other training units. In this way, mobilisation actions were largely beyond the remit of the Army to control; however, Army was required to manage the effects. This process, at the battalion level, generally commenced with the establishment of a nucleus of personnel (core headquarters functions) in the new unit's location, which would take receipt of recruits that had passed through an RTD.⁵⁹ Key headquarters staff would then promote individuals they felt were suited to higher duties, thereby enabling the administrative and training functions of the unit. Subsequently, basic individual training and some form of collective training (usually at the section or platoon level) would continue until the unit was embarked on operations.⁶⁰ The ability of individual units to conduct training was essential to the expansion of the force at a time where training continuums did not exist. However, the strain this placed on the unit headquarters (and those tasked specifically with training) was immense. This liability should be factored into future planning—not necessarily as something that should be avoided but as something that should be managed closely. Further information regarding capacity issues in new units is explored in the next section.

This section has demonstrated the human-centred nature of capability development for Army. During force expansion Army may receive individuals who are required to serve but do not choose to. The profile of recruits may also be more diverse than has historically been the case, with greater proportions of individuals for whom English is a second-language and those who do not fit traditional stereotypes of the desired recruit. In response, training to achieve combat proficiency throughout the deployed force must accommodate variations in commitment and abilities among recruits. To overcome such challenges, Army must ensure its training is realistic and of sufficient duration. Doing so will enable a mixed workforce to achieve the organisational standards of defence mastery that are required of a professional land force.

Scaling a Training Establishment

Growing and contracting the training establishment during the Second World War was ultimately a test of flexibility for Army's structure and policies. At times, training was conducted in theatre or in transit, though the preference was for it to be conducted in Australia.⁶¹ For example, platoon-level training in the 6th Division was conducted in Australia, with the intention of completing all other required training in the Middle East under British instruction.⁶² Time spent in training was similarly in a state of flux. In theatre, units completed three-month courses, which culminated in a three-week battalion exercise. In late 1940, training depots were established such that a training battalion was raised for each infantry brigade; and an artillery training regiment as well as a training regiment of reinforcements was raised for each cavalry and other unit.⁶³ By 1943, however, training was considerably more standardised and reflective of operational demands. Recruit training consisted of an eight-week course. The recruit was then transferred to Land Headquarters (LHQ) for training on a further four-week course on jungle warfare. LHQ also trained each new officer for six-weeks in the duties of a platoon commander in jungle warfare.⁶⁴

Commenting on the initial state of training and unit formation, the *Compendium of Military Expansion in Australia*, published in 1981, stated that conditions were:

far from ideal ... [with obvious] shortage of everything from weapons to uniforms and instructors. Although a quota of instructors from the permanent artillery and from the Instructional Corps was provided, it

*was not uncommon for a subaltern or sergeant to have to train a platoon single handed. Gunners did gun drill at Puckapunyal with logs.*⁶⁵

Other notable instances of poor equipment being provided include a rejection by the Treasury of an Army request to purchase motor vehicles for 2 AIF. The Treasury also denied funds to establish a modern artillery factory (to produce 25-pounder artillery pieces) and a second munitions plant to produce ammunition. The raising of the first three divisions in 2 AIF were highly dependent on provision of new modern equipment from British factories and stores, and the liberal use of British Army training establishments and instructors in theatre.⁶⁶ Quantities of modern equipment were so severely depleted that some platoons only had a few rifles and one light machine gun. Meanwhile, some infantry units in 6th Division had been relegated to using wooden replicas of the weapons they lacked during training.⁶⁷ Force expansion pressure experienced during the Second World War highlights the extent to which the training establishment is dependent on fundamental inputs to capability⁶⁸—a fact that remains highly acute for personnel.

Tension between the force generation system and the field force stressed the available workforce, particularly among officer cohorts and senior NCOs. AIF recruitment suffered most from a lack of experienced NCOs. This led to special classes of instruction being held at training centres in the military districts to produce NCOs who could instruct. Highlighting judgements made during this time, one officer claimed:

*'Owing to the lack of NCOs transferring from the Militia, officers, including company commanders, were compelled to handle extremely large squads for all types of instruction, as well as personally running NCO classes for selected privates. Also lack of ammunition, and the paucity of Lewis and Vickers machine guns and three-inch mortars reduced individual training in these to a minimum. It was hard enough to get dummy hand grenades, let alone live ones.'*⁶⁹

As highlighted above, training was also initially constrained due to issues of supply and available infrastructure. Training camps for AIF personnel were established near all major cities, with temporary accommodation and facilities set up at racecourses, showgrounds and exhibition grounds to

house personnel before the camps were ready.⁷⁰ Permanent camps were established at Enoggera (Queensland); Liverpool and Menangle (New South Wales); Broadmeadows, Seymour and Bendigo (Victoria); Mitcham (South Australia); Blackboy Hill (as it was then named) (Western Australia); and Claremont (Tasmania).⁷¹ However, with the expansion of Army in 1943, Australia needed more training establishments. Schools and training establishments such as the Land Headquarters Training Centre (Jungle Warfare) at Canungra (established in November 1942), a Staff School, an Armoured Fighting Vehicle School, a Small Arms School, a School of Military Engineering and a School of Military Intelligence were created during this time.⁷² As a result, by 1944 Army possessed 'an extensive educational system' providing technical and advanced training in all aspects of modern warfare.⁷³ By the end of the Second World War, approximately 40 schools, in geographically dispersed locations, had been established and more than 96,000 courses had been run.⁷⁴

The extensive growth achievable during the Second World War is indicative of an adaptive army. In response to increased demand, Army proved itself to be flexible in both establishment and thought. In terms of the actual expansion or contraction requirements of the training system, Army used a risk-based approach informed by concurrency pressures and the sustained generation and administration of capability. Underpinning efforts to scale the training system was the availability of officer and senior NCO cohorts. Today these experienced individuals remain essential to the force generation system and, as such, their continued supply needs to be managed for the force-in-being and applied within any force expansion plan. Further, the successful growth of Army's contemporary training system depends on continued innovative thinking (on both infrastructure and training environments). Beyond these human factors, however, Army's ability to deliver quality training inevitably depends on the availability of fundamental inputs to capability and a willingness to flexibly use equipment and other forms of supply.

Army's Future Training Demands

As demonstrated above, the Second World War experience, supported by some experiences in the First World War, was the basis upon which Army formulated its present training requirements. These critical events helped define tolerable training standards and methods, forced the

identification of new training locations, and highlighted the demands placed on the limited fundamental inputs to capability—particularly experienced personnel. The overarching lessons of Army’s training experience in the world wars have been taken seriously. In subsequent periods of peace and during low-intensity conflict, Army has been able to adopt these lessons to their fullest extent, such as overtraining to prevent injury and death; ensuring experienced Army personnel instruct on courses to impart their unique knowledge; and exercising individually and collectively on repeatable scenarios to build intellectual and practical reflexes. These lessons are the fruit of Army’s lived experience. With the benefit of deep domain mastery characteristic of a professional military, and supported by an effective force generation system, the Australian Army is able to achieve a level of asymmetric influence that belies the relatively small size of the land force. Maintaining and enhancing the training system will enable Army to expand again should the need arise. As stewards of the LDTS, the obligation exists for those tasked with designing and implanting it to maintain complete awareness of how and why Army’s training system has evolved, in order to inform future decision points and to identify options for change if required.

In seeking to address the requirements of the land domain’s future training needs, Army has already committed to dispersed training arrangements, enhanced training environments leveraging the benefits of training and learning technology, reduction of ‘time in training’, and modularisation of courses. These are all critical transformation initiatives but they are narrowly focused on changes necessitated by the emerging strategic environment. The LDTS must look further, to the types of scenarios the future force may be presented with, and to the larger establishment it may be tasked to generate. Decisions required for longer lead time capability generation need to be made now.

Army’s Future Training Challenge

Based on history and Australia’s current strategic guidance, Army must be prepared to adequately generate and sustain land power, as part of the integrated force, possibly for prolonged high-intensity operations. Consequently, Army must take measures to scale up to a force that is larger than the force-in-being while simultaneously sustaining directed commitments.

Central Idea—a Contemporary Plan 401

Leveraging the experiences of the Second World War, the LDTTS must be capable of adequately preparing land forces to be deployed and sustained at the ‘speed of relevance’ in response to emerging needs. In the context of strategic mobilisation, the term ‘speed of relevance’ refers to the pace of action required to prepare and generate land power equivalent to operational demand. Additionally, ‘need’ is defined as the expansion of the ADF to meet severe and/or multiple concurrent crises; its adaptation to rapidly field new or repurposed capabilities; and the endurance required to meet prolonged periods of high-tempo activity in a manner that is nationally sustainable.

Army’s history of generating an expanded force highlights key training system requirements for a mobilised future force. These considerations should be factored into any contemporary Plan 401. They include:

- balancing risks in quantity and quality as well as between readiness and growing the training establishment—including through protecting certain workforce cohorts and/or establishing shadow establishments or learning programs to enable rapid decision-making if required
- identifying opportunities to integrate, partner or outsource training
- understanding the population base of recruits—in terms of both skills opportunities and limitations in learning ability (such as language)
- understanding the integrated training requirements—identifying whether Army may be responsible for wider Defence, or even whole-of-government/nation, education needs in the land domain
- seeking innovative solutions to remediate capability limitations—in terms of both training locations and conditions of training
- as part of this process, reviewing the extant policy that supports our system across a number of strata and making preparations to change it if the context changes.

These demands are only relevant to a training system capable of expanding Australian land forces; unique approaches are warranted when considering naval and air capabilities. While the nature of land power needs is broadly understood, there remain extraordinary opportunities to further investigate how to optimise a modern army training system. Realising such a system

will involve engagements across Defence, government and industry and, in response to cultural evolution within Army and modern safety considerations, will inevitably require changes to means and methods of training.

Recommendations for a Plan 402

Adequate preparations must include the development of plans that enable the land force to expand. Such plans must specifically address the ways in which the force generation system can grow in line with operational demand. This means they must include instructions on ways to:

- build flexibility into the workforce/people management system—through capability-based employment specifications, open architecture, enhanced resourcing, and better outcomes for Defence personnel. This may also include further modularisation of training and a shift toward service category (SERCAT) neutral training where such an approach is appropriate to achieve total workforce outcomes
- leverage integration—to harness the full resources of Defence, whole-of-government, industry, allies and partners
- train the trainer now—to build an expanded cohort of experienced officer and NCO instructors
- conduct threat-centric training—to build enhanced threat literacy and to focus training and education efforts on most likely / most dangerous pacing threats
- identify latent experience in the Australian population—such as among veterans or people with equivalent civilian skill sets
- establish learning continuums and learning objectives that are appropriate for maintaining the force-in-being in competition, and for expanding the future force in response to enduring high-intensity conflict—possibly including through shadow postings, shadow training programs or shadow learning management packages
- remediate equipment supply, particularly for Reserve units, for training schools and for a larger force—something that will require better integration across the Defence enterprise and (in a time of national mobilisation) the national support base
- overcome capacity issues in units and headquarters to prioritise training—removing non-essential tasking where appropriate and enabling a greater proportion of Army personnel to be available for training and education

- realign and build resilience into training locations—endeavouring to ensure alignment with population centres
- enhance use of existing facilities—such as running some training environments 24/7
- increase the use of non-defence training areas—to enhance the sophistication of training environments beyond fixed defence training areas
- adopt novel technologies and techniques to meet the changing character of war and enhance training capacity—considering live, virtual and constructive ranges and infrastructure; using alternative methods of training delivery, like simulation; and leveraging the democratisation of devices at the individual level (for example, Army personnel can learn a language via an application on their personal smartphone, tablet or similar device anywhere and at any time)
- develop an instructor culture that can rapidly accept new technologies and demographics (whether they be cultural, gender, experience or service based)
- consider alignment of Army training with the national skills framework to easily recognise civilian qualifications.

Any review of Army's historical experience in growing an expanded force during national mobilisation efforts is necessarily reductive. A full examination of the changes that were made to Army's training system both during the world wars and subsequently in response to them would be an expansive undertaking beyond the scope of this article. Accordingly, this article has not provided a full review of factors such as C2 structures, the calculations that informed cost-benefit analyses of force ratios, and the actual time expended in training among various trades. While the recommendations proffered in this article are therefore necessarily limited and broad in nature, they are nevertheless valuable. The intent is to situate these considerations within broader debates about military mobilisation; to help generate the kind of thinking that exists only in a multidisciplinary setting—engaging academia, specialists in industry, former and current serving members, who all have relevant experiences to share among the profession of arms.

Conclusion

The size and structure of the Australian Army has never been static. Army has expanded and contracted in response to operational demands and the politics of the day. The organisation has responded to demands of major conflict without adequate levels of preparedness—particularly in the First World War. Prior to the Second World War, government was able to fund steady increases to Army’s size, while the organisation itself developed contingency plans on how to grow further to deliver an expeditionary force as well as allowing for the defence of Australia. This planning, formalised for Army in Overseas Plan 401, was integral to realising a force generation system that could effectively deliver new land capability from additional resources granted to Army by government. The plan was limited in some details—divesting the development of significant portions to regional units—but it provided the signposts for force expansion. While the lack of detail that characterised the plan reflected, in part, the infancy of Army as an organisation, it is nevertheless still useful as it highlights the foundations required to grow a land force: enlistment, concentration, equipping and training.

Today Army does not control enlistment or supply arrangements, and has limited authority over force concentration. However, Army does control the pivotal aspect of its force generation system: the LDTS. In particular, the LDTS plays a considerable role in mobilisation and force expansion, scaling land capability in line with operational demand. Indeed, Army’s ability to use its training system to expand and contract the size of the force, and to generate personnel with sufficient defence mastery, has been ultimately determinative of its ability to deliver national defence capability as and when needed. This is a particularly salient point in considering current and future force generation demands.

The quality of Army’s people and teams is dependent on threat-centric training, which establishes individual and collective literacy on the most likely and most dangerous pacing threats. History shows that the fluctuation in Army’s training system (in both size and form) is intimately tied to the readiness of the field force—the organisation cannot staff training establishments with experienced and qualified trainers if they are simultaneously required for operations or to promote and staff newly established headquarters. Army’s ability to expand in response to

contingency scenarios will continue to be determined by the availability of experienced trainers, by military priorities and by the unique requirements of the strategic situation. As it stands, the LDTS may not enable Army to deliver capability quickly enough to meet the emerging strategic demands identified by the Australian Government. Further, uncertainty about when, if and how such a contingent scenario—like major conflict—could evolve, combined with the time required to develop trade, domain and defence mastery, will challenge any attempt to expand the current Army.

Such uncertainty requires a response now, in line with government calls for accelerated preparedness. In particular, prompt action should be considered to address the opportunities presented by this article, such as building flexibility into the workforce/people management system and resourcing innovative and novel methods of training. These opportunities should also be considered against extant plans and concepts to ensure they enhance and contribute to building the desired force generation system. It may not be possible to achieve the desired end state within extant resourcing. Nevertheless, making choices now can act as a hedge against Australia's worst-case scenario. Army faces the same questions now as it did in response to all previous defence and national mobilisation events: how can demands on the field force be balanced against the stressors that are transferred to the force generation system? This article contends that perhaps the answer lies in the *Commonwealth War Book* and Overseas Plan 401: before the commencement of conflict, Army must prioritise efforts to establish resilience in the fixed machinery of war—in the administration of the land force and its training.

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‘The Army is too small’: Lessons from the National Service Scheme, 1965–1972

Thomas Richardson

In November 1964, the Menzies Government introduced a limited form of conscription that would come to be called the Selective Service or National Service scheme. All 20-year-old men were required to register for the scheme, but only a small number were needed by Army. Over the course of a year, a series of ballots were held to determine who was required. After smaller intakes in 1965, from 1966 onwards the annual number of men called up was 8,400.¹ The scheme would continue for eight years, until discontinued by the Whitlam Government upon its election in December 1972. It is, to this date, Australia’s last experiment with compulsory military service.

Popular and indeed academic memory of National Service is dominated by the Vietnam War. In total 15,281 National Servicemen served in the Republic of Vietnam between 1966 and 1972.² Of those who served, 200 were killed, out of an Australian total of 523. This use of National Servicemen overseas in combat would come to bitterly divide the Australian community.³ But the dominance of Vietnam has also served to obscure some basic facts about National Service. The first is its highly selective nature. Between 1964 and 1972, 804,286 men registered for National Service. Of these, 63,735 served in Army (the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) did not participate in the scheme).⁴ The actual percentage of eligible men who were conscripted was thus very small.

The reason for the relatively small number of conscripts is twofold. Throughout the post-war period, the Menzies Government was afraid that a genuine and large-scale conscription scheme would badly disrupt the Australian economy and prove unaffordable. These considerations came very much to the fore in November 1964, when the decision to introduce National Service was made. The second and more significant reason, however, was that Army had indicated not only that it did not need more than a small percentage of available men to meet Australia's strategic needs but also that taking a larger percentage would actually actively hurt it and its ability to defend the nation.⁵

It is a little known fact today that Army actively opposed the National Service scheme until very late in 1964. Indeed, even after acquiescing (and indeed providing perhaps the decisive voice in Cabinet deliberations), it retained a deep ambivalence towards the scheme. Unlike those in the public or in the public service advocating for conscription, Army had to deal with the actual logistics of absorbing a large number of recruits annually and turning them into soldiers. It understood that any form of compulsory military service was a matter not merely of political will but of practical reality, and that every regular soldier pulled into the work of administering such a scheme was another person unavailable for a field force unit. It understood, in other words, the cost as well as the benefit.

There is little chance, 60 years later, of conscription being again introduced in Australia, and this article does not advocate for it. But the difficulties Army faced in implementing the scheme are indicative of the problems even a very limited mobilisation would be likely to cause. For although the percentage of men conscripted was comparatively small, they were still enough to nearly double the size of Army, from 22,681 in 1964 to 41,392 at the end of 1967. While this upper ceiling of just over 40,000 men was reached partly because of need, it was also a matter of capacity. Army remained absolutely taut reaching it, and could functionally go no further.⁶ This article thus examines how Army came to acquiesce to National Service despite its misgivings; how it absorbed, trained and led so many extra soldiers in such a short period of time; and the costs of sustaining such a force in the medium term. It concludes by drawing out lessons that are relevant for the Army today, not just around the perils of expansion but around the advantages of an expanded workforce as well.

The March to Conscription

The immediate cause of the Menzies Government's decision to introduce National Service lay in the recommendations of the February 1963 Strategic Position Paper and the subsequent March 1963 Defence Review. When both documents were written, Australia's strategic position seemed poor and was getting steadily worse. The two countries Australia had identified as being key to the maintenance of a favourable position in mainland South-East Asia were on the brink: Laos was in the process of being 'neutralised', and a Communist insurgency in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) was getting steadily stronger. Australia had already made a commitment to the RVN, with a team of advisers sent to help train the Army of the Republic of Vietnam in 1962. The outlook, however, remained less than rosy.⁷ Closer to home, in February 1963 Indonesia announced a new policy of *konfrontasi* aimed at the proposed Federation of Malaysia. This development was particularly alarming for Canberra. Indonesia not only sat astride Australia's northern approaches but also bordered Papua New Guinea, which was still an Australian territory. While the Australian forces based in Malaya did not become immediately involved (as the Indonesians initially limited their military efforts to Borneo), the potential for Australia to be drawn into the conflict was obvious, as was the potential for that conflict to expand into Papua New Guinea.⁸

In light of events unfolding within Australia's northern approaches, the February 1963 Strategic Position Paper concluded that Australia's strategic position had deteriorated and that the armed forces therefore needed to be bigger.⁹ As the Prime Minister's Department succinctly put it in their covering note for Cabinet, 'The Army is too small and the Air Force and Navy both need a strike capability.'¹⁰ Cabinet agreed, and asked the Minister for Defence, Athol Townley, to suggest ways in which increased funding could be spent.¹¹ Townley's response in a Defence Review tabled in March 1963 was emphatic: 'I consider that a considerable increase in the size of the Army field force has the highest priority in current defence preparations.'¹² The review specifically called for the Australian Regular Army (ARA) to reach a size of 28,000 no later than 1967, with an eventual goal of 33,000. Cabinet again agreed, calling for the 33,000 target to be reached as 'rapidly as practicable'.¹³

From the outset, Army understood that rapid expansion of the force would be extremely difficult to achieve. As a later Army study would note, the default position of the ARA since its creation in 1947 was to be short of manpower.¹⁴ Even the prior target, an increase from 21,000 to 24,500 by 1965, was seen as 'ambitious'.¹⁵ As the Defence Review itself noted, to achieve 33,000 by 1972 would require sustained enlistments above those achieved in 1958–59, the single best postwar recruiting year.¹⁶ Nor was it just a problem of raw recruits; Army projected a shortfall of 270 officers by 1967.¹⁷

Despite the priority placed on increasing the Army's strength, the March 1963 Defence Review was hostile to the idea of National Service. It noted that such a scheme would be of little use unless it was highly selective (only 5 per cent of 18 year olds would be needed in order to reach a strength of 28,000 by 1967) and unless conscripts served a minimum of two years with the potential to go overseas. The review further acknowledged that National Service would entail a considerable overhead in training and administration and would not help with key areas of personnel deficiency—'tradesmen, specialists, senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and experienced junior officers'.¹⁸ Townley also noted that National Service would substantially reduce the readiness of frontline units, by syphoning off officers and NCOs into training duties. The review thus recommended against National Service, a recommendation Townley agreed with.¹⁹

Army's hostility to National Service had deep roots. In 1951, the Menzies Government had adopted a scheme in which 10,000 18 year olds were chosen annually for 90 days' military training followed by three years' service in a Citizen Military Forces unit. Those called up were under no obligation to serve overseas. While politically popular among groups who saw conscription as a sign of the government taking defence seriously, the scheme had almost no military value. At a time when Army desperately needed regular soldiers to maintain its substantial commitment in the Korean War (one and later two battalions, out of three overall), it was forced to divert large numbers of personnel to provide basic training to men who could not be used overseas.²⁰ Army eventually succeeded in 1959 in convincing Cabinet to end the scheme, but its spectre clearly hung over discussions several years later.

For the 12 months after the delivery of the March 1963 Defence Review, Army mirrored Townley's arguments against National Service. According to Army such a scheme would reduce the readiness of combat units to an unacceptable level, would not solve recruitment needs in key areas, would be too selective, and would be an inefficient use of resources.²¹ Yet Army also faced a basic reality, one it had already predicted: voluntary recruiting would be simply inadequate to reach the manpower targets that had been set for it, and that Army itself had acknowledged as necessary to meet Australia's strategic needs. In 1961–62 and 1962–63 Army did succeed in increasing its overall strength by just over 1,000 men each year. However, the increase of 737 in 1963–64 fell well short of the needed 1,276. Moreover, failure to meet the annual intake requirement had a compounding effect: it meant that in 1964–65 Army would need to gain an additional 1,919 recruits to stay on track to meet its overall target, or nearly double the increases it had previously achieved in 1961–62 and 1962–63.²² Clearly, voluntary recruiting would not close the gap.

Anticipating the inevitable deficiency in intake numbers, in March 1964 Army sketched out a compromise. In that month, a paper on selective service was written by Army at the request of Cabinet. While it used all the same arguments deployed over the previous 12 months to reject a substantial selective service scheme, the attached annex nevertheless suggested a very limited form of national service.²³ This proposal conformed to existing resource limitations and, importantly, minimised the risk of diminishing Army readiness. It estimated that Army would need around 9,000 National Servicemen to reach the proposed strength of 33,000 and that this would require biannual outputs of around 3,000 recruits. Even this comparatively tiny call-up would stretch Army resources to the limits. The paper estimated a total shortfall of 1,150 officers due to the need to substantially increase the training establishment and the size of the field force. It did argue, however, that such a shortfall could be made up via improved retention through increased pay and conditions, special short service commissions, and 'maximum use' of selective service officers.²⁴

Although Army had acknowledged that there was a way forward on National Service, it officially remained opposed. Chief of the General Staff (CGS) Lieutenant-General Sir John Wilton, in particular, viewed National Service as unnecessary. Army was big enough for the tasks assigned to it, and Wilton was confident that improved pay and conditions would

see an increase in recruits and improved retention.²⁵ If the scope of those tasks grew because of the outbreak of limited war on mainland South-East Asia or elsewhere, the proper response would be the mobilisation of the Citizen Military Forces (CMF). It would be at this point, Wilton argued, that the introduction of selective service would be warranted—because of the scale of the crisis facing the nation but also because, with a mobilised CMF, Army would have the capacity to absorb a substantial number of new recruits without overly harming readiness.²⁶

Wilton argued this point forcefully in March 1964, and was backed by his fellow service chiefs. Six months later, however, Army—and Wilton—did an about-face. A paper on 'Defence Implications of the Situation in Vietnam', written by the Defence Committee, was presented to Cabinet on 3 September 1964. It made clear that, with the continued decline in the South Vietnamese position, and ongoing hostility from Indonesia towards the Federation of Malaysia, Australia could soon find itself fighting simultaneously on mainland South-East Asia, in Malaysia and in Papua New Guinea. This was beyond the capacity of the armed forces at their existing strength. Understandably concerned, Cabinet asked for the Defence Committee to start ranking the three theatres in order of priority for Australia—and for the services to once again review their approaches to manning.²⁷

The subsequent study, handed in later in September, saw Army throw in the towel. The paper noted:

*Despite current proposals to improve the army strength, progress towards our manpower objectives over the last few months has been too slow and in the same period the strategic situation has deteriorated seriously ... Present trends indicate that a selective service scheme is the only method of achieving manpower objectives appropriate to the present and foreseeable strategic situation.*²⁸

Critically, the paper did not abandon Army's other concerns about the impact of selective service but instead looked to solve them. It argued that the National Service call-up should start small, at around 3,000 annually, and then steadily increase. Once this small initial group was trained and posted to frontline units, Army would have enough free capacity to start absorbing larger and larger groups, with only a marginal impact on readiness. As a bonus, this method would allow Army to reach the 33,000 target by 1967, five years earlier than planned.²⁹

On 4 to 5 November 1964, Cabinet considered this proposal. The new Minister for Defence, Senator Shane Paltridge, was sceptical of the call for National Service, arguing that 'a scheme of this size would involve administrative and other difficulties out of proportion to the results sought'.³⁰ He instead wanted a further six months of intensive voluntary recruiting; if this failed, the 'last resort' of selective service should be introduced. The Minister for the Army, Jim Forbes, disagreed, however, and got Wilton to address Cabinet directly. Wilton made the case eloquently. He argued that the selective service scheme outlined in the manpower study would not only allow Army to meet its likely tasks but also give Army the training and base infrastructure needed to undergo a more substantial mobilisation should Australia's strategic position deteriorate further.³¹ Over the objections of its own Minister for Defence, Cabinet:

*decided, on the basis of the professional military advice provided and for more effective national defence having regard to the current strategic appreciation, to take steps to introduce a compulsory selective national service scheme.*³²

What made Wilton change his mind? Arguments would be advanced later that he was almost bullied into the decision by his political masters who wanted National Service for domestic political reasons.³³ There seems little actual evidence, however, to support this view. A speech Wilton gave at the August 1964 CGS Exercise suggests he was already beginning to shift on the issue. Addressing an audience that included not only his own officers and men but a number of visitors from overseas, Wilton expressed faith that improvements in pay and conditions would allow Army to meet its manpower targets through voluntary recruitment, and rejected both the idea of universal conscription and a 1950s style scheme. However, he did then set out what he believed would be the necessary conditions for a successful National Service scheme: two years' service followed by three years in the reserve; liability for service overseas; and call-up at age 20 (rather than age 18). It hardly needs saying that these were the conditions the government would ultimately adopt a few months later. Wilton concluded by cautioning his audience, stating, 'We may require a very selective scheme if the voluntary system cannot build up the Regular Army at a rate fast enough to meet operational requirements'.³⁴ In his memoirs, Wilton declined to discuss the politics of National Service and instead simply reiterated this point:

*Having decided on its policy and strategy ... the government of the day **must take whatever steps are necessary** to implement its policy and strategy ... In the early sixties one of the steps necessary for the implementation of the government's policy and strategy was the 2nd N.S. Scheme, because without it we would not have had a regular army field force strong enough to deploy and maintain our strategic commitments.³⁵*

The most likely explanation for Wilton's change of heart thus seems to be his recognition that Army needed to be a certain size to execute government policy, and that the only way to achieve this—whatever his misgivings—was through National Service. Those misgivings must also have been ameliorated somewhat by his advocacy for structuring the scheme in such a way as to allow it to increase the capacity of Army to absorb larger contingents of recruits, and thus limit the impact on readiness. Whatever the case, Cabinet agreed, and the government quickly legislated for a scheme of selective compulsory service. The first intake would begin training on 1 July 1965.³⁶ The National Service scheme had been born.

The Scheme

The operation of the National Service scheme was relatively straightforward. Men turning 20 in a particular year were required to register with the Department of Labour and National Service (DLNS), which administered the scheme. Registration was to occur over two periods annually, in January and July, with each period lasting a fortnight. January was for those with a birthday in the first half of the year, July for those in the second. If a man was out of the country when the registration period was open he was required to register within 14 days of his return.³⁷ Several groups were not required to register: Indigenous Australians, as defined by the *National Service Act 1964* (although they could volunteer for National Service); non-naturalised immigrants from outside the UK; members of the permanent armed forces; foreign diplomatic personnel; and United Nations staff. In January 1967 the rules around immigrants changed, increasing their liability.³⁸

Each year there were main ballots—in March and September—that yielded two intakes each, with each intake consisting of around 2,000 men. In addition, there were supplementary ballots for men who had been out of the country during the registration period.³⁹ Numbered marbles—181 in the first ballot, 184 in the subsequent ones—were placed in a barrel. The DLNS calculated the number of balls that needed to be drawn based on Army requirements combined with its own estimate as to how many men 'balloted in' would subsequently be found unfit, would successfully defer, or would be exempt.⁴⁰ Until September 1970, those birth dates that were drawn were not published, for a variety of reasons. Instead, within a month, all those affected received a letter telling them whether they were 'balloted in' or 'balloted out'.⁴¹

Once balloted in, a man could achieve deferment in a variety of ways. Indefinite deferment was granted to those who had married prior to call-up; had a serious criminal record; were judged to pose a security risk; or had joined the CMF, Citizen Naval Forces or Citizen Air Force. They could enlist in the citizen forces prior to their 20th birthday and give one year's effective service and a further five years' service. Alternatively, they could enlist prior to the ballot and give six years' service. An early loophole was that a man could enlist in the CMF, wait for his ballot, and then immediately resign; from 8 December 1965 those who enlisted in the CMF had to serve for six years regardless of the results of the ballot.⁴² Temporary deferment was available to those who could claim exceptional hardship or compassionate grounds, and for students, apprentices and trainees. Hardship claims were primarily for those working on family farms. Deferments had to be applied for annually.⁴³

Exemption was granted on the basis of physical or mental disability, occupation, and conscience. In practice this meant that religious ministers, theological students, and members of religious orders were all exempt. Conscience applied only to those who objected to all military service. Those who objected to National Service or to combatant duties had to go to court to try to get an exemption.⁴⁴

Those balloted in and without deferment or exemption then faced three examinations. The first was a medical examination, conducted by casually employed civilian doctors. The second was an interview, in which those balloted in were asked questions about their education

and training. Those without an intermediate certificate (equivalent to finishing Year 9, or Year 10 in Victoria) also sat an aptitude test. The final examination was a security and character check, done in cooperation with the Attorney-General's Department, ASIO and the Commonwealth Police. A criminal record was not an automatic disqualification; those with minor offences were usually accepted.⁴⁵ Once this was all done, the man received a formal notice telling him to report for Army service at a certain place on a certain date and time.⁴⁶ DLNS then handed over to Army a nominal roll of those called up, personal data sheets for each soldier, and the records generated by their medical examination.⁴⁷

Once the recruits had reported to their 'points of take over'—typically in capital cities, with the exception of recruits in western and central Victoria and rural New South Wales—they were taken out to their training battalions. In 1965, recruits from Queensland and half of those from New South Wales went to 1 Recruit Training Battalion (RTB) at Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga; the remainder went to 2 RTB at Puckapunyal in Victoria. Basic training lasted 10 weeks.⁴⁸ Soldiers were then allocated to a corps, based on civilian experience, corps requirements, personal preference and a desire to keep overall training to a maximum of six months. Corps training happened at corps schools—such as the Armoured Centre—or in units. The latter included the Royal Australian Infantry (RAINF), meaning National Servicemen could receive their corps training within the infantry battalions in which they were posted.⁴⁹ Time in training ranged from two weeks for hygiene duty men in the Royal Australian Signals to 13 weeks in the Australian Army Catering Corps. Infantrymen took 10 weeks.⁵⁰ In total, National Servicemen would serve for two years, with a further three years in the reserves. 'Reserves' was distinct from both the CMF and the newly created Regular Army Reserve. It meant only being available to be legally called up in the event of a defence emergency, with no requirement to attend training over the course of the three years.⁵¹

One group who took a slightly different path were those selected for officer training. Having arrived at an RTB, these recruits were subject to a new round of tests. Those considered suitable and in possession of the necessary educational level (usually around 20 per cent of an intake) went before a selection board. Around one in three passed, and these men were sent to 1 Officer Training Unit (OTU) at Scheyville on the outskirts of Sydney.⁵² There they did a six-month course before graduating as

second lieutenants.⁵³ Those who were allocated to the RAINF went straight to units; those allocated to other corps could receive additional corps training. In total 1,871 National Servicemen graduated from Scheyville, of whom 328 served in Vietnam.⁵⁴

The Nasho Tidal Wave

Even having shaped the National Service scheme to its liking, dealing with the influx of recruits it created was a massive challenge for Army. As part of its submission in September 1964, Army had suggested not only that it could quickly reach a strength of 33,000 but that the government should even consider expanding Army to allow it to maintain a division-size field force.⁵⁵ This was an option the government took up, and in August 1965 Menzies announced that, beginning in 1966, the annual intake would be 8,400 men in order to maintain Army at a strength of 40,000.⁵⁶ This meant that in the space of three years Army would have virtually doubled in size.

The first and immediate problem was accommodation, both for the units the National Servicemen would be trained in and the new units they would eventually serve in. New facilities had to be built for 1, 2 and 3 RTB at Kapooka, Puckapunyal and Singleton. New barracks had to be built at Enoggera, Holsworthy and Townsville, and the newly created Special Air Service Regiment's home at Swanbourne was upgraded.⁵⁷ Not all new accommodation had to be constructed from scratch: the new OTU at Scheyville took over a former immigration camp, although appropriate facilities such as firing ranges still needed to be built.⁵⁸

The next problem was expanding the field force to accommodate these soldiers. When Cabinet agreed to National Service in November 1964, the Royal Australian Regiment had four battalions, of which one was always deployed to Malaya. In January 1965, the government committed the battalion in Malaya to active combat operations in Borneo, and in April it committed another to South Vietnam.⁵⁹ Army thus had to raise three new battalions—nearly doubling the size of the regiment—while also having two battalions deployed in combat overseas.

The first two new battalions, 5 Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) and 6 RAR, came into being on 1 March and 5 June 1965, respectively. The initial cadre of 5 RAR came from those left surplus by 1 RAR's reversion from the pentropic organisation to the smaller tropical warfare establishment before its departure for Vietnam, while 6 RAR took two rifle companies and 'a fine nucleus of officers and NCOs' from 2 RAR.⁶⁰ The formation of both new battalions thus rested to some degree on a happy accident—Army created its own surplus when abandoning the failed pentropic structure and its larger 'battle groups'. Many of the other ranks (ORs) rendered surplus were also long-service soldiers who were qualified for promotion, and they duly became the junior NCOs of the battalion.⁶¹

The next battalion created, 7 RAR, raised at Puckapunyal on 1 September 1965, did not have quite the same path. One reason for Army's desire for initially small National Service intakes was that those cohorts, once trained, could help form the cadre necessary to absorb greater numbers of recruits later on; 7 RAR reflected this preference. While it received a cadre from 3 RAR after its return from Malaysia, from the outset the battalion's junior officers and junior NCOs included a large number of National Servicemen. This fact, combined with its isolation from other infantry battalions in the wilds of Puckapunyal, gave it what one writer euphemistically described as 'a distinctive character'.⁶² The battalion itself famously signalled that 'accelerated growth guaranteed with supplements of oct aged lentils and dec fresh greens'.⁶³ The preponderance of National Servicemen in leadership positions also meant that the 20 months the battalion spent training before its deployment overseas were more than welcome, given the lack of experience of many key personnel.⁶⁴

That Army was able to successfully raise three new infantry battalions, in the process nearly doubling the size of the field force, is testament both to the quality of personnel in the ARA prior to November 1964 and the basic soundness of Army's shaping of the National Service scheme. After a pause, a further two battalions were raised: 8 RAR on 18 July 1966 and 9 RAR on 13 November 1967, the latter the product of the government's decision in mid-1967 to increase the size of the commitment to Vietnam from two to three battalions.⁶⁵ While this was again done successfully, it was clear that Army had reached the absolute limit of what was possible while maintaining its commitments overseas. It must be remembered that these commitments included not only the battalions in

South Vietnam and Borneo but also the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam and the Pacific Island Regiment in Papua New Guinea. Both units drew on the same groups that were in short supply and desperately needed for the infantry battalions: mid-ranking officers, senior NCOs and warrant officers, and specialists.⁶⁶

There were also realistic caps on how many National Servicemen could be in an infantry battalion. National Service could only provide junior officers, junior NCOs and ORs with limited corps training; everyone else had to come from the ARA. Army also had the foresight to acknowledge that some ARA privates and lieutenants needed to serve in infantry battalions in order to provide the NCOs and mid-ranking officers of the future. Army thus estimated that out of a battalion strength of 779 only 350, or 44.9 per cent, should be National Servicemen.⁶⁷ This meant that a disproportionate number of recruits into the ARA had to be funnelled into the RAINF. This situation was exacerbated by the requirements of other units and corps. While there was no formal policy about National Servicemen joining the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR), for example, soldiers needed to have 15 months service left when they joined the regiment. This meant National Servicemen generally had to extend their time in Army if they were going to do so. The practical impact was that only a tiny number made it in. Between July 1967 and August 1968, 56 National Servicemen applied to join the SASR. Of these, only six completed selection and only four of them were ultimately posted to SASR.⁶⁸ The bulk of the unit was thus made up of highly in-demand Regular Army ORs. Other corps likewise had to take larger number of regulars simply because of the length of training and the necessity of specialisation.⁶⁹

The impact of the relative shortage of Regular Army ORs is illustrated by the experience of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC). From the outset, the government accepted that an armoured personnel carrier troop deployed to Vietnam would have a much higher percentage (73.7 per cent) of National Servicemen than any other unit.⁷⁰ Even within this framework, the preference of the RAAC was that crew commanders would be regular soldiers who had some experience under their belt before they took the commanders course. However, the lack of Regular Army soldiers flowing into the corps made this impossible, and National Servicemen had to be used. In the event, this was not a serious problem because, as John Coates put it:

*it was not long before the whole Army found out that National Servicemen were in many cases better educated than many of their regular contemporaries, were easy to train and quick to learn.*⁷¹

The most famous National Servicemen of them all, Corporal Normie Rowe, was one who became a crew commander and performed admirably on active service.⁷² Yet the entire situation was demonstrative of the way in which Army was stretched to its limits by the requirement to absorb even a comparatively small number of National Servicemen.

Another area of Army that felt unique consequences from its rapid expansion was the Royal Australian Army Medical Corps (RAAMC). Part of the appeal of National Service was that it gave Army access to professionals it would otherwise struggle to attract.⁷³ A medical student who was balloted in at age 20, for example, would be allowed to finish his studies but would still be required to serve afterwards—thus giving Army a newly qualified doctor. The problem with this, however, was that the length of training meant that National Service doctors only began entering Army from 1969.⁷⁴ The RAAMC thus had to deal for three years with the reality of an enlarged Army deployed into combat without directly benefiting from the resources that had underpinned that growth. Moreover, even after National Service doctors began entering Army, they lacked the training necessary to serve in certain roles—particularly that of surgeon. The shortage of these specialists was only solved in 1970 by a policy of cross-posting surgeons from the RAAF and RAN, and mobilising CMF practitioners on short-term tours.⁷⁵

Sustaining Army

Building a nine-battalion Army was one thing; sustaining it was another. Every battalion went through some variation of the three-year cycle around their deployments to Vietnam. They spent a year in Vietnam; they returned to Australia and gradually rebuilt their strength after the discharge of their National Servicemen and the general posting cycle diminished their strength; and then they spent a year training and preparing before starting the cycle again.⁷⁶ This cycle was primarily the product of Army's decision to rotate entire battalions rather than individuals. Army had used the latter policy with 3 RAR in Korea, and the US Army and Marine Corps used it in Vietnam. Despite frustration among US commanders

that the rotation of entire units meant Australian battalions were non-operational for a period as they left or arrived, Australian commanders remained committed to the policy.⁷⁷ A battalion would train, fight, and then return together. National Service sat uneasily with this policy, however.

When the National Service scheme was introduced, Wilton had decreed that intakes be spread across units. Consequently a battalion could expect to gain and lose 70 men every three months.⁷⁸ The obvious consequence was that while a battalion would do a year-long tour in Vietnam, a National Serviceman might not, depending on when he had been called up and posted in. An example is 4 RAR/NZ during its first tour in 1968–1969. The battalion began operations in June 1968 and was due to conclude in mid-May 1969. It contained 56 members of the 1/67 National Service intake, 85 of the 2/67, and 150 of the 3/67. Those from the 1/67 intake largely departed Vietnam in mid-December 1968, roughly halfway through the battalion's tour, and those in the 2/67 in mid-March 1969. The 150 of the 3/67 saw out the tour.⁷⁹ Those who left were replaced; these replacements could go home with the battalion, or they could be required to transfer into the incoming battalion and see out their 12-month tour. In addition, some 31 National Servicemen from the 1965 or 1966 intakes had extended their service in Army to go with the battalion to Vietnam. While some had extended long enough that they saw out the entire tour, others had added only a few months and so went home in late 1968.

Personnel churn was typical within battalions. 8 RAR went to Vietnam for its lone tour in 1970–1971 with an establishment of 795. In total, however, 1,163 men served in the battalion during its tour in Vietnam.⁸⁰ This was partly because of casualties and illness but mainly because of National Servicemen moving in and out. The (not inconsiderable) administrative burden caused by these changes would fall on the regulars of the battalion, adding to their already considerable workload.⁸¹ In other corps, the churn was even greater, although this was largely because of Army decisions independent of the National Service scheme. In February 1968, half of C Squadron, 1 Armoured Regiment, took its Centurion tanks to Vietnam. That only half the squadron was initially deployed was the product of ongoing debates within Army's higher command about the utility of the tank in South-East Asian conditions. When the argument was belatedly and correctly settled in favour of the Centurion, the other half of the squadron deployed. This meant that, from the outset, any rotation of the

squadron was not really a rotation at all, as it had arrived in two distinct groups. This situation was further exacerbated by the fact that most of those who deployed in February 1968 had less than a year left of their National Service and so had to be replaced before the squadron rotated home. The end result was that when B Squadron replaced C Squadron in February 1969, the actual personnel turnover was low and was concentrated amongst the squadron's senior officers and NCOs.⁸²

The burden National Service imposed on Army was well understood by its senior leadership. As the drawdown from Vietnam began in 1969, Army began to think about what it would look like after the end of the conflict. A paper commissioned by Deputy CGS Major-General Stuart Graham argued for the continuation of National Service beyond Vietnam. While making many arguments for the validity of the scheme—from the quality of National Servicemen themselves to the certainty it gave defence planning—the central point of the paper was that, even with National Service, Army had been stretched to maintain a three-battalion task force overseas. The implication was that, in any kind of future crisis, a purely volunteer Army would be of limited utility.⁸³ Graham's fellow senior leaders did not disagree with this assessment but were unsure that National Service was the ongoing answer. In his response to the paper, Adjutant-General (and former commander Australian Force Vietnam) Major-General Arthur MacDonald noted that 'National Service undoubtedly has brought great advantages to the Army' and that 'without it [Army] would not have been able to sustain our contribution to Viet Nam'.⁸⁴ But MacDonald also argued that part of the reason Army had found it difficult to sustain the presence in Vietnam was that so many regulars were employed in the training and administration of National Servicemen. Turning over 16,000 soldiers (or around a third of the force) every two years put a tremendous strain on the remainder.⁸⁵ The Military Board's CMF member, Major-General NA Vickery, agreed. In his opinion, a National Service scheme entailed too much effort in order to produce soldiers who only gave two years' service. Vickery was also prepared to voice a view that must have been increasingly obvious in 1969: that public opposition to National Service was hurting Army by making it a target of public ire—an ire that was worn by the ordinary regular.⁸⁶

In the event, the argument concerning continuation of the National Service scheme was moot. As already noted, the Whitlam Government ended National Service immediately upon its election in December 1972, leaving Army to figure out what to do next. But there is an implication worth pondering in MacDonald's and Vickery's arguments. The paper Graham had commissioned argued that National Service gave certainty to defence planning because it allowed the government to set the size of Army in a way that purely volunteer recruiting could not. This was clearly true—to a point. But, as MacDonald and Vickery implicitly argued, Army could only absorb so many National Servicemen before its capacity was exhausted; and the only real way to increase that capacity was to increase volunteer recruiting. This brought Army right back to where it had started in 1963–64, and where it had found no good answers.⁸⁷

Lessons from National Service

Readers may wonder what lessons there are from the 1964–1972 National Service scheme beyond the impracticability of repeating it. This impracticability is, in itself, a valuable lesson to be reminded of. The ARA today is approximately the same size as it was in 1964. The size of the Australian population, however, has more than doubled. The percentage of those available from a certain cohort who could reasonably be absorbed by Army would thus be tiny. In 1964, the fact that only a few would be asked to shoulder such an enormous burden and risk was viewed by many—including Army and the DLNS—as a form of moral and political hazard.⁸⁸ Arthur Calwell, the leader of the Australian Labor Party, famously denounced it as the 'lottery of death'.⁸⁹ Even some of those who served under the scheme and remained broadly in favour of compulsory service agreed.⁹⁰ A limited form of National Service is not coming back; and a wider form of conscription would so change the character of the Australian Army as to make it unrecognisable.

There are, however, two key lessons that can be taken from the scheme. In its analysis of the manning issue in the early 1960s, Army noted that, in periods of genuine national crisis, recruiting numbers surged. Notwithstanding current narratives about feckless and uninterested youth (which remain eerily reminiscent of those

deployed in the 1950s and 1960s), it is entirely possible this could happen again.⁹¹ Army's experience of National Service gives a sense of the limitations and possibilities of future expansion.

The first lesson is in the possibility offered by a wider recruiting base. It is notable that virtually everyone involved in the scheme—from Wilton to his senior officers, to the ordinary soldiers who served alongside them—spoke of National Servicemen only with the highest praise. Wilton's comment in his memoirs that 'in a great many cases [National Servicemen] were of much better quality than the normal ARA recruit in terms of intelligence, physique and education' is typical.⁹² Perhaps more importantly, as the 1969 paper noted, National Service made 'the Army more representative of the society from which it [was] drawn'. This is important not just for social and political reasons but for capability ones too. The paper argued that National Service 'prevents stagnation and is necessary to cope with the technological development of that society'.⁹³ This is a key point.

The ability to expand its recruitment base gives Army access not only to skills it needs but lacks in sufficient numbers (such as trades or professions) but also to areas it might not yet realise it requires. An imperfect but still remarkable example is the use of the Royal Australian Army Educational Corps (RAAEC) in Papua New Guinea. Virtually every local soldier in the Pacific Island Regiment in 1957 was illiterate, and this remained the case despite an influx of new recruits in 1964–65. While Army had long recognised this as a practical problem, little had changed because of a lack of resources and racist attitudes that Papua New Guineans were simple and could absorb little knowledge. By the mid-1960s, these racist views were slackening, however, and the practical aspects of the illiteracy problem were becoming acute. Already short of men and facing its own expansion, Army simply could not spare the technical specialists or NCOs necessary for the expanded Papuan Infantry Regiment (PIR) or the new Papua New Guinea Command.⁹⁴ The answer was to use National Servicemen who had qualified as teachers—'chalkies'—to teach the necessary skills. In total around 300 served in Papua New Guinea, alongside RAAEC regulars, and their achievements were substantial. By 1969, 90 per cent of the PIR had been educated to a standard equivalent to the first year of high school.⁹⁵ This was an important achievement, not only in increasing the capability of the PIR but in preparing the ground for what would become the Papua New Guinea Defence Force at independence.

The second lesson is the way in which a sudden significant increase in recruiting numbers can be managed without undue impact on readiness. National Service was deliberately structured so that its earliest intakes would produce the junior officers and junior NCOs who could be used to command the later, larger intakes. Moreover, the quality of National Servicemen—which does seem to have surprised Army—allowed them to assume more responsibilities more quickly than had been anticipated. The overall approach succeeded. This is demonstrated by the experience both of the last three additional battalions raised and of Army as a whole. It is remarkable that Army was able to double in size in three years while continuously deployed on operations and without an appreciable loss in combat effectiveness. It is an achievement that should not be underestimated.

Despite the National Service scheme's effective intake structure, and the raw talent of the conscripted cohort, the size of the Regular Army put a hard limit on expansion. This is the third and final lesson. There were simply too many areas where National Servicemen could not adequately serve, or cover emerging shortages. An obvious example lies in the officer corps. In the lead-up to the introduction of National Service, Army noted that it already had a substantial shortfall in officers and that this was only set to increase, particularly in the key ranks of captain and major.⁹⁶ National Service unexpectedly went some way towards solving this problem, as one in five graduates of 1OTU chose to stay in Army beyond their two years and thus potentially move beyond second lieutenant.⁹⁷ But this was not enough to make up for the overall shortage—a shortage that was exacerbated by a steady increase in officer resignations between 1967 and 1969. The biggest reasons given for these resignations were dissatisfaction with service conditions, pay, and promotion prospects.⁹⁸ Army was thus back where it had been in 1963–64: even with the introduction of National Service, it faced limitations on its size because poor pay and conditions hurt recruitment and retention.

The National Service scheme did, as Major-General MacDonald put it, bring 'great advantages' to Army. It allowed Army to nearly double in numbers in the space of three years and so grow to the size necessary to execute the government's chosen strategy. By expanding the recruitment base to demographics who would not normally consider military service, National Service raised the general quality of Army's personnel and gave

it access to a variety of skills and capabilities—some of which it had not fully anticipated needing. Yet National Service was not a panacea. It could not compensate for shortages in key areas such as the officer corps. It also could not, even independent of financial or political concerns, provide an ever-greater flow of recruits. How many National Servicemen could be recruited was still governed by the number of regular soldiers in Army; and the issues that had left Army struggling to recruit an adequate number of regulars remained relevant even after the introduction of National Service. Perhaps the ultimate lesson is thus that limited forms of compulsory military service don't solve the problems of recruitment—they merely disguise them.

About the Author

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Expeditionary Force Mobilisation Planning in an Age of Austerity: Overseas Plan 401 and the Interwar Australian Military Forces (1919–1939)

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*One thing alone is of import: the point of preparation
reached at the actual outbreak of war.—Ferdinand Foch¹*

Introduction

It is conceivable that the Australian Defence Force (ADF) may, within coming years, be called upon by the Australian Government and people to raise, train, sustain, and deploy an expeditionary force into the Indo-Pacific littoral.² Scenarios for such a contingency are easy to imagine, and could include a great power conflict between China and a multinational coalition led by the United States of America (USA), or a forward deployment of Australian military power to secure the integrity of Australian or an international partner's sovereign territory from a regional competitor.³ Such a deployment could be beyond anything contemplated for decades, and dwarf—in both scale and risk—Australia's contributions to conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan, or its peacekeeping operations in Timor-Leste or the Solomon Islands. Task-organised battle groups, built around a particular sub-unit or battalion, may not meet the scale required. Instead, the government of the day may have to consider a larger deployment—a

rotation of brigades or an entire division or divisions, supported by appropriate enablers, with replacements and reinforcements as required.

With sufficient planning and lead time, such a deployment is neither outside the capability of the ADF nor inconsistent with its history. Since its birth in 1901, the Australian Army has mobilised and deployed combat-capable forces to Southern Africa, North Africa, the Middle East, North, Central, and South-East Asia, and Oceania. Yet not since the Vietnam War has Army deployed a brigade-sized unit into major combat operations overseas, and not since the Second World War has it deployed a division. The mobilisation and despatch of such forces is a complex process. Writing in 1883, the British Army's Lieutenant-Colonel George Armand Furse argued that a 'carefully detailed plan of action' was required, and that it:

should contain full instructions on all points that require to be generally known; it should take in the smallest details, and should show the place of assembly of the personnel belonging to each part of the force; the sources from which the officers, men, horses, and materiel required to complete the corps to war strength are to be obtained; the partition of the work, the time allotted to each operation, and the gradual completion of the whole. All officers alike should be acquainted with its main features, and the order to mobilise should suffice to commence the operations, no further directions being needed.⁴

History is replete with inspiration and insight to guide contemporary mobilisation and expeditionary force planning, and Army can look to its own past for relevant examples.

On 15 September 1939, 12 days after Australia declared war on Nazi Germany, Prime Minister Robert Menzies announced the formation of a 'special force' of 20,000 men, organised into a division, for 'service at home or abroad'.⁵ This declaration did not catch the Australian Army flatfooted. Since 1922 Army had developed, maintained, updated, and amended detailed plans to mobilise expeditionary forces of varying sizes and capabilities for service overseas. Over the weeks and months that followed Menzies' statement, Army enacted this plan—titled Overseas Plan 401—to raise what would become the 6th Australian Infantry Division of the Second Australian Imperial Force (2nd AIF). While the formation and war history of this division and the 2nd AIF has already been explored in

detail elsewhere, what has not been examined is the planning process through which this critical plan was developed and evolved in the years before it was enacted.⁶ It is altogether surprising that Overseas Plan 401 has received little academic analysis to date. No mention of the plan is contained in the Second World War Official History series (*Australia in the War of 1939–1945*), including within Gavin Long’s first volume, *To Benghazi*, which discusses the interwar period and the raising of the 2nd AIF in depth.⁷ As this article will show, subsequent claims by historians regarding the plan (such as that it was ‘prepared in 1922’, or ‘dusted off’ for implementation in 1939) lack the nuance born from engagement with the substantial, albeit incomplete, archival material available.⁸

This article examines the context and development of Overseas Plan 401 up to its implementation in September and October 1939. It contextualises the planning process both within Australia’s history of expeditionary force operations to the interwar period, and within the period itself. The article analyses the genesis and development of the plan from its earliest iteration as the ‘STAR’ plan, through to its codification in 1924, and it discusses the differing conceptions of how such a plan could or would be used. The key features of Overseas Plan 401, and the subordinate plans for enacting it as developed by the state-centred Military District Base Headquarters, are also explored.⁹ The article then surveys subsequent updates and revisions, including a substantial revision in 1931–1934 and a flurry of amendments in 1938–1939. Implementation of Overseas Plan 401 (that is, the raising of 6th Division) has already been discussed elsewhere, but several key challenges in effecting the plan are outlined to highlight its deficiencies. The article’s conclusion then highlights key lessons from the planning process that have enduring relevance to a contemporary audience. Understanding the strengths and weaknesses of Overseas Plan 401 offers much food for thought, both for those undertaking expeditionary force or mobilisation planning and for those who may expect to be drawn into such spheres in coming years.

Mobilising Australian Expeditionary Forces to 1919

By the dawn of the interwar period in 1919, Australia and its precursor colonies had already developed significant experience and expertise in the mobilisation and deployment of expeditionary forces abroad.

In March 1885, a force of 770 infantry and artillerymen were raised in colonial New South Wales and despatched to the Sudan, a three-month deployment supporting a British campaign to reassert control over the area.¹⁰ Fourteen years later, the Australian colonies again rallied to support a British imperial campaign. Between 1899 and 1902, some 16,175 personnel—first in colonial contingents and later in federated Australian contingents—were deployed to Southern Africa against the Boers of the Transvaal Republic and the Orange Free State.¹¹ They have subsequently been regarded as ‘more imperial volunteers than Australian soldiers’; sent overseas as individual battalions or regiments, the units and personnel were integrated within British formations and operated under the strategic and operational command of British officers, subordinate to their authority and reliant upon them for sustainment.¹²

In the aftermath of the South African War, the newly formed Australian Army remained cognisant of the potential need to mobilise and deploy a force abroad to support the defence of the empire and the nation. Realising this requirement, however, was rendered difficult due to Army’s legislative basis under the *Defence Act 1903*, which specified that:

*Members of the Defence Force who are members of the Military Forces shall not be required, unless they voluntarily agree to do so, to serve beyond the limits of the Commonwealth and those of any Territory under the authority of the Commonwealth.*¹³

Despite this principle, Australian and British politicians and soldiers continued to acknowledge a role in a future conflict for Australian troops.¹⁴ In a May 1911 memorandum, for example, the British Army’s General Staff in the War Office suggested that, in a hypothetical crisis in Egypt, Australian forces might not arrive in time to ‘take part in a decisive action, but reinforcements from India might do so provided they started in anticipation of relief by troops coming from the Commonwealth’.¹⁵ The Australian Government therefore needed to consider the amount and nature of assistance they would be prepared to offer so that ‘definite plans of action’ could be prepared.¹⁶ During the 1911 Imperial Conference in London, Australia’s Minister for Defence, George Pearce, agreed to instruct Army Headquarters (AHQ) to secretly commence detailed planning for a future expeditionary force.¹⁷ Such planning was given an even more imperial flavour following a November 1912 conference between Pearce;

the Australian Chief of the General Staff (CGS(A)), Brigadier General Joseph Gordon; and the General Officer Commanding the New Zealand Military Forces (GOC(NZ)), Major-General Alexander Godley. Here they agreed that:

at any time that it is deemed advisable to contribute a quota to an Imperial expeditionary force the Commonwealth and the Dominion should make a joint contribution in the form of an Australasian division, or, as an alternative, an Australasian mounted force.¹⁸

Over the subsequent 20 months, some progress was made in planning for an expeditionary force, with a draft plan more akin to a 'study' developed to raise 12,000 troops for overseas deployment.¹⁹

In August 1914 the 'pattern of imperial assistance' to Britain's wars, established in the Sudan and the South African War, was repeated on a larger scale.²⁰ Within a fortnight of the declaration of war upon imperial Germany, the Australian Army had begun to raise two separate forces for action overseas. In response to a request from the British Government on 6 August 1914 to capture German possessions in New Guinea, an Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force (AN&MEF) of six companies of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve, an infantry battalion, two machine gun sections, a signalling section and a Medical Corps detachment was concentrated in Sydney. Within a week, the force was organised, clothed, armed, and given some rudimentary training before embarking on 18 August 1914, whereafter it spent the next four months successfully capturing German territory.²¹ The second force, comprising the 1st Australian Division as the Australian Imperial Force (AIF), needs little introduction or description as its mobilisation, expansion, and campaigns have been the source of significant academic exploration.²² Yet it is worth noting that the 1st Australian Division was the first such formation raised within Australia, recruited on the basis of a quota system whereby the most populated states provided the highest portion of troops, and it was 'mobilised in the remarkably short time of six weeks', with preferential recruiting of veteran or semi-trained manpower meaning that of the 14,693 enlistees some 58.49 per cent had served previously in the Citizen Forces or the British Army (regular or territorial).²³ During the First World War, the AIF would ultimately reach a strength of five infantry divisions under an Australian Corps headquarters, and almost two cavalry divisions. Although it started from a very low competency and experience base, through hard training and battlefield exposure the AIF became an effective force that directly contributed to the Allied victory.

Interwar Defence and Army Policy

In the aftermath of the First World War, both Army and the nation swiftly demobilised. Yet even before the force was formally disbanded on 31 March 1921, the policy frameworks that would shape Australian defence and the Army had been developed.²⁴ Interwar Australia remained a convinced supporter of imperial defence, and sought the maintenance of Britain's superpower status. As Pearce—again Minister for Defence—argued in 1933, 'Australia's Defence Policy must be to co-operate in the Imperial Defence Policy and to provide the maximum contribution she can afford to the Defence Forces of the Empire'.²⁵ Yet such contributions were given through the guise of local defence. The threat of Japan, real or imagined, dominated the consciousness of both politicians and military personnel, and throughout the period successive governments placed their faith in a blue-water naval strategy. This was based on the numerical superiority of the Royal Navy over the Imperial Japanese Navy, established as a result of the 1922 Washington Naval Treaty, and the establishment of a naval base at Singapore. Given the relative size of Australia and its limited financial and manpower resources, Australia had little choice except to rely on the security provided by its membership of the British Empire/Commonwealth, while still seeking to influence British policy and exercise its own agency within the imperial relationship.

This defence policy, whereby local defence was prioritised but an imperial role was acknowledged, was reflected in the Army's policy framework as established in 1919–1920. Two separate committees were appointed by Pearce in 1919 and 1920 to report on matters of policy and develop practical proposals to guide the structure and training of the postwar Army. The Swinburne Committee sat in June 1919 and recommended the continuation of the prewar citizen-soldier army, permanently organised into divisions and recruited through a universal training scheme.²⁶ The second committee was labelled a 'Conference of Senior Officers of the Australian Military Forces'. This conference confirmed the suggestions of the Swinburne Committee and recommended the adoption of an army structure of two cavalry divisions, four infantry divisions, and three mixed brigades capable of forming a fifth division. It also suggested the establishment of a munitions supply branch, modernisation of coastal defences, a financial provision to support the training of commanders and staffs, and the establishment of an instructional

staff to train non-commissioned personnel. Importantly, the conference also recommended revisions to the voluntary overseas service principle in the *Defence Act 1903* to 'compel service abroad', arguing that:

*[the] community must make up its mind, however unwillingly, that all preparations for the defence of Australia ... may break down absolutely if, at a final and decisive moment, the weapon of defence cannot be transferred beyond our territorial waters.*²⁷

No such revision of the Defence Act occurred, partly due to a postwar 'myth of an intrinsic Australian aptitude for soldiering' and that 'not even the lessons of the Great War ... educated public opinion to the degree necessary even to contemplate change of this law'.²⁸ As a result, the Army remained 'essentially a territorial defence force, just as the body that existed before World War I had been',²⁹ requiring any further overseas force to be raised from scratch, as the AIF had been. The bulk of the conference's recommendations were accepted and enacted by the government of Prime Minister 'Billy' Hughes, though it did reject a significantly increased training period for citizen-soldiers. The form of the Army developed by the conference would be maintained throughout the interwar period, with the important corollaries that in 1922 the citizen force's establishments were lowered into that of a 'nucleus' organisation, and in 1929 the government of Prime Minister James Scullin (1929–1931) abolished the compulsory military training scheme and rendered the citizen-army a volunteer 'Militia'.

Most post-war Australian governments accepted the possibility of another military contribution to an overseas war involving the British Empire. The coalition governments of Prime Minister Stanley Bruce and Earle Page (1923–1929) specified that the Army was to retain an organisation that could be mobilised both for service in Australia and abroad. While it acknowledged that time, personnel, and materiel would be required to prepare it for war service, it nevertheless made little provision for such.³⁰ While the policy lapsed under the government of Prime Minister Scullin (a 'sincere pacifist' according to Long, *To Benghazi*, p. 13), it was revived under the administration of United Australia Party (UAP) Prime Minister Joseph Lyons. In 1932, UAP Deputy Leader John Latham noted that government policy was for the Army to be 'capable of operating overseas in the largest possible numbers'.³¹ This sentiment was reinforced in 1934 by Pearce (a member of the UAP government) during a meeting in New Zealand when he observed that it was 'the policy of the Commonwealth

Government' to be able to despatch an expeditionary force of a division overseas within three months of a call to arms, with this to then be followed by 'a second, and ultimately a third Division'.³² Despite their prevalence within government circles, such views were always expressed behind closed doors and not uttered in public. No interwar Australian government wished it to be known that preparations were in hand and that discussions had occurred with British and New Zealand officials on such matters. Anti-expeditionary sentiment was strong within the Labor Caucus, and their platform in the lead-up to the 1937 election included a proposal to amend the Defence Act to 'forbid the raising of forces for service outside Australia, or promise of participation in any future overseas war, except by decision of the people'.³³ Indeed, in organising Australian representation at an upcoming Pacific defence conference in New Zealand, Minister for Defence Geoffrey Street stated that any potential discussion of naval, military or air forces serving overseas was 'a question of high political importance on which the decision is reserved to the Government', which could not 'relax its rigid control even of the discussion of this subject ... [owing to] the attitude of a large section of public opinion towards overseas military service'.³⁴

Such restrictions and public attitudes did not prevent politicians and servicemen, in both Britain and Australia, hypothesising about how a post-First World War Australian expeditionary force could be used. In a 'handbook' prepared in May 1921 (just prior to the Imperial Conference that assembled in London), the British War Office suggested that Australia should 'be able to maintain at full strength during a long war for the purposes of Imperial defence as a whole' approximately four divisions. Such forces, they continued, would be of most value in 'areas comparatively accessible to them, but remote from Great Britain', with participation and contingents welcome in both 'small' and large wars.³⁵ In 1922, British Prime Minister David Lloyd George and Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill actively sought Australian and other Dominion contingents to reinforce British positions in the Chanak crisis, considering them a form of imperial manpower reserve. Throughout the 1920s, expectations remained that Australia, and the other Dominions, would contribute within their spheres of interest in future wars. But the rush to rearm in the 1930s prompted further, and more forceful, considerations of the role an Australian contingent would have in future emergencies. In 1934, Chief of the Imperial General Staff (CIGS) General Sir Archibald Montgomery-Massingberd queried CGS(A) Major-General Julius Bruche regarding potential timelines

for the despatch of an Australian expeditionary force overseas, including the possibility of the 'provision at short notice of a specially organised force for service in the Pacific Islands or for garrison duty in the Far East'.³⁶ Visiting Australia in 1934 to advise on Australian Defence, Committee of Imperial Defence (CID) Secretary Hankey reflected the views of Whitehall and the British service chiefs when he recommended the development of:

an expeditionary force in Australia, which could be sent to co-operate in the protection of the strong points on the front line of Australian defence or to relieve British Forces whose presence was urgently required elsewhere.

Prior to his departure, Colonel Thomas Hutton (General Staff Officer Grade 1 in the Directorate of Military Operations at the War Office) had specifically flagged Singapore or India as potentialities, the latter of which offered better training facilities.³⁷ A further suggestion from the British service chiefs came in 1936 when, attempting to undermine or sidestep the voluntary overseas service principle, they recommended the development of 'small additional forces' in Australia that could 'reinforce or garrison important points in the Pacific Area at short notice'.³⁸ Clearly an Australian expeditionary force role in the Pacific, either reinforcing Singapore or garrisoning other British territories in the area, was a consistent perceived role by British decision-makers.

Within Australia, similar views were held. Throughout the interwar period, Australian political figures avoided discussion of where future expeditionary forces might be deployed. This was the case even in secret discussions. In 1932, Latham stated to the British Chiefs of Staff Sub-Committee of the CID that the Australian Army was to be prepared to fight 'not only in Australia, but also elsewhere', and that his government believed that, in an emergency, they should do 'all that was possible towards helping in the main battle wherever it might be'.³⁹ Army leaders had more specific ideas, and in keeping with the views of the period most saw the Asia-Pacific as the likely theatre. Both government and military figures, however, remained guided by the assumption that any Australian force deployed overseas would do so as a part of a larger, British-led multinational force. The 1920 'Senior Officers Conference' had identified Japan as the primary threat to Australia, and their suggestions regarding alterations to the volunteer principle should be considered in that light, along with any potential

requirements to support a military action coordinated by the League of Nations.⁴⁰ As early as 1923, Chauvel identified Singapore as a likely location for the despatch of an Australian contingent, though he did note that this would depend on 'the state of sea power' which, given overall British lack of strength in the Pacific, 'would not inspire the people of Australia to send forth a War Garrison'. In parallel, he acknowledged the likelihood that a force so deployed (especially in haste) would 'be largely untrained and would require intensive training after arrival'.⁴¹ Just one year later, Australia's inability to send a division built on 'Great War' establishments overseas forced Chauvel to downgrade plans to a 'Small War' establishment, rendering any expeditionary force to be 'designed primarily for a war against an enemy who is not armed and equipped on modern lines ... [and] unable to meet a modern enemy on anything approaching equal terms'.⁴² Such a force would have been capable of garrison duties only, though it would have still made a valuable contribution to imperial defence by relieving a British force to proceed to the main theatre.

Chauvel maintained his conception of the uses of an expeditionary force during his tenure as Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces and CGS(A), and upon his retirement in 1930 it was passed to his successors.⁴³ Both Bruce and Major-General John Lavarack continued to perceive the Asia-Pacific as the most logical area of future deployment. In a 7 August 1934 letter to CIGS Montgomery-Massingberd, Bruce hypothesised possible future taskings. He noted that, within three months, Army could deploy a division-sized force either for additional training overseas, for use in garrison duties, or for use against a poorly trained or equipped enemy. He further acknowledged it might also raise and embark (within 37 days) a smaller, partially trained infantry brigade group which, if local naval superiority was assured, could be deployed:

- (i) To garrison our Pacific Possessions including Hong Kong and Singapore.
- (ii) To seize undefended islands that would be valuable to the enemy as advanced bases and so deny their use to him
- (iii) To attack and capture enemy islands that are defended by weak or partially trained garrisons.⁴⁴

This is a significant statement of intent, and one for both historians and Army planners to consider given government direction to develop an Army 'optimised for littoral manoeuvre'.⁴⁵ Indeed, Bruche's scenario directly contradicts a persistent hindsight criticism of the interwar Army, namely that:

*[between] 1941 and 1943 the defence of Australia was conducted in the maritime littoral environment to the north of the continent. There is no evidence that operations such as these were considered by Australian defence planners in the interwar period.*⁴⁶

It should also prompt contemporary planners to consider how quickly they could forward deploy a similarly sized force into the region. Lavarack's logic followed that of Bruche, and his gaze remained close to home. Given the looming threat of an aggressive Japan, in 1936 Lavarack noted to CIGS General Sir Cyril Deverell that it was now 'difficult to visualise conditions' that would enable the deployment of a force overseas in support of an imperial war, although if local naval security was assured he did not 'see any great difficulty in sending one of two infantry brigades for garrison duty in the Pacific'.⁴⁷ Indeed, Lavarack (or a member of his staff) showed a remarkable prescience, stating in July 1936 to Deverell that, in a future European war, Army might 'relieve the British Army of some of its commitments in the Far and Middle East', but even in a war of the 'greatest magnitude ... an Australian Expeditionary Force might never again be despatched as far as Europe'.⁴⁸ Army's view on potential theatres of action remained Pacific focused, obsessed as it was with the threat of a territorially aggressive imperial Japan. Yet such views were for the future, for the time when Army had plans to raise such a force; how Army came to develop such a plan will now be explored.

Postwar Crises and the Genesis of Plan 401 (1920–1930)

The AIF had not even been disbanded before the Hughes government was asked by Britain to consider despatching or rerouting a force for service overseas. In June 1920, an uprising in British-occupied Iraq caused the War Office to scramble for reinforcements to send to the area. On 18 September, Britain's Secretary of State for the Colonies, Lord Milner, forwarded to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada a request for 'some measure of military assistance', perhaps through the despatch of a unit to Iraq itself, or to India or Palestine to thereby relieve a British unit to embark for Iraq.⁴⁹

Hughes declined, outlining to Governor-General Sir Ronald Munro Ferguson the ‘various reasons ... he feels it impossible to take action in the matter’.⁵⁰ Such reasons are easy to surmise, including how politically unpopular the deployment of such a contingent would be after years of war and over 60,000 dead—there was little public appetite for further imperial adventures abroad. As events transpired, the uprising was soon repressed and the need for Dominion contingents ebbed.

In the midst of a wide-ranging reorganisation of the Army, it is unsurprising that Milner’s request did not trigger within Army Headquarters the need to develop plans for future expeditionary forces. In January 1921, the Military Board ordered the constitution of an ‘Army Head-Quarters Mobilization Committee’, to be presided over by the Deputy Adjutant-General and including representatives of the General Staff and Quartermaster General’s branches, though the extent of its deliberations is unclear.⁵¹ Army’s mobilisation planning was hampered while it awaited receipt from Britain of the post-war revision of the Field Service Regulations (FSR)—Army’s capstone doctrinal document—and potential updates to mobilisation processes outlined within it, and the establishment of an operations directorate within AHQ.⁵² When received, the definition of mobilisation contained within the updated FSR 1923 (Provisional) did not differ from that elucidated in the 1909 original, namely that:

Mobilization is the process by which an armed force passes from a peace to a war footing, that is to say, its completion to war establishment in personnel, transport and animals, and the provision of its war outfit.

The regulations did, however, provide further guidance on differences between ‘general’ mobilisation—extending to the naval and air forces—and ‘partial’ mobilisation, which was centred on ‘regular’ forces and may nor may not extend to the calling out of reservists and militiamen.⁵³ Further encouragement to begin conceptual planning came in May 1921, when the British War Office recommended that the Dominions commence ‘studying and preparing plans’; maintenance of such plans would avoid the ‘delay, inefficiency, and waste of both life and treasure’ involved in improvising an expeditionary force if the need arose.⁵⁴ Such suggestions, however, provoked no action by AHQ or Pearce.

It took a further imperial crisis to shock the Army out of its postwar planning stupor. In September 1922, the revanchist Turkish Nationalist movement of Mustafa Kemal ejected a Greek army from Western Anatolia, and began eyeing an advance to re-establish Turkish control over a demilitarised international zone around the Dardanelles as established in the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. The demilitarised zone was garrisoned by a multinational military force which included British troops located near the city of 'Chanak'.⁵⁵ British Prime Minister Lloyd George opted to remain firm in the face of Turkish revisionism, and on 16 September 1922 Secretary of State for the Colonies Winston Churchill cabled the Dominions seeking their support in the crisis and commenting that 'the announcement that all or any of the Dominions were prepared to send contingents even of moderate size' would 'be a potent factor in preventing actual hostilities'.⁵⁶ Hughes received the request with shock and alarm; not only had press reports arrived in Australia of the call to arms ahead of the official request, but he and many others in Australia were also unaware of the situation that provoked the request. While Hughes railed in secret telegrams to London regarding the lack of information and consultation from the British Government regarding the crisis, in public he declared that his government 'would be prepared, if circumstances required, to send a contingent of Australian troops', if only to defend the Anzac graves at Gallipoli from potential harm.⁵⁷

The sudden crisis caught Army flatfooted. Since the end of the war, little thought had yet been given to plans or schemes to send abroad an expeditionary force—any 'excess' staff capacity that could have done so had been eliminated in early 1922 following defence cuts resulting from the Washington Naval Treaty, when some 69 of the 313 Staff Corps officers in the Army were retrenched.⁵⁸ All three branches of AHQ commenced rapid development of plans to raise a contingent for overseas service. Within a fortnight of the initial British request, the General Staff Branch in AHQ forwarded to the district bases sealed packets marked with the code word 'STAR', which were to be held under lock and key until further advice was received.⁵⁹ These packets contained three documents: provisional war establishments for an overseas service contingent; tables of allotment of troops to districts; and draft military orders to authorise the raising of a 'Second Australian Imperial Force'.⁶⁰ Only little of these plans is now knowable for certain, owing to their destruction after they were superseded. Nevertheless, CGS(A) White did confirm that the documents provided for 'several contingencies' requiring forces of varying size and composition.⁶¹

Complementary instructions on the administration, recruitment, quartering, and equipping of a force were despatched to the district bases on 28 September by the Adjutant-General's and Quartermaster General's branches in AHQ. Initially only 'thoroughly trained ... ex-members of the A.I.F.' were to be enrolled, with recruiting opened to unskilled volunteers only if necessary to reach establishments. Most commands were to be set aside for similarly experienced officers in the Citizens Military Forces (CMF), with a small portion of regimental appointments to go to permanent officers. These 'preliminary instructions' were provided to enable immediate action and ensure that the mistakes 'which occurred in early stages of [the] organization of the A.I.F.' were not repeated. Interestingly, ministerial approval had not yet been obtained for this framework prior to its dissemination, with district base commandants advised that 'under no circumstances will any portion ... [of the plan] be made public without authority from Army Headquarters'.⁶² The pre-emptory communication of such plans to the district bases reflected the decentralised nature of Army administration and organisation of this period; each district base would have a key role in raising a portion of an overseas force as responsibility for initial recruitment, concentration and administration was devolved to them.

Although undertaken speedily, Army's development of the 'STAR' plan was overtaken by events. In the first week of October the Chanak crisis dissipated as both sides accepted the need for negotiation rather than conflict.⁶³ The Army's failure, in the early post-war period, to even consider expeditionary force planning was also obscured by the Hughes government's reluctance to actually commit a force to overseas service. The crisis had nonetheless revealed that such a commitment was still possible, and that Army needed a set of coordinated contingency plans to enact if required. Personnel within AHQ, therefore, were ordered to continue development of the expeditionary force plans, with CGS(A) White reporting to CIGS Lord Cavan on 19 October 1922 that AHQ was 'busy completing our plans in detail for much of similar events' with 'matters well in hand', through this was complicated as copies of British war establishments had not yet been received. Regardless, White promised Cavan that the latter would 'of course be consulted beforehand as to the size and composition of our quota' if the raising of any such force appeared likely.⁶⁴

Throughout October and into November 1922, AHQ continued to develop the procedures and policies that would guide the mobilisation of a future expeditionary force. Having initially been excluded from the planning process, on 14 November 1922 the district base commands were ordered to undertake their own subordinate planning, based on the principles and organisations developed by AHQ in the 'STAR' plan, for what was being called the 'Plan of Concentration No. 401'. The role of the commandants in raising such a force was reinforced, as they were reminded that they were 'responsible for the preparation of the plan and the organisation of the forces within their district upon the ordering of mobilisation', with such plans to be submitted to AHQ for review by 1 February 1923.⁶⁵ Over subsequent months both AHQ and district-level plans were further developed. By August 1923, Chauvel—now both Inspector General and CGS(A)—was able to claim to Australia's Military Representative in London, Brigadier General Thomas Blamey, that the plans to mobilise and deploy an expeditionary force of up to one division and a cavalry brigade were 'complete and can be put into force at the shortest time, provided the Australian Army is not [also] mobilized'.⁶⁶

Yet Chauvel was overselling the completeness of the plans. Despite the efforts of AHQ staff, it was only in late September 1923 that a complete draft of its 'Plan of Concentration 401' was available for Chauvel to share with Adjutant-General Major-General Victor Sellheim for the latter's comment and feedback.⁶⁷ This draft, Sellheim noted in his response, showed a 'decided improvement on the existing plans'. Regardless, Sellheim advised that the title for the plan was misplaced, suggesting as alternatives 'Plan of Organization 401' or 'War Plan 401', and that the future force should be branded with the previously agreed title of 'Second A.I.F.' instead of the suggested designation of 'Australian Expeditionary Force'. The reason for this preference was his concern that the abbreviation of the latter would undoubtedly become confused with the abbreviation of the USA's 'American Expeditionary Force' of the Great War. Beyond such matters, Sellheim requested a range of alterations to the plan's principles regarding the appointment of recruiting staff, the pay of non-commissioned officers (NCOs), attestation procedures, administrative control of the deployed force, and the confirmation of appointments.⁶⁸ Chauvel readily acceded to many of Sellheim's suggestions, though he did opt instead to change its designation to 'Overseas Plan 401'.⁶⁹

On 31 January 1924, with Sellheim's amendments incorporated into AHQ's guiding document, Chauvel circulated to the District Commandants a copy each of 'Overseas Plan 401', requesting that they revise their existing plans in accordingly.⁷⁰ As with the 'STAR' plan, no copy of AHQ's 'Overseas Plan 401' of 1924 is identifiable in the archives, but the principles contained therein are clear through the available district-level subordinate plans (for the 'Overseas Plan 401' hierarchy, see Figure 1). AHQ's 'Overseas Plan 401' comprised two parts: Part I contained the general principles upon which an expeditionary force was to be raised, and included instructions to guide the district bases in developing their subordinate plans; and Part II contained a summary of action to be taken by the branches and departments of Army Headquarters upon being ordered to raise the force itself. The principles that governed the force were simply stated. The plan was to be used to raise a force, following government direction, for service overseas at a time when Australian territory was not threatened. While the difficulty of laying down the composition of the force to be raised ahead of time was acknowledged, four 'alternative' forces were provided as options, namely:

Force A: One Infantry Brigade Group with non-divisional and line of communications (L of C) units

Force B: One Division (less 1 Infantry Brigade Group)—that is, the units required to build up Force A to a complete division, together with certain additional non-divisional and L of C units

Force C: One Division with non-divisional and L of C units

Force D: One Cavalry Brigade Group with non-divisional and L of C units.

Upon deployment, each force would be accompanied by the necessary base and administrative depots to provide for national control and administration in distant theatres. With recruitment to be undertaken on a national basis, each military district would provide a set quota of recruits, specific units or even whole formations, with the most highly populated states, New South Wales and Victoria, having the largest quotas. Owing to the constraints of the *Defence Act 1903*, all recruits were to be volunteers, with preference in enlistment given to AIF veterans in the CMF, then to veterans no longer serving, with untrained recruits to be enlisted last and only if necessary. After attestation, personnel would be concentrated at locations specified within district-level plans, and formed into new units and

formations. Reflecting the need to provide common nationwide procedures, 'Overseas Plan 401' contained specific policy guidance on topics such as eligibility and procedure of appointing officers, NCOs and other recruits to the force; organisation and procedures for recruiting; concentration of units and personnel; supply and transport; movement tables; quartering; issuing and accounting of equipment; initial training; medical and veterinary arrangements; and pay and finance.⁷¹ Subordinate, district-level plans were required to account for and implement the guidance on all such matters.

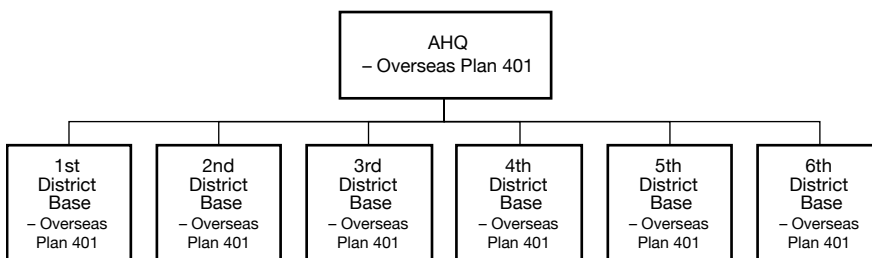


Figure 1: Hierarchy of AHQ's 'Overseas Plan 401' and the subordinate district-level implementation plans

The issue of the consolidated 'Overseas Plan 401' in January 1924 prompted necessary work within the district bases to update their plans in line with the new guidance from AHQ. Copies of the AHQ plan were also despatched by Chauvel to the CIGS in February 1924, along with a request for comment or revisions that could be incorporated into it, with a further copy sent to the GOC(NZ) in August 1924.⁷² As an additional control measure, in mid-1924 AHQ's Lieutenant-Colonel Henry Wynter visited several districts 'on duty in connection with mobilization and the preparation of Overseas Plan 401', and to 'examine the steps so far taken ... in regard to these matters'.⁷³ Wynter, one of the brightest officers in the interwar Army, was intimately connected with the development in the period of 'Overseas Plan 401' and broader mobilisation planning, firstly as 'S.O. [Staff Officer] Mobilization' within AHQ's General Staff Branch, and from February 1925 to November 1929 as AHQ's 'Director of Mobilization'.⁷⁴ Wynter's oversight of district planning ensured that when the 2nd District Base submitted their 'Overseas Plan 401' to AHQ for review, he was able to request specific amendments to ensure it adhered to the principles and intent of the guiding document.⁷⁵

Throughout the remainder of 1924 and into 1925–1926, further amendments to ‘Overseas Plan 401’ continued to be made both in AHQ and within the districts. On 13 August 1924, the final elements of the ‘STAR’ plan still in effect were superseded by new documents issued by AHQ.⁷⁶ In a rare, though limited, instance of interservice planning for the period, in 1925 AHQ worked with the Naval Staff to develop shipping tonnage tables—an analysis of the types and capacities of ships undertaking trading to Australia—to assess what kinds of vessels could be utilised to transport a force overseas at short notice.⁷⁷ Perhaps the most significant amendment made during this period was the change to ‘Small War’ establishments noted previously, along with significant amendments to district quotas, force compositions, and tables of organisation as promulgated in November 1925, though no details on the nature of these changes is available.⁷⁸

By the close of 1926, both AHQ and the district bases had finalised development of their plans, and their attention was refocused on developing plans for the general mobilisation of the Army for the defence of Australia. Yet as the 1920s wore on, and the Army continued to struggle in the face of government parsimony, the Army’s ability to implement ‘Overseas Plan 401’ became ever more questionable. Not only were equipment stocks wholly insufficient, a factor fully acknowledged within AHQ and by the various ministers for defence in the period, but the core of ex-AIF veterans upon which ‘Overseas Plan 401’ relied continued to diminish in both quantity and suitability. Those veterans still serving in the CMF, and those universal service trainees who might volunteer for overseas service, offered a potential nucleus for an expeditionary force; yet with a requirement to attend only 12 days of training annually—eight days in camp and four in local drill halls—the level of individual and collective skills maintained was meagre.⁷⁹ Regardless, the voluntary overseas service principal meant Army had no mechanism to draw directly on such personnel unless they chose to volunteer. As the 1920s continued, and a new decade dawned, the Army’s force in being (FIB) offered an ever-worsening foundation for the mobilisation of an expeditionary force.

Revisions and Implementation (1931–1939)

By 1931 it had become widely recognised that 'Overseas Plan 401', as formulated in 1923–1926, was no longer a viable plan upon which to raise a force for overseas service. As Bruche noted to CIGS Field Marshal Sir George Milne in October 1931, revision of the plan had:

become necessary owing to changes in our organization arising out of the discontinuance of compulsory military training and to the fact that only a negligible proportion of our ex-service men, upon whom we were relying mainly to provide our first contingent, are now of suitable age for inclusion in an Expeditionary Force.⁸⁰

Revisions to the plan, however, had been initiated under Bruche's predecessor as CGS(A), Major-General Walter Coxen, who on 2 May 1931 had forwarded to his Military Board colleagues a revised draft of Part I for their comment. The new version contained substantial revisions, including provision to raise a 'special force' in addition to Forces A to D; removal of preference in enlisting AIF veterans; the allotment of CMF battalion areas as recruiting areas; decentralised enlistment processes within the districts (enlistments being no longer required to be conducted at a 'Central Enlisting Office'); and changes in the procedures for detailing recruits to training camps and conducting medical re-examinations. A new appendix altering the allotment of quotas to the districts was also to be provided.⁸¹ Responding to Coxen in July and August respectively, Quartermaster General Major-General Charles Brand and Adjutant-General Major-General Thomas Dodds provided their own suggested updates to the plan in their areas of responsibility.⁸² An indication of further changes to the previous plan, principally within the order of battle (ORBAT) for Force B/C were also flagged in October 1931.

The changes were extensive, and indicated Army's focus on capability development. In deploying a division-sized expeditionary force, 'Overseas Plan 401' provided for the mobilisation of two air defence brigades and a tank battalion. The inclusion of both, for which equipment or manufacturing capacity did not exist in Australia, was an attempt to justify the acquisition of both equipment and trained personnel so such units could eventually be raised in the Militia. Bruche, however, questioned the wisdom of including such forces within the ORBAT as they would 'consist of personnel only and will be required to be provided with their armament and equipment and

be trained after arrival overseas'.⁸³ The proportion of artillery and anti-air establishments in the revised ORBAT was significant, suggesting that it was now intended that the overseas force would be sufficiently equipped to engage a peer or near-peer enemy. Force B/C would include not only four artillery brigades within the division itself, but two anti-aircraft brigades and a medium artillery brigade as non-divisional (potentially corps-level) units.⁸⁴

The revised 'Overseas Plan 401' was promulgated on 1 March 1932. As in previous processes, copies were issued to each district base and commandants were requested to revise their plans in line with the updated principles.⁸⁵ The CIGS had again been asked to provide advice on the revised plan, and his views had been received by July 1932. By and large the CIGS's suggestions were incorporated into the plan, though Bruche did ensure the inclusion of some further sub-units in the force structures (possibly suggested as non-essential by the CIGS), such as provost or signals sections of Forces A and D (the brigade groups). While Forces A and D had been designed to slot within a multinational division of a larger British expeditionary force, Australia's autonomy as a member of the Commonwealth required that Australian units maintain a separate 'national identity' as far as possible, even when operating closely with and within British formations.⁸⁶

In his dealings with the CIGS, Bruche was at pains to remind him that each of the alternative forces contained units for which equipment was 'not at present available in Australia' and unlikely to be attained for a 'considerable period'. These included capabilities such as light and medium tanks, anti-aircraft artillery, and searchlight equipment which would have to be provided from British sources upon mobilisation or arrival overseas. In correspondence with the CIGS, Bruche remarked that if an Australian expeditionary force could 'arrive in a Theatre of war West of Suez within 3 months of the decision being taken to raise it', he would be interested 'to learn whether this equipment could be made available by the War Office on its arrival'.⁸⁷ The War Office's response to this question is unclear, though the fact Bruche maintained within the alternative ORBATs units for which there was no equipment available in Australia, and which would have to receive such equipment from Britain, suggests that he received a positive response. On 1 September 1932 a further revised version of AHQ's 'Overseas Plan 401', which included the CIGS's accepted amendments to the ORBAT, was compiled and subsequently issued to the districts,

the latter being advised that the new version made no amendments to the method of raising the force but that it contained substantial revisions to the ORBAT and its accompanying establishment tables.⁸⁸

It is worth pausing here to consider in more detail the composition of the four forces contained within 'Overseas Plan 401', and the geographical basis upon which they were to draw recruits.⁸⁹ Despite four alternative forces entailed within the plan, only three differing force structures actually appear. This is because Force B was designed as a follow-up contingent to reinforce Force A (an infantry brigade group) up to a division (Force C). Force A comprised an infantry brigade of four battalions, a field artillery brigade of four batteries, a field engineer company, and a range of enabling sub-units for signalling, supply and transport, provost, postal, and medical. Force D, meanwhile, consisted of a cavalry brigade of three Light Horse Regiments, an armoured car regiment, one field artillery battery, a field engineering troop, and a similar proportion of enablers as Force A. Force C, encompassing an infantry division and significant non-divisional and L of C units, was the largest force contemplated (see Figure 2). Its structure and recruitment areas harked back to that of the 1st Australian Division of the First World War with, for example, the 1st Australian Infantry Brigade of Force C and the 1st Australian Division to be recruited wholly from New South Wales, while the battalions of the 3rd Infantry Brigade were drawn from Queensland, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Even the designation of the division's reconnaissance regiment—the 4th Australian Light Horse Regiment—was identical to that which accompanied the 1st Australian Division abroad in 1914, though in Force C it would be drawn from Queensland, New South Wales and Victoria rather than just the latter.⁹⁰ In line with the Army's organisational philosophy of the time, field formations were recruited (and, in theory, reinforced) on a territorial basis rather than through a centralised recruiting and duty-allotment system such as that now used by the ADF.

Following revisions to the ORBAT in mid-1938, Force C was to be accompanied abroad by a mechanised artillery brigade, a medium artillery brigade, an anti-aircraft artillery brigade, two anti-aircraft engineering companies, and an army tank battalion. In reality, the lack of equipment made each of these formations little more than an aspirational target. A 1938 army tank battalion, for example, required 23 light tanks, 19 medium tanks, and eight close support (or ‘infantry’) tanks (50 total); in 1938 in the whole of Australia there were only four Vickers Medium Mark IIs which had been delivered in 1929, and 11 modern Mark VIA Light Tanks which arrived in late 1937 (15 total). A further 24 light tanks were on order from Britain, though no timeline for delivery had been provided.⁹¹ Ultimately the division that would be mobilised in 1939 through ‘Overseas Plan 401’, the 6th Australian Division, would take a similar form to that contained within the plan (see Figure 3). There would, however be significant differences. The Light Horse Regiment was replaced with a mechanised divisional reconnaissance regiment, the artillery brigades were restructured into field regiments of two batteries (in line with British establishments), and a machine gun battalion was added to the ORBAT. There were also significant reductions in the non-divisional troops; the medium brigade, the anti-aircraft brigade, the anti-aircraft engineer companies, and the tank battalion were all removed from the force structure.⁹²

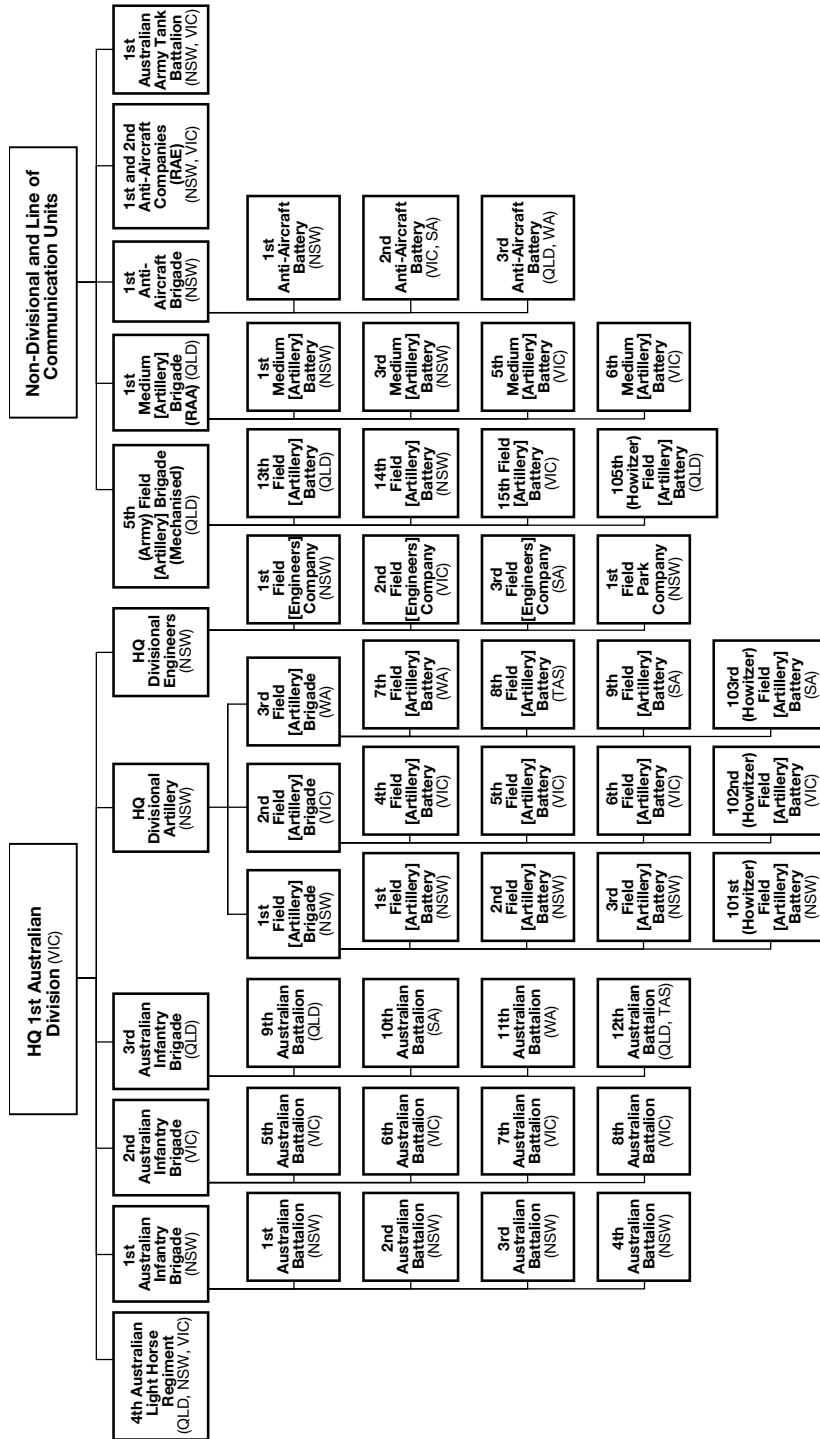


Figure 2: ORBAT of Force C, including amendments to mid-1938 but excluding enablers such as signals, logistics or medical units⁹³

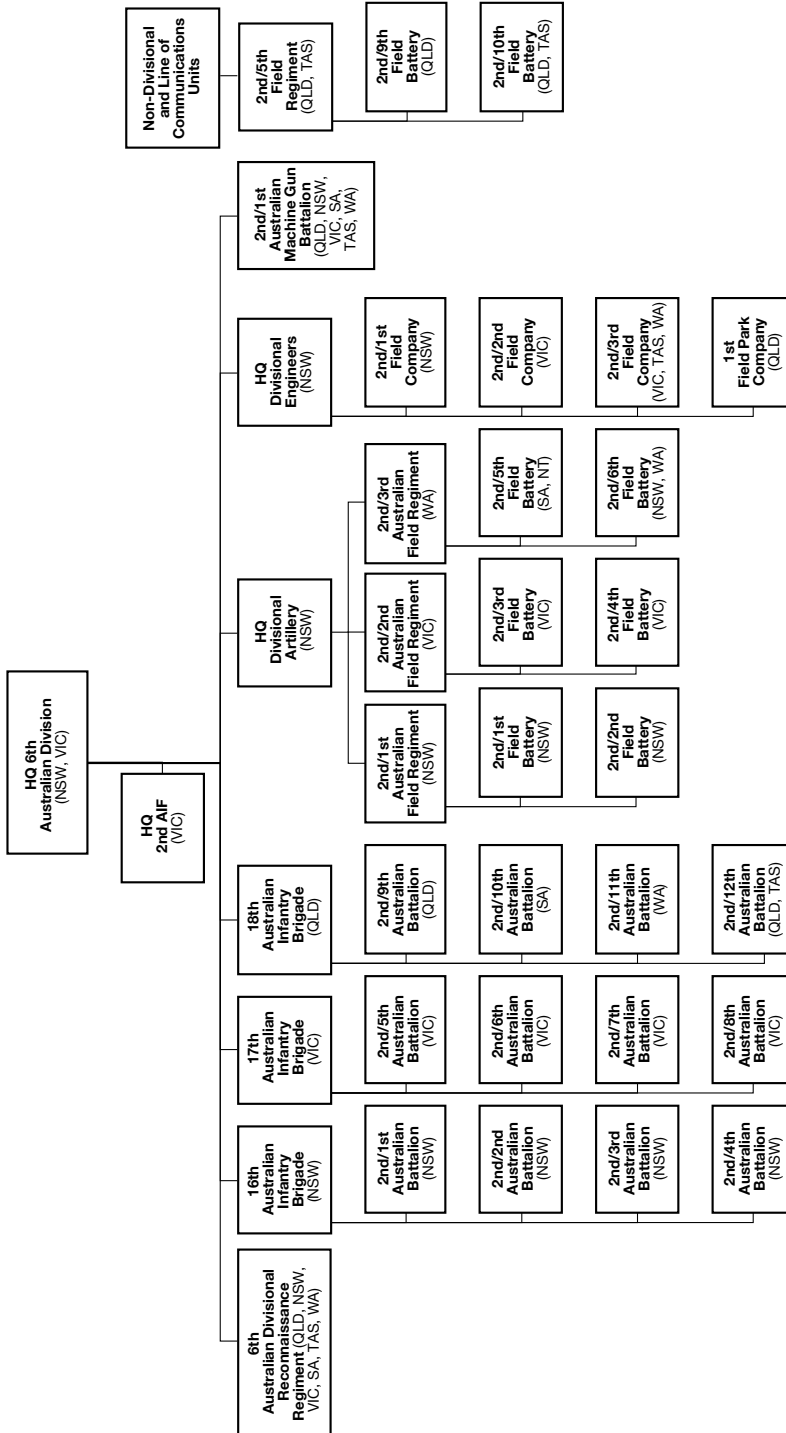


Figure 3: ORBAT of 6th Australian Division, excluding enablers such as signals, logistics and medical units, as of December 1939, prior to its departure overseas⁹⁴

Yet the mobilisation of 6th Australian Division would not occur for several years. Further updates and revisions to 'Overseas Plan 401' continued to be made in the years following its promulgation in September 1932, as geopolitical instability heightened. In June 1933, work was initiated in the Quartermaster General's Branch at AHQ, in tandem again with the Naval Staff, to update the shipping tonnage tables, though a lack of staff within the branch slowed progress.⁹⁵ With the rapid mobilisation of an overseas force seemingly more likely, in July 1933 the Director of Military Operations and Intelligence in AHQ, Colonel Vernon Sturdee, requested that the veil of secrecy surrounding district-level 'Overseas Plan 401' be extended. While previously the particulars of the district plans were to 'be known only to the officers required to complete the peace time preparations', this status was to be altered. Now the system of recruiting and drafting of recruits into concentration areas was to be briefed to a wider body of Staff Corps officers and members of the Australian Instructional Corps within both district base headquarters and CMF formations.⁹⁶

As 1934 drew to a close, further work on 'Overseas Plan 401' slowed. This was despite the advice of Hankey, who visited Australia in September–November 1934 to advise the Lyons government on defence matters. Ever the staunch supporter of intimate defence ties between Commonwealth nations, Hankey had expressed support for Australian expeditionary force plans to be discussed and coordinated with the War Office. This had been the standard procedure for many years, and in February 1934 Bruce had forwarded updated copies of 'Overseas Plan 401' to both CIGS Lord Milne and GOC(NZ) Major-General Sir William Sinclair-Burgess. The latter noted that the plan would be 'of the greatest assistance to us' as New Zealand worked 'on similar schemes', with it potentially being 'of great service in ensuring co-operation'.⁹⁷ With little more development on 'Overseas Plan 401' being undertaken, it was therefore a surprise to the now CGS(A) Major-General John Lavarack when, in November 1935, he was advised by Sinclair-Burgess that the New Zealand Military Forces had developed plans for the despatch of an expeditionary force of one cavalry brigade and attached groups, named 'Plan E' or 'Force E'. This force, Sinclair-Burgess felt, should be:

*Looked upon as the other cavalry brigade etc. with which
your Force D should combine to form a cavalry division.
In the event these expeditionary forces being required, a*

combination between Australia and New Zealand, as in the last war, seems more natural than that either of the forces should be combined with an unknown English formation.

Although he sought Lavarack's views, Sinclair-Burgess was evidently enthusiastically committed to the proposal. In his letter to Lavarack he delved into the possible composition of the divisional headquarters, how appointments could be shared—including noting that he would be 'quite agreeable to the initial divisional commander being an Australian'—and how the balance of troops required to form the division could be apportioned between each Army.⁹⁸ Given the signing of 'Plan Anzac' by the Australian and New Zealand Chiefs of Army on 17 April 1933, of which outcome one was the ability to integrate a New Zealand motorised infantry battle group into an Australian brigade, this suggestion by Sinclair-Burgess is of note.⁹⁹ Lavarack duly responded in January 1936, confirming that he had 'read your proposal with interest and am in agreement in general principle' as 'Australian and New Zealand Forces should work in close co-operation as in the last War'. He added, however, that:

[the] question is not of immediate urgency, and that its fulfilment would depend upon the attitude of our respective Governments at the time when the need for the despatch of expeditionary forces became more apparent.

Lavarack poured further cold water on the suggestion, highlighting the differences in organisation and equipment between the two potential forces, and that further contingencies would need to be developed that would allow either country to deploy an expeditionary force singly or in cooperation.¹⁰⁰

Lavarack's rejection of Sinclair-Burgess's proposal was shortsighted as it could have been further developed without significant staff effort. However, Lavarack's perspective was undoubtedly influenced by his all-too-extensive understanding of the difficulties entailed in mobilising an Australian expeditionary force. As Lavarack noted in May 1936, the Army's lack of anti-tank guns or rifles, Bren light machine guns, machine-gun carriers, tanks, armoured cars, anti-aircraft equipment and motor transport necessitated that any force sent abroad would be only partially trained and armed with personal equipment only. As a result, it would need a 'reasonable period' of training, after being equipped from British stocks in theatre, before it would be prepared for operations.¹⁰¹ Lavarack's realistic assessment regarding

the mobilisation of an overseas contingent was given full force in a private letter to Lieutenant-General John Dill, a friend in the British Army, stating:

If you imagine that within a year of the outbreak of war you will have [an Australian expeditionary force] approaching the standard of Passchendaele or the 8th of August, forget it. The standard of leadership, of man-power actually serving, of training, and of equipment is now far lower, relatively, than it was avant la guerre in 1914. You saw the A.I.F. as it was from late 1917 onwards, but it had not really found itself ... until about the middle of 1917, i.e. until] after 2.5 to 3 years of solid training and war experience. It will take as long next time.¹⁰²

The accuracy of Lavarack's assessment would largely be borne out during the early years of the Second World War.

As Army entered 1938, continued development of 'Overseas Plan 401' at both the AHQ and district levels remained a low priority. Aside from occasional amendments to the plan, staff effort was instead focused on mobilisation of the Army's First Line Component—a portion of the CMF theoretically kept at a higher readiness to defend against raids on continental Australia. These priorities were altered in March 1938 based on Lavarack's assessment that a European war was becoming ever more likely.¹⁰³ Within two months, a series of updates to the plan's ORBATs were developed. Seeing an opportunity, both the Quartermaster General's Branch and the Adjutant-General's Branch also suggested their own amendments, the results being consolidated and forwarded to the districts so they could again update their plans.¹⁰⁴ By July 1938, the international situation had deteriorated to such a point that AHQ was undertaking 'intensive war planning'.¹⁰⁵ Such planning was prioritised during, and in the aftermath of, the September 1938 Sudeten crisis. Army was ordered to complete its war plans 'with the greatest possible expedition', a direction that was passed on by AHQ to all formations, bases and schools when it ordered that all staff were to regard 'war preparation work [as] their primary duty at the present time'.¹⁰⁶ The tempo of planning slowed in response to the easing of international tensions evidenced by the signing of the Munich Agreement on 30 September. Nevertheless, Army continued to update its existing mobilisation plans—including 'Overseas Plan 401'—through a 'specially co-ordinated and intensive programme' to ensure

suitable progress before a further international crisis.¹⁰⁷ When this crisis ultimately manifested in September 1939, Army's mobilisation plans were incomplete, but relative to 1914 they represented a quantum leap in preparation. Although still under revision when Australia declared war upon Nazi Germany on 3 September 1939, 'Overseas Plan 401' nevertheless offered a clear path for the mobilisation of an expeditionary force. Yet Army, on the whole, remained poorly placed to actually raise the force.

The strategic situation was uncertain, with Japan's intentions in the Asia-Pacific unclear and the government of Prime Minister Menzies therefore reluctant to denude Australia of its scarce trained manpower and equipment. Further, the post-Depression attempts to improve, expand and re-equip the Army had yet to yield significant results. Despite the haste with which an overseas contingent could have been raised through 'Overseas Plan 401', it was not until 15 September that Menzies announced the formation of an expeditionary force, 3 October that a revised ORBAT for the force was issued by the Military Board, 13 October that the force commander (Major-General Sir Thomas Blamey) was gazetted, and 20 October that the first recruits were attested.¹⁰⁸ Despite multiple iterations over the years, 'Overseas Plan 401' was ultimately enacted to mobilise the 6th Australian Division, and its existence undoubtedly contributed to the relatively smooth raising of the formation and its associated non-divisional units (see Figure 3) throughout late 1939 and into 1940.

The actual raising and despatch of the 6th Australian Division has already been extensively analysed in other histories, and does not need repeating here.¹⁰⁹ Some particularly relevant observations, however, are warranted. Though the formation's mobilisation was, on the whole, smoothly executed, it was not without issue, a factor that was identified contemporaneously. Some of the principal problems were:

- An unrealistic expectation that approximately 50 per cent of enlistees would be drawn from the Militia (25 per cent in actuality), and a widespread reluctance in the Militia to join the 2nd AIF.
- Inadequate camp, training, and war equipment, with the small quantities on hand required to be shared between mobilised Militia units and the 2nd AIF.

- The barriers to effective administration caused by territorial recruitment and geographic dispersal of formations and sub-units, with training quality also varying 'considerably' across Australia.
- Severe shortages of qualified officers and NCOs capable of imparting instruction.
- Friction between district staff who administered the 2nd AIF units within their areas, and the divisional chain of command.¹¹⁰
- Planning on the basis of the use of Australian, not British, war establishments, which required significant amendment of the divisional ORBAT in Australia (change from field brigades to field regiments, the Light Horse Regiment with a mechanised Divisional Reconnaissance Regiment) and upon concentration overseas (reduction in the size of infantry brigades from four to three battalions in 1940).¹¹¹

Perhaps, though, the Army's and government's biggest failure in preparing plans for an expeditionary force was not some minor detail or deficiency within 'Overseas Plan 401'. Instead it was the situation of general decay that existed within Army, and the inadequate FIB upon which an overseas contingent had to be raised. John Blaxland correctly identifies that the Army's interwar decline meant it faced 'a formidable task in preparing for war, one that would take months if not years and would tax their abilities to the utmost'.¹¹² Given the litany of deficiencies of the interwar Australian Army—including, but not limited to, inadequate training and experience opportunities at all levels, shortages of modern equipment, and the lack of joint planning with the naval and air staffs—it is altogether unsurprising that it took the 6th Division some 14.5 months to reach sufficient operational capability to enter its first action at Bardia on 3–5 January 1941. The fact that this delay did not imperil the defence of Australia or its territory was due to two factors: the strategic depth provided by the expanse and strength of the British Empire, and the fact that, until 1941, Army did not have to face a regional adversary. This situation is unlikely to exist in future conflicts.

Conclusion

Throughout the interwar period, and following the Chanak crisis of 1922, the Australian Army developed and maintained a plan to provide for the despatch of an expeditionary force abroad. 'Overseas Plan 401' was not a stagnant document—significant staff effort was expended both within AHQ and in the military districts to ensure it was updated and amended as conditions changed. Understanding the depth of such effort sheds new light not only upon Army's historical planning process but also upon its preparation for the Second World War, and its attempts to learn from its efforts in the First World War.

For the contemporary Army and ADF, while acknowledging that 'Overseas Plan 401' was of a different era, the plan itself and the planning process remain relevant. As outlined in this article, opportunities exist to consider the plan's successes and failures as a basis for future planning. Firstly, the contemporary integration of the Army within the ADF needs to be acknowledged. The development of a contemporary 'Overseas Plan 401' would require more inter-service cooperation than was necessary in the past. Army now delivers capability to the strategic centre, the land domain as well as the sea, air, cyber, and space domains. Interdependencies between the services, such as calculations of shipping tonnages and vessels required to support the deployment and supply of a force into the region, would need to be identified and developed within a joint context.

While the basis of 'Overseas Plan 401' was sound when implemented in 1939, an initial challenge to force development was the need to ensure compatibility and interoperability with potential partners. Army and ADF needs to not only maintain awareness of broader geopolitical alignments which may impact upon its choice of partners, but close awareness of their force structures, capabilities, and future-focused initiatives needs to be maintained. The organisational, planning and personnel disruption caused by changing force structures prior to mobilisation (or after concentration overseas) should be avoided in all possible cases. Expeditionary force mobilisation plans must be continually updated so that they remain current, cognisant of the context within which the force may be employed.

All mobilisations are fundamentally impacted by the state of the FIB and the expansion base within and surrounding it. As outlined in this article, implementation of 'Overseas Plan 401' was severely hampered by the desultory state of the interwar Army in almost all spheres, but especially in its materiel. The modern Army and ADF should ensure they acquire and stockpile sufficient equipment to facilitate mobilisation. While in a future conflict some such equipment may be able to be drawn from a partner's (such as the USA's) stocks, its availability should not be assumed. In its absence, the delay in achieving combat capability could constitute a significant strategic threat.

Other elements of 'Overseas Plan 401' remain relevant. For example, instead of the centralised recruiting model currently used, there may be merit in the ADF examining the plan's territorial recruitment model where formations were raised and trained within certain geographic boundaries. Following the First World War, mobilisation plans relied (initially) on AIF veterans volunteering and forming an experienced nucleus of an overseas contingent. Today, Army lacks the benefit of a large body of trained manpower in Australian society outside of those currently serving, and this situation poses an ongoing challenge that warrants further consideration. Army also needs to ensure it develops an adequate expansion base for mobilisation. This is a current and future challenge; as 2nd Australian Division has now been assigned a dedicated operational role in the defence of Australia, it no longer offers an expansion base for operations overseas or within Australia.

Finally, as exemplified in the case of 'Overseas Plan 401', while Army and the ADF cannot plan for every contingency, having a plan that provides for the mobilisation of expeditionary forces of different sizes and capabilities can enhance the speed with which such a force could be deployed, with an associated reduction in the need to develop ad hoc and task-organised formations. Ensuring this plan remains current requires the provision of resources, but it is a price that repays itself multiple times through avoiding costly (in both time and money) improvisation upon entry into a conflict. Ultimately Army's history is replete with lessons for the modern day—we only need to take the time and effort to study them.

About the Author

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Mobilisation and Australia's National Resilience

David Kilcullen

Introduction

This article explores ways to strengthen Australia's resilience and facilitate national mobilisation for an environment of increasing threat, major-power conflict and geopolitical competition. It suggests a conceptual model of layered defence as a framework for national resilience and mobilisation, offers a comparative analysis of four distinct approaches the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation's (NATO) resilience agenda, Singapore's total defence (TD) model, the Baltic states' comprehensive defence systems, and Taiwan's overall defence concept (ODC) and considers ways to incorporate insights from all four approaches into Australia's ongoing resilience and mobilisation efforts.¹

The article first analyses Australia's strategic environment, then develops a framework for national resilience within an overall layered defence construct that is compatible with, though slightly different from, the 'National Defence' framework advocated in the 2023 Defence Strategic Review and the 2024 National Defence Strategy and Integrated Investment Program. This generic framework enables comparison among differing resilience and mobilisation systems. The comparative analysis examines four such systems, and was developed through documentary research, engagement with NATO's 'Allied Command Transformation' (ACT) in

Norfolk, Virginia; field visits to Singapore, Finland, Estonia, Taiwan and Norway; participation in three NATO resilience seminars held at ACT; and interviews with key personnel from domestic and border security agencies, special operations forces, and territorial defence organisations in relevant countries between 2022 and 2024. The article draws insights from each approach, and from recent events including the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine War, and the conflict in the Middle East, before recommending next steps that policymakers might wish to consider.

Key Judgements

The analysis suggests the following key judgements:

- Major-power competition, war in Europe and the Middle East, ongoing tension with China, 'tech wars' among great powers, economic decoupling among regional blocs and targeting of offshore, cyber and space-based infrastructure all intensify the 'uncertain and threatening' environment identified in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update and the heightened risk of conflict noted in Australia's 2023 Defence Strategic Review and 2024 National Defence Strategy.
- Australian national resilience and mobilisation efforts within this environment will require a more extensive, robust, and better resourced approach than in the past 30 years—especially if Australia seeks to future-proof national resilience and mobilisation against emerging threats. This judgement applies both to external threats and to internal security, countering foreign influence and protecting the civil and human rights of all Australians.
- National mobilisation—for defence, and for a broader range of government objectives—is a whole-of-community effort that will require focused leadership at every level of Australian government and civil society.
- Though not the sole departments involved, Home Affairs and Defence play the critical executive roles across multiple essential functions in resilience, and these departments therefore should be the main effort for national mobilisation, while strengthening the coordinating role of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet represents an important supporting effort.

Part 1—A Conceptual Model for Mobilisation and National Resilience

Australia's Strategic Environment

Already by 2020, the Defence Strategic Update had identified several concerning trends that have since accelerated, contributing to further degradation in Australia's environment. These included intensifying great power competition, increased aggression within the international system, decreased strategic warning time, increasing grey zone activity, increased risk of major war in the Indo-Pacific, and international norms and a rules-based international order under strain.²

NATO's 'Resilience Agenda' identifies similar trends, analysing them through the lens of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA), a framework developed by the US Army War College as a sense-making approach to the post-Cold War environment.³ The alliance's 2030 Capstone Concept, adopted in mid-2021, describes the strategic environment as shaped by VUCA factors and characterised by boundless (geographically unbounded), persistent, simultaneous conflict among state and non-state actors.⁴ Like Australia's key current strategic policy documents, it identifies rising risk of great power conflict amid disruption and complexity.

Since 2020, the characterisation of Australia's environment first noted in the Defence Strategic Update has been validated by a series of major disruptions, including:

- **state-sponsored cyberattacks on the Australian parliament in mid-2020**, followed by significant data breaches at Optus and Medibank reflecting increased threat to Australia's cyber infrastructure and digital economy⁵
- **the COVID-19 pandemic and related trade, transport and supply chain disruptions**, along with international and domestic unrest in multiple countries, including Australia, related to governments' reaction to the pandemic⁶
- **China's economic bullying and political warfare campaign to punish Australia** for seeking an independent investigation of the origins of COVID-19, including export disruptions and 'fourteen demands' by a senior Chinese diplomat⁷

- **the chaotic withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021**, which undermined US and allied credibility, weakened Western deterrence (increasing the risk of major war), and boosted the morale of terrorist groups worldwide while triggering a humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and an international surge of refugees⁸
- **Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine**, resulting in part from weakened Western credibility after the Afghan collapse, which has created the largest, highest-intensity conflict in Europe since the Second World War; triggered global supply chain, commodities and food supply disruptions; caused a major refugee crisis; and reshaped the Eurasian geostrategic order⁹
- **US-Chinese tension escalating** through a series of incidents in the South China Sea and East China Sea, around the Philippines and in the Taiwan Strait, with continued growth in Chinese naval and air power, missile capability (including anti-shipping and hypersonic missiles) and space-warfare capabilities, alongside a 'tech war' in which the US seeks to disrupt China's access to advanced semiconductors and artificial intelligence¹⁰
- **increasingly aggressive Chinese incursions into Australian sea and airspace**, resulting in Australian ships and aircraft being harassed, targeted using lasers, or shadowed by Chinese air and naval forces in Australia's exclusive economic zone, while Chinese intelligence-gathering assets frequently encroach on Australian Defence Force (ADF) and multinational exercises¹¹
- **the AUKUS agreement**, to which governments of both major Australian political parties committed, and which has deepened security relationships and interoperability with the UK and US, along with improvements to Australian defence capability¹²
- **targeting of commercially owned infrastructure**, including the destruction by sabotage of the Nordstream 1 and Nordstream 2 pipelines in the Baltic Sea in September 2022, the targeting of space-based communications infrastructure, and a series of attacks on offshore fibre-optic cables and oil and gas platforms¹³
- **increasing sabotage** in multiple countries targeting railways, factories, bridges, food production, power generation, water purification and other critical systems using kinetic (physical) and cyber means¹⁴

- **increased threat from foreign interference, influence and subversion** (including disinformation and misinformation) targeting civil society and government, with negative effects on national cohesion and trust in institutions at all levels¹⁵
- **spillover from the Israel-Gaza conflict and wider Middle Eastern theatre**, including increased terrorist threat within Australia and supply chain disruption following efforts by Ansarallah (Houthi) forces in Yemen to block the Red Sea to commercial shipping traffic.¹⁶

The 2023 Defence Strategic Review took account of these developments (with the exception of the Middle East conflict, which had not yet escalated when the document was published) identifying a global strategic environment with significantly heightened risk of conflict. The review noted:

*Australia's strategic circumstances and the risks we face are now radically different. No longer is our Alliance partner, the United States, the unipolar leader of the Indo-Pacific. Intense China-United States competition is the defining feature of our region and our time. Major power competition in our region has the potential to threaten our interests, including the potential for conflict.*¹⁷

Noting that emerging technologies enable hostile actors to seriously threaten Australia without invading our territory, and that our traditional reliance on geography and strategic warning time no longer applies, the review concluded that Australia's current regional circumstances are characterised by major-power competition, coercive tactics, an accelerating and non-transparent expansion of military capabilities, militarisation of emerging and disruptive technologies, nuclear weapons proliferation, and increased risk of miscalculation or misjudgement.¹⁸

While Defence was analysing the environment for the 2020 and 2023 reviews, the Department of Home Affairs also initiated a range of efforts on homeland security and critical infrastructure. However, the Commonwealth Government has issued no whole-of-government strategy since 2013's *Strong and Secure: Australia's National Security Strategy*, partially updated in the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper.¹⁹

Strong and Secure identified several national security risks, including espionage and foreign interference, instability in developing and fragile states, malicious cyber activity, proliferation of weapons

of mass destruction, serious and organised crime, state-based conflict or coercion significantly affecting Australia's interests, and terrorism and violent extremism. Based on that risk analysis, it enumerated eight pillars of Australian national security, as follows:

1. Countering terrorism, espionage and foreign interference
2. Deterring and defeating attacks on Australia and Australia's interests
3. Preserving Australia's border integrity
4. Preventing, detecting and disrupting serious and organised crime
5. Promoting a secure international environment conducive to advancing Australia's interests
6. Strengthening the resilience of Australia's people, assets, infrastructure and institutions
7. The Australia–United States alliance
8. Understanding and being influential in the world, particularly the Asia-Pacific.²⁰

While the risks and pillars identified in 2013 remain relevant, their relative importance has shifted as a result of the developments noted above. As Bruce Jones noted in 2020, global affairs at the broadest level have been unsettled by China's rise to become the world's second-largest economy, largest energy consumer and second-largest defence spender. Meanwhile, Beijing's increasingly assertive posture is intensifying a pattern of great power competition.²¹ These developments have increased the risk of major conflict in Australia's region, while simultaneously increasing the threat of foreign interference, cyber-attacks, sabotage of Australian assets and infrastructure, and disruption of Australia's trading, energy supply and economic interests.

The intensified war in Ukraine since February 2022 has dominated security thinking within NATO and, to a lesser extent, in Washington DC. However, as the head of the UK's Security Service (MI5), Ken McCallum, noted in 2020:

if the question is which countries' intelligence services cause the most aggravation to the UK in October 2020, the answer is Russia. If, on the other hand, the question is which state will be shaping our world across the next decade, presenting big opportunities and big challenges for the U.K., the answer is China. You might

think in terms of the Russian intelligence services providing bursts of bad weather, while China is changing the climate.²²

More recently, in February 2023 the US intelligence community assessed that:

while Russia is challenging the United States and some norms [in a regional conflict in Ukraine], China has the capability to ... alter the rules-based global order in every realm and across multiple regions, as a near-peer competitor.²³

Each of these assessments emphasises the distinction between acute, urgent crises and longer-term but less obvious shifts in the background environment—McCallum's 'weather' versus 'climate' metaphor is particularly apt. Addressing this full range of threats, in a timely manner, involves developing a robust model for national resilience and national mobilisation within an integrated overall defence and security framework.

National Resilience in Context

We can understand national resilience within a broader construct of comprehensive (sometimes termed 'total') defence, in which national security derives from the integrated effects of multiple activities and institutions across a series of layers, building on each other.²⁴ Underpinning this 'layered defence pyramid' (but not considered in detail in this analysis) lies a set of national policies to enhance cohesion, prosperity and state effectiveness.²⁵ These include industrial, critical technologies and commodities, entrepreneurship, innovation, scientific research and development, energy, health, education, trade, telecommunications, transport and space policy.²⁶ This policy baseline represents the platform on which national security capabilities are built, and is fundamental to national strategy.²⁷

Layers within the pyramid include national resilience, total (or territorial) security, conventional (sometimes 'traditional') military capabilities, countering hybrid and 'actorless' threats (pandemic disease, climate change, natural disasters)²⁸ and grey zone activity. The higher up the pyramid, the tighter the control exercised by national authorities, and the greater the role of central (as distinct from local and state) government. Higher placement on the pyramid does not imply greater importance, risk, or expenditure—arguably, the lower levels are the most important.

Rather, each layer builds on, draws resources from, and enhances the effects of the layers beneath it. The framework can be represented graphically as shown in Figure 1.

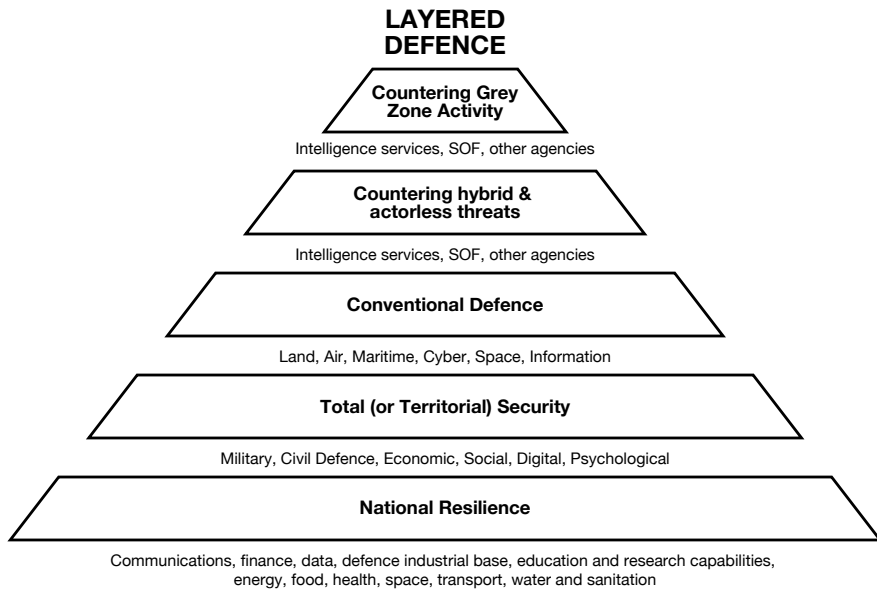


Figure 1: Layered defence within a comprehensive (total) defence framework

Within this construct:

- **National resilience** forms the base on which all other activities build. While nations and organisations define resilience differently (as discussed below), most include some or all of the categories of communications, finance, data, health, energy, food and water and transport in their frameworks.
- **Total defence** builds on national resilience and includes military and non-military territorial defence organisations, border security, customs and excise, biosecurity, civil defence (including emergency services), environmental protection, critical infrastructure protection (physical and digital) and, in some countries, social cohesion and psychological preparation of the population.

- **Conventional defence** includes military activities to defend the nation, its territory and population, and its broader interests. It includes operations in the land, sea, air, space, cyber and information domains and is led by Defence and supported by Home Affairs, the intelligence community and law enforcement.
- **Countering hybrid and actorless threats** deals with terrorism, insurgency, people-smuggling, narcotics trafficking, modern slavery and other serious organised crime, along with threats to the environment and public health from natural disasters, disease, weather and climate. The intelligence community, special operations forces and other specialised agencies often take the lead at this level, supported by conventional defence and home affairs organisations.
- **Grey zone activity** is action beyond the realm of normal peacetime interaction but below the threshold of armed conflict. As the upper level of the layered defence construct, it builds on all capabilities from the other layers. Many nations, and organisations such as NATO and the EU, have published defensive strategies or established centres of excellence for countering grey zone activity. Several also conduct offensive operations in the grey zone.

Roles of Defence and Home Affairs

The departments of Home Affairs and Defence play a role at every level of this layered construct and are the two most important agencies in executing the Commonwealth Government's resilience and mobilisation efforts, while the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet plays a critical coordinating role. Home Affairs's core business lies in the resilience layer, with the department leading most inter-agency efforts at this level, while other departments play supporting roles. At the level of total defence, Home Affairs and Defence operate together, each leading specific tasks while supporting other agencies on others. Defence takes the lead in conventional defence, supported by Home Affairs and others, while at higher levels of the construct each department conducts specialised activities to support whole-of-government objectives, in conjunction with other agencies. Within Defence, the ADF plays a critical role in executing operations at each level of the construct, while also providing a recruiting and mobilisation base that enables its own activities but also those of other departments. The national industrial base, along

with financial, communications, scientific and technological research, education, health and transport systems, provides the firm platform on which higher levels of the construct rest, while ultimately also providing the motivation for national mobilisation and resilience, since these systems form key parts of the Australian society that is being defended.

National Mobilisation within Layered Defence

This layered defence construct is not specific to Australia. Rather, it is a generic framework that allows comparison of capabilities and concepts across multiple countries and organisations (discussed in Part 2). It represents a comprehensive, enduring, flexible framework for national resilience and defence across multiple threat levels over time, rather than a wartime posture. As the strategic environment progresses from normal or steady-state peacetime cooperation and competition, through pre-crisis, crisis, conflict and war, the necessary level of national mobilisation changes accordingly. Mobilisation involves trade-offs between readiness posture (which is costly to maintain) and strategic warning time. The decision to mobilise—if taken under pre-crisis or crisis conditions—can itself precipitate a conflict, as seen most famously in the European powers' mobilisation on the eve of the First World War or, more recently, Ukraine's January 2022 decision not to mobilise lest this should provoke a direct Russian invasion.²⁹ Conversely, failure to mobilise in time can leave a nation unprepared and vulnerable to strategic surprise.³⁰

Over much of the last five decades, Australian planners assumed a 10-year strategic warning window for major inter-state conflict, allowing the nation to maintain peacetime mobilisation levels on the assumption that it would have a decade to prepare for war. As a result, problems of mobilisation—particularly, rapid expansion of the ADF and the supporting assets and infrastructure needed to enable such an expansion—were under-emphasised. One of the most important observations of the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, therefore, was the judgement that the nation is now inside that 10-year warning period and must now raise its mobilisation posture (and, by extension, improve national resilience). The 2023 Defence Strategic Review went further, noting that loss of warning time 'has major repercussions for Australia's management of strategic risk. It necessitates an urgent call to action, including higher levels of military preparedness and accelerated capability development'.³¹ The 2024 National Defence Strategy

reaffirmed these judgements, noting that 'Australia no longer enjoys the benefit of a ten-year window of strategic warning time for conflict' and that since 2023, 'our strategic circumstances have continued to deteriorate, consistent with the trends the Defence Strategic Review identified'.³²

Acknowledging that a 10-year warning period no longer exists represents a significant departure from 30 years of strategic practice. It also departs from Australia's post-Cold War focus on threats from weak states, failing states and non-state actors—and hence on small-scale, long-duration coalition expeditionary operations, in support of alliance partners, in distant theatres. This focus resulted in under-resourcing of resilience capabilities, and the atrophy of national mobilisation planning. Most importantly, the acknowledgment that Australia can no longer rely on a 10-year warning time underscores the need for a mindset shift toward self-reliant national defence, and the ability to mobilise rapidly and effectively in the face of a deteriorating strategic environment.

For Australia as for other countries, the COVID-19 pandemic also represented a wake-up call. It highlighted the need for resilience against actorless threats, alongside national cohesion, intergovernmental coordination at local, state and Commonwealth levels, improved effectiveness across a range of services, resilience against bullying by a great power adversary, and supply chain, food and energy resilience.³³ During the same period, a series of natural disasters—bushfires and flooding in Australia, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions across the region—required the nation to mobilise around shared resilience goals. Key questions arising from this experience include the following:

- What is the optimal division of responsibilities among local, state and Commonwealth governments? Is the existing allocation of roles appropriate?
- Should decision-making adaptations such as National Cabinet be extended or adapted into permanent national security institutions?
- In emergencies that do not justify use of the Commonwealth's constitutional defence power, who has legal authority? How should that authority be coordinated among states and territories, and among Commonwealth agencies? Do existing arrangements scale appropriately for higher-level threats?

- Does the use of the ADF rather than civilian agencies for COVID-19 or other emergencies devalue civilian agencies? Does it overstretch Defence, or deplete resources better used higher in the layered defence pyramid?
- Which departments should have command and control (C2) authority, as distinct from execution responsibility, and under which circumstances?
- How has recourse to Defence for internal security efforts affected public trust in the military, and how has it affected training and warfighting capability?
- How has use of Defence assets for logistics, transport and public safety affected Defence's readiness for its core warfighting functions, and how has it influenced investment in other agencies?
- What is the appropriate role within national resilience for civil society, including organisations such as the Mindaroo Foundation; the Australian Resilience Corps; Team Rubicon; the Returned and Services League; and veterans', religious and volunteer groups, charities and philanthropic foundations?
- How can a multiplicity of assets and organisations at every level of civil society best be coordinated—as distinct from controlled, since these are non-government assets—in order to achieve synergy and efficiency?
- Last, but arguably most importantly, how can the civil rights, democratic freedoms and human rights of all Australians be respected and safeguarded even under conditions of national emergency and patriotic dissent?

These questions were partially addressed in the 2023 Defence Strategic Review and 2024 National Defence Strategy. However, in the absence of a whole-of-government national security strategy—or a detailed, robust and regularly updated plan for national mobilisation—an approach that focuses primarily on the role of the Department of Defence and the ADF can, by definition, only be a partial solution. Even following the excellent work of the Department of Home Affairs's national resilience task force, addressing these broader questions remains an important interdepartmental requirement, as well as a crucial national conversation, if recent crises are to help improve national resilience and mobilisation capacity for the era of heightened threat in which Australia currently finds itself.

Part 2—National Resilience and Mobilisation within Layered Defence—a Comparative Analysis

Using the layered defence construct, described in Part 1, as a common analytical framework, this section offers a comparative analysis of four resilience and comprehensive defence approaches: NATO's resilience agenda, Singapore's TD construct, the Baltic states' total resistance model and Taiwan's ODC.

NATO's Resilience Agenda

NATO resilience requirements (mandated under Article 3 of the North Atlantic Treaty) include the twin components of military capacity and civil preparedness. Each NATO nation is obliged to maintain its own national resilience and mobilisation capability. In effect, collective defence commitments under Article 5 of the treaty serve to complement self-reliance commitments from each nation to its allies under Article 3. At their 2016 Warsaw summit, NATO leaders committed to enhancing resilience across seven baseline requirements.³⁴ These are:

1. Assured continuity of government and critical government services
2. Resilient energy supplies: back-up plans and power grids, internally and across borders
3. Ability to deal effectively with uncontrolled movement of people, and to de-conflict these movements from NATO's military deployments
4. Resilient food and water resources: ensuring supplies are safe from disruption or sabotage
5. Ability to deal with mass casualties and disruptive health crises: ensuring civilian health systems can cope and sufficient medical supplies are stocked and secure
6. Resilient civil communications systems: ensuring telecommunications and cyber networks function even under crisis conditions, with sufficient back-up capacity (Note: in November 2019, NATO defence ministers stressed the need for reliable communications systems including 5G, robust options to restore these systems, priority access to national authorities in times of crisis, and thorough assessments of all risks to communications systems)

7. Resilient transport systems: ensuring NATO forces can move across alliance territory rapidly and that civilian services can rely on transport networks, even in a crisis.³⁵

This framework represents a recognition that civil preparedness and resilience, while well-resourced during the Cold War, became less effective after 1991. Russia's seizure of Crimea in 2014 prompted a reassessment, leading to reinvestment and increased resilience efforts led by the international defence staff and NATO's ACT. The principal mechanisms for advancing NATO resilience have included high-level commitments at NATO summits in 2016, 2019 and 2022; creation of a NATO resilience symposium that has met regularly since 2019 to pursue data sharing, common standards and collaborative resilience; and capability development through NATO-accredited centres of excellence (COEs). COEs are international military organisations that train and educate leaders and specialists from NATO member and partner countries, engage in doctrine development, and work on lessons learned, interoperability and experimentation.³⁶ NATO-accredited COEs support military and civil resilience capabilities, including countering improvised explosive devices, C2, cooperative cyber defence, crisis management and disaster response, energy security, defence against terrorism, joint chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear defence, and stability policing.³⁷ They provide trained personnel, research, and common concepts, doctrine and procedures across the alliance.

In addition, although not currently a NATO COE, the European COE for countering hybrid threats, in Helsinki, is jointly funded by the European Union, specific nations and NATO. The centre was established in 2017 by a network of nine participating nations, along with multinational institutions within NATO and the EU.³⁸ Its establishment reflects the heightened focus on resilience and great power competition among Nordic and Baltic nations following Crimea, and the status of Finland as an EU member but not (at the time) a NATO ally. The accession of Finland to the alliance in 2023 has not yet resulted in the counter-hybrid COE becoming a NATO COE, but its focus is likely to remain on cross-cutting issues including legal resilience, deterrence and cyber resilience.

While initially emphasising civil preparedness, NATO's resilience framework was adapted in 2019 to sharpen its focus on communications systems, cybersecurity and information security.³⁹ It has continued to evolve. For example, COVID-19 exposed nations' reliance on extended supply chains for critical commodities, prompting greater emphasis on supply chain resilience. All NATO-accredited COEs were tasked to develop lessons learned from the pandemic, under a process coordinated by NATO's Joint Analysis Centre for Lessons Learned, located in Lisbon.⁴⁰ Likewise, the alliance noted the need to improve resilience against 'invisible' (i.e. actorless) threats⁴¹ and announced a Strengthened Resilience Commitment in June 2021.⁴² This commitment, for the first time, introduced the concept of 'democratic resilience', noting 'increasingly pervasive hostile information activities, including disinformation, aimed at destabilising our societies and undermining our shared values; and attempts to interfere with our democratic processes and good governance'.⁴³ It informed a proposal to establish a centre for democratic resilience focused on countering misinformation, disinformation and foreign influence. This proposal has been controversial among member nations on civil liberties and national sovereignty grounds, and has not been implemented so far.⁴⁴

NATO's Resilience Framework: Implications for Australia

In a broad sense, Australia can learn much from NATO's approach to resilience and mobilisation, particularly the alliance's strengthened resilience commitment since 2021 (in effect, a partial mobilisation in the face of Russia's build-up ahead of the invasion of Ukraine). Simply having a stated set of resilience priorities—centrally updated, furthered by a coordinating body and advanced through a network of capacity-building centres—helps focus efforts. NATO's multinational character means that resilience rests on intergovernmental data sharing, while in Australia's case the states and territories could benefit from aligning with Commonwealth priorities, while drawing on national resources.

Australia's critical infrastructure legislation shows some overlap with NATO's resilience agenda. The Security Legislation Amendment (Critical Infrastructure) Bill 2021 identified 11 critical sectors: communications; financial services and markets; data storage or processing; defence industry; higher education and research; energy, food and grocery; health care and medical; space technology; transport; and water and sewerage.⁴⁵ Australia's policy includes areas (space technology, higher education and

research, defence industry, and financial services and markets) not covered in NATO's framework. Conversely, two NATO functions—continuity of government and control of mass population movement—are not explicit in Australia's legislation, though they are covered under existing policies. It is of course worth noting that critical infrastructure protection, mobilisation, and national resilience are different though overlapping categories.

A major omission in NATO's framework is supply chain resilience. NATO's pandemic lessons learned process has not yet resulted in an updated framework to include supply chain resilience as an additional, eighth baseline requirement. In Australia's case, the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, in cooperation with India and Japan) represents a national effort to strengthen supply chains in the Indo-Pacific.⁴⁶ Analyses by the Productivity Commission and by the Office of Supply Chain Resilience in the Department of Industry, Science and Resources have improved interdepartmental coordination.⁴⁷ Home Affairs's establishment of critical technology supply chain principles further supports these efforts at the policy level.⁴⁸ Arguably, however, more needs to be done, particularly by Defence, given Australia's degree of reliance on platforms, systems and supply classes (including several key natures of ammunition) that are manufactured offshore and would have to be imported across potentially threatened sea lanes in the case of conflict.

Singapore's Total Defence Model

Singapore has a strong historical focus on homeland defence and resilience, driven by the circumstances of the nation's founding and its geographical positioning between larger (and not always friendly) neighbours. The TD concept was formally created only in 1984, but it draws on the national service program created in 1967. This, in turn, built upon internal security arrangements established by the Malayan Federation (which included Singapore at the time) during the Malayan Emergency (1948–1960). It also reflected lessons learned from Singapore's experience of occupation by Japan in 1942–1945. The Swiss and Finnish models of TD have been cited as sources for Singapore's model, the goal of which is to create a civil defence framework and elevate it alongside pre-existing military defence arrangements, forming an overarching national security capability that draws on Singapore's full resources and gives every Singaporean citizen a part to play.

When first established in 1984, TD comprised five pillars (military, civil, economic, social, and psychological) with a sixth, digital, added in 2019 to reflect increased cyberthreats. Singapore updated its model to include digital defence at around the same time that NATO increased its emphasis on digital resilience within the alliance resilience framework, perhaps reflecting heightened global appreciation of the risk of cyber-attack and malign influence. There have been calls in Singapore's parliament to add a seventh pillar, climate. While this proposal remains under discussion, the current pillars are described by the Singaporean Government as follows:

- **Military defence** is having a strong Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) to deter aggression and protect the country. It also involves citizens doing their part to support the military. This involves obligatory national service in the SAF for two years by able-bodied males above 16 years of age, followed by reserve service with obligations to maintain physical fitness and attend annual in-camp training.
- **Civil defence** provides for the safety and basic needs of the whole community so that life may go on as normally as possible during emergencies. This pillar includes police, fire, ambulance and the Singapore Civil Defence Force, a uniformed organisation under the Singapore Ministry of Home Affairs which provides firefighting, rescue, emergency medical support and civil defence.
- **Economic defence** is the government, business and industry organising themselves to support the economy at all times. Individuals contribute by working hard and meeting the challenges of development. Those who continually improve themselves to stay relevant play an even bigger role. Economic defence includes stockpiling key commodities including food, water, medical supplies and personal protective equipment, along with efforts to create redundant supply chains and safeguard water supplies.
- **Social defence** is about people living and working together in harmony and spending time on the interests of the nation and community. Social defence is focused on countering foreign influence, radicalism and extremism, while keeping Singapore's multicultural and multi-faith society harmonious.

- **Digital defence** requires every individual to be the first line of defence against threats from the digital domain. Digital defence includes cybersecurity efforts, training of cyber defence teams and regular audits of critical digital infrastructure.
- **Psychological Defence** is each person's commitment to and confidence in the nation's future. In addition to focusing on mental health, this component includes countering misinformation and disinformation, and building psychological resilience.⁴⁹

The TD framework has been applied in several crises, most recently during the COVID-19 pandemic. A 2023 study noted that Singapore's COVID-19 pandemic experience had shown that TD was 'a viable framework for facilitating a coordinated, multi-domain response to a non-conventional security threat' and that the persistence of non-conventional security threats and hybrid warfare indicated that Singapore must continue to adopt a TD approach.⁵⁰ The analysis noted that coordination and collaboration, including forging 'collaborative partnerships (i.e., government-to-government, public-to-private, private-to-private) for crisis management' must occur pre-crisis and that the 'immediacy of the on-going COVID-19 pandemic presents an opportunity for young Singaporeans to understand total defence as "lived" experience rather than a set of ideals or principles imposed from top-down'.⁵¹

Singapore's Total Defence Framework: Implications for Australia

Singapore has much to offer Australian policymakers' thinking about national resilience and mobilisation. As an open, connected society reliant on global trade and embedded in the international rules-based order, Singapore cannot pull up the drawbridge and attempt to turn itself into a fortress. Indeed, this was a key lesson from 1942, which informed the creation of TD in 1984. The TD framework represents a functional approach to resilience, considered as a set of activities involving various categories of action, rather than (as in the NATO resilience agenda or Australia's 2021 legislation) a target set to be protected. As an approach that has adapted over decades to a range of threats including military tension, terrorism, financial crises and pandemics, TD has proven its utility and flexibility. It shows the value of a capable, empowered home affairs team that embeds defence (SAF), police, internal security and intelligence representatives in multi-functional teams and coordination centres, developing enduring relationships among personnel within operational departments.

Certain pillars of Singapore's approach—social and psychological defence, and some elements of economic defence—might prove controversial in Australia if implemented in the same way as in Singapore. Even in Singapore's close-knit environment, some aspects of social cohesion and psychological mobilisation have been criticised by opposition parties (and challenged in the courts) as authoritarian. This, of course, has also been true of Australian efforts to counter violent extremism, and (particularly at the state level) of pandemic-era mandates, travel bans and lockdowns. In this sense, though Singapore differs from Australia in many ways, the government of Singapore faces similar challenges in preserving human rights and democratic freedoms while building resilience against foreign influence and hybrid threats. As for NATO's centre for democratic resilience, this inherent tension is likely to be one of the more contested aspects of any future national resilience program.

One other noteworthy aspect of Singapore's approach, of relevance to Australia's consideration of national mobilisation, is its use of a large-scale national service scheme including all male Singaporean citizens and second-generation permanent residents. National service has, of course, been a longstanding—and at times politically controversial—aspect of Australia's national defence preparedness (as discussed below), and Singapore's experience is a useful point of comparison despite its differences from Australia.⁵² As of 2023, this scheme produced approximately 50,000 national service full-time personnel performing an initial two years of compulsory full-time service. After this initial period, national servicemen perform a further 10 years of part-time service as operationally ready reservists, during which time they are assigned to operational units and required to undertake regular individual and unit training.

As of 2023, the total available reserve personnel pool generated in this manner was approximately 350,000 part-time personnel, on top of the 50,000 performing full-time service. All Singaporean male citizens and second-generation permanent residents are required to register for national service at the age of 16 years and six months, and then undergo psychological, aptitude, medical and other testing to determine suitability for different forms of service. Service can be undertaken in the SAF,

Singapore Police Force, or Singapore Civil Defence Force (a uniformed service under the Ministry of Home Affairs, which provides emergency services including firefighting, rescue, and emergency medical response, and coordinates the national civil defence scheme under the TD construct).

Baltic States ('Small-State Resilience' and 'Total Defence')

The Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) each have distinctive approaches to resilience and mobilisation. However, the similarities among these nations' approaches outweigh their differences, reflecting shared geography—living next door to an aggressive great power—and a common history of imperial Russian and Soviet occupation, followed by hybrid warfare directed at them by the post-1991 Russian Federation.

The Baltic model:

*includes not just the national armed forces and allied forces, but also the mobilisation of all national resources towards defeating an invader, along with active resistance by every citizen that is in any way legitimate under international law.*⁵³

Civilians under hostile occupation are prepared to engage in both non-violent and armed resistance under a legal framework, controlled, directed and supported by the national government (whether inside the country or operating externally as a government-in-exile), with the objectives of:

*imposing direct or indirect costs on an occupying force, securing external support, denying an occupier's political and economic consolidation, reducing an occupier's capacity for repression, and maintaining and expanding popular support [for the legitimate government].*⁵⁴

Current capabilities reflect recent hybrid, political, economic and cyberwarfare attacks from Russia, and heightened mobilisation posture since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Each country considers military defence as 'closely intertwined with nonmilitary or civilian capabilities and policies, with a special role for the citizenry and the national consciousness' and has adopted a whole-of-society approach that is 'now considered an integral part of national defence and encompasses not only active and passive resistance but also early warning and protection of the population'.⁵⁵ Governments in the Baltic states are 'educating their societies

about national defence and creating familiarity and links with military service branches via reintroduction or expansion of mandatory service and strengthening of national voluntary forces'.⁵⁶

Components of this approach include:

1. Military defence capabilities
2. Civilian support for military defence
3. Public-private cooperation for defence
4. Psychological defence
5. Civil protection and civil defence
6. Strategic communications
7. Domestic and internal security
8. Continuous operation of the state and country
9. Cybersecurity
10. Economic resilience.⁵⁷

Sometimes described as 'deterrence through resilience', this approach recognises that as small nations (in terms of both territory and population), Baltic countries are unlikely to defeat a direct invasion. However, a resilient posture demonstrating the costs any invader would suffer may change an adversary's calculus. Cost-imposition strategies can be structured across multiple categories, including time (slowing an invader), space (forcing an attacker to secure multiple locations or extended supply lines) and materiel (requiring an attacker to consume resources beyond the value of the objective sought).⁵⁸ The goal is to demonstrate, ahead of conflict, that the cost of invasion would outweigh any benefit, and thus deter adversary action. Recently a fourth category—reputational cost—has been raised by the damage Russian forces initially suffered in Ukraine to their reputation for competence and effectiveness. The aim of cost imposition is to defeat an adversary's 'will to engage in—or continue with—aggression by denying benefits, increasing costs and influencing their perception of both costs and benefits' while at the same time the ability to resist an invasion would 'send an important political message to Allied governments, namely that the local population does not accept the new rulers and is putting their lives on the line to defend their national sovereignty'.⁵⁹

Beyond these similarities, Baltic states differ from each other in their planning and policy settings, approaches to conscription, and civilian resistance frameworks. Estonia, having suffered cyber and physical attacks, emphasises territorial and cyber sovereignty, supported by 'participation of all sectors of society, including government institutions, the private sector and civil organizations'.⁶⁰ Estonia has maintained conscription since its independence in 1991. Besides the regular military, the Estonian Defence League, an armed volunteer organisation supported by Estonia's department of defence, has approximately 17,000 members and another 11,000 volunteers within its women's and youth leagues.⁶¹ It works with Estonian special operations forces and conventional forces to conduct territorial defence and guerrilla resistance in time of war, and performs civil defence and emergency response functions in peacetime.

Latvia currently maintains an all-volunteer military, and focuses on improving its ability to:

*resist hybrid threats that may be economic, political and technological in nature, to counter information warfare and, like Estonia, to increase social cohesion. As outlined in the 2016 State Defence Concept, civil-military cooperation is part of the national security approach and brings together state administrative institutions, the general public and the national armed forces. According to the Latvian Constitution, the ability of the population to engage in individual and collective resistance is regarded as an indivisible part of the national identity and civic confidence, forming the foundation of state defence against any aggressor.*⁶²

Lithuania reintroduced conscription in 2016. Its approach includes mobilising all national resources to defeat an invader, along with guerrilla resistance by all citizens, as noted above. Lithuanian strategic documents include the concept of civil resistance, defined to include all citizens of Lithuania, either acting as individuals or formed into small units, and engaging in a range of activities, both armed and unarmed, against aggression and occupation.⁶³ Lithuania has also:

used the concept of 'comprehensive security' which stands for the cooperation of military and civilian institutions and interoperability of military and civilian capabilities ... The Ministry of National Defence has supported this effort by publishing extensive practical

*recommendations on how to prepare for and act in emergencies and war, issuing a brochure with focus on resilience in 2015, and issuing a third volume focusing on resistance in 2016.*⁶⁴

In its 2020 threat assessment, Lithuania's intelligence service laid out a useful categorisation of issues relevant to national resilience. These included regional security, military security, activities of hostile intelligence and security services, protection of constitutional order, information security, economic and energy security, terrorism and migration, and global security.⁶⁵

In 2019, working with the Swedish Defence University, the US theatre special operations component in Europe (SOCEUR) developed a Resistance Operating Concept (ROC) building on Baltic and Nordic experiences and lessons learned from Second World War and Soviet-era resistance movements, armed and unarmed.⁶⁶ The ROC is complemented, within US organisations, by a Resistance Manual for personnel engaged in support to resistance, and within participating countries by civil and (in some cases) armed resistance handbooks.⁶⁷ In early 2020, SOCEUR and its partner nations co-sponsored a symposium alongside Special Operations Component Pacific (SOC PAC), enabling Taiwan, South Korea and other Indo-Pacific countries to compare notes on total defence, contributing to Taiwan's ODC. The ROC is likely to be updated in the near future, to reflect lessons learned by regional countries as a result of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Baltic Total Defence: Implications for Australia

The Baltic countries differ from Australia in that direct military invasion of national territory by a neighbouring country is the primary threat towards which their mobilisation and resilience systems are oriented. As a result, and because of the size mismatch with Russia, territorial defence (including armed resistance against an occupier) is a key component of the Baltic model. Australia has lower risk of direct territorial invasion, hence less need for Baltic-style asymmetric territorial defence. At the same time, Australia's offshore infrastructure, extended trade networks and reliance on international telecommunications and supply chains make it possible for an adversary to dislocate Australian society without an invasion. Therefore, the Baltic focus on cyber defence, rapid national mobilisation, whole-of-nation partnerships and use of emergency services and civil defence leagues to bolster capability in the event of war are all relevant to Australia.

More importantly, deterrence through resilience and changing an adversary's calculus through cost imposition are highly relevant for Australia, given that a physical invasion of Australia's territory is both relatively unlikely, and not necessarily the most dangerous course of action an adversary could adopt.⁶⁸ As a result, affecting an adversary's decision-making before the outbreak of any conflict—and thereby influencing the adversary's choice of methods and targets—is particularly important for Australia, as is the focus (likewise critical for the Baltic states) on preserving sovereignty amid great power conflict in a wider region. Lithuania's threat assessment categories (regional security, military security, activities of hostile intelligence and security services, protection of constitutional order, information security, economic and energy security, terrorism and migration, and global security) are a useful framework through which to consider Australia's national mobilisation needs.

Taiwan's Overall Defence Concept

The Republic of China (Taiwan) introduced its ODC in 2020, following debate within the Taiwanese Government and military-to-military engagement with like-minded countries. The ODC is Taiwan's concept to deter and, if necessary, defeat attack by Communist China. As an integrated strategy, the ODC emphasises Taiwan's constrained resources, 'existing [geographical] advantages, civilian infrastructure and asymmetric warfare capabilities'.⁶⁹ The concept noted that China's defence budget at that time outweighed Taiwan's by a factor of 22, while its active forces outnumbered Taiwan's twelvefold. Recognising that this asymmetry would only grow in the future, the ODC sought to shift away from Taiwan's traditional focus on small numbers of expensive, high-end conventional weapon systems, towards a larger number of smaller, stealthier, cheaper, more easily dispersed and thus more survivable capabilities.

In support of this reorientation, the ODC emphasises national resilience ahead of and during conflict, whole-of-nation support to the armed forces, homeland defence, deterrence through resilience, and civil resistance. It also offers a mobilisation construct, with one of its two components—'force buildup'—focused on developing a survivable force that can endure missile, air and cyber attacks ahead of (or instead of) an invasion. Civilian infrastructure is repurposed for dual use or military application, and a whole-of-nation civil resistance structure supports Taiwan's military reserve forces, who would act as an asymmetric territorial defence force.⁷⁰

China's response to a visit to Taipei by US Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi in August 2022 involved the unprecedented launching of missiles directly over Taiwan, and triggered 'a visible swelling of public concern about the possibility of war erupting across the Taiwan Strait'. Such factors have resulted in 'a marked increase in the Taiwanese public's interest in civil defence preparedness' and a recognition of national mobilisation and resilience as a key component of deterrence and a way to shape an adversary's calculus ahead of conflict.⁷¹

National resilience and mobilisation programs that support the ODC's military elements include civil defence programs, along with several 'bottom-up' approaches started—on a voluntary basis but with government support—by civil society groups. One such program is the Kuma Academy, a volunteer organisation funded by donations from the public and wealthy individuals, which conducts one-day courses for civilians across a range of civil defence and emergency response skills. The academy's courses are taught by professional instructors, and also cover resistance warfare skills and 'topics like cognitive warfare methods, modern warfare, and basic rescue and evacuation practice'.⁷² Another is the Forward Alliance, founded by a Democratic Progressive Party politician who is also a military veteran, which provides training courses for groups of 400 to 500 civilians per month, focusing on civil defence and disaster relief.⁷³

In Taiwan the legal authority for civil defence was formalised in January 2021 with the passage of the Civil Defence Act, which gave the Ministry of Interior (MOI) authority over civil defence in peacetime and tasked the MOI to raise a civil defence force that would transfer to Ministry of Defense control in wartime. The law details the legal scope of civil defence, appoints management authorities to coordinate defence at the central level and down to the village level, and specifies the organisation of civil defence forces.⁷⁴ Within the MOI, the National Police Agency (NPA) runs a civil defence command and control office. As a recent study notes:

there is no official data on the number of civilians currently involved in the NPA's civilian defence force, and details about their training and proficiency are sparse. In turn, this lack of information has allowed for little public accountability around what the law mandates. Recent anecdotal evidence claims that the NPA's civil defence force has

*around 50,000 civilians, mostly comprised of men between the ages of 50 and 70, who perform four hours of training per year.*⁷⁵

The initially lacklustre performance of the civil defence force may have contributed to a groundswell of bottom-up national resilience activities in Taiwan, particularly noticeable since Russia's invasion of Ukraine.⁷⁶

Taiwan's Overall Defence Concept: Implications for Australia

As a like-minded democracy in the Indo-Pacific region, under both hybrid and conventional threat from an aggressive China, Taiwan's approach has much to offer for Australian policymakers. The creation of a single central authority under a home affairs ministry, with the establishment of a single national C2 centre within the National Police Agency, offers lessons for how to structure a civil defence and mobilisation capability, while also offering cautionary indications of what can happen when a motivated population perceives that limited steps are being taken by the government and takes matters into its own hands. Taiwan's ODC concept draws directly from NATO's resilience agenda and from the SOCEUR/SOCPAC workshop series that shared with Taiwan several key lessons from the Baltic and Nordic states' approach to resilience and asymmetric defence.

Taiwan differs from Australia in significant ways. Most notably, it is far smaller in land area than Australia (though similar in population, at 24 million people compared to Australia's 26 million). Taiwan is threatened by invasion from mainland China, as well as blockade and rocket or missile strikes, along with hybrid political, economic, cyber and information warfare attacks. Thus, as for the Baltic states, direct territorial invasion looms larger for Taiwanese analysts than for Australian ones. At the same time, like Australia, Taiwan is a democracy whose survival is tied to the free global flow of commerce and commodities under a stable international rules-based order. A 'fortress Taiwan' would not be sustainable over the long term, even though (unlike Singapore) Taiwan does have a forested, mountainous hinterland that might sustain guerrilla-based resistance warfare for an indefinite period under occupation. Thus, for Australians, Taiwan's mobilisation approach offers insights on how to regulate, structure and operate a national resilience system in a democracy being subjected to hybrid warfare and foreign interference.

Part 3—An Australian Approach to Mobilisation and National Resilience

Insights from the Comparative Analysis

Australia's circumstances differ in detail from each of the four comparative examples analysed. However, relevant insights for Australian resilience include the following:

- Establishing a stated set of resilience priorities—centrally updated, furthered by a coordinating body and advanced through a network of capacity-building centres—helps focus resilience efforts and allows states and territories to align with national priorities and draw on national resources.
- Supply chain resilience was an under-emphasised area before the pandemic. NATO may update its framework to include supply chain resilience as an additional requirement. In Australia's case, the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative and the Office of Supply Chain Resilience may help strengthen supply chains, as will Home Affairs's critical technology supply chain principles. However, this is a dynamic area that requires continuous monitoring and updating in order to keep abreast of changing circumstances. Arguably, a concentrated effort to integrate and align supply chain resilience efforts across Commonwealth agencies and between the Commonwealth and the states and territories should also be a high priority for the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.
- Singapore's TD framework is a functional approach to resilience, defined in this context as a set of activities involving various categories of action, rather than as a target set to be protected. In updating the categories of national security noted in *Strong and Secure*, Australian planners may wish to draw on Singapore, Taiwan, the Baltic states and NATO for updated functional frameworks.
- A total defence concept shows the value of a capable homeland security organisation that embeds defence force, police, internal security and intelligence community personnel in multi-functional teams and coordination centres, developing relationships among personnel within operational departments.

- Preserving human rights and democratic freedoms while building resilience against foreign influence is critical, but problematic for multiple countries and for NATO. Countering disinformation and foreign influence is likely to be one of the more contested aspects of any future national resilience program.
- The Baltic states' focus areas of cyber defence, national mobilisation, whole-of-nation partnerships and use of emergency services and civil defence leagues to bolster capability in the event of war are all relevant to Australia.
- Deterrence through resilience and use of cost-imposition strategies to change an adversary's calculus are highly relevant concepts for Australia, as is the Baltic states' focus on preserving sovereignty amid great power conflict in the region.
- Taiwan's creation of a single central authority under its home affairs agency, with a national command and control centre in the national police headquarters, offers lessons on structuring civil defence. The Taiwanese Civil Defence Act of 2021 is worth studying as a model for coordination of national resilience.
- Similar to the Baltic states, the threat of direct invasion looms larger for Taiwan than for Australia. At the same time, like Australia's and Singapore's, Taiwan's survival is tied to the free global flow of commerce and commodities under a stable international rules-based order. Taiwan's approach offers insight on national resilience in a democracy subjected to hybrid warfare and foreign interference.
- Several of the countries studied (and many NATO nations) have some form of national service or conscription scheme. This allows them to maintain large numbers of trained reservists who previously performed full-time service and are available as a personnel base for mobilisation and wartime expansion, and for use in emergency services and territorial defence roles. Australia has not had a national service scheme since the 1970s. However, universal military service was a component of Australian defence policy from Federation onward under governments of all political orientations. Likewise, schemes such as the short-lived Ready Reserve program of the 1990s received significant public support. In the context of a broader consideration of national mobilisation, efforts to bolster the size and capability of Australia's Reserve force—whether linked to compulsory national service or not—are worth considering.

In addition to these insights, and building on the general environment described in Part 1, two recent developments affected all resilience approaches discussed in Part 2 to such a degree that they are worth discussing in their own right. These were the COVID-19 pandemic and Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine since 2022.

Insights from the COVID-19 Pandemic

As noted by Singapore, NATO, Taiwan and others, a key lesson from COVID-19 was the critical importance of supply chain resilience. This included the need to assure access to suppliers of critical commodities and materials (such as pharmaceuticals and personal protective equipment); monitor and prevent foreign actors' attempts to drain critical stockpiles before or during a crisis; detect and prevent flooding of markets with counterfeit or contraband supplies; develop sovereign sealift and airlift capacity for assured emergency supply (for acquisition abroad, and regional/local distribution inside the country); and sustain national transport, energy and logistical infrastructure under conditions of lockdown and restricted inter-state movement.

In addition to demonstrating the importance of supply chain resilience, the multi-year pandemic highlighted the need for resilience capacity to deal with protracted emergencies as well as acute crises. Likewise, the need for resilience from multiple overlapping shocks (as seen in Australia with the near-simultaneous bushfire emergency, pandemic, flood emergencies and ongoing terrorist threat) became clear during the pandemic. When China's anger at Australia's call for an investigation into the pandemic's origin resulted in diplomatic bullying and trade sanctions (as referenced in detail above), the need for resilience to hybrid warfare became even clearer.

Policy alignment and coordinated action among local, state and Commonwealth governments and implementing departments, via National Cabinet, was—as in Singapore—an example of repurposing existing resilience arrangements for the pandemic. Policymakers may wish to consider whether Australian governments have sufficient powers and authorities (especially at the Commonwealth level) to marshal an effective national response to future, potentially more severe, pandemics. At the same time, the importance of maintaining public trust through credible, accurate crisis communications became apparent at the national and state level. Simultaneously, the need to preserve civil liberties

and political/human rights under crisis conditions offered a foretaste of the dilemmas that could face Australian governments at all levels in the event of escalating hybrid warfare and foreign interference.

Insights from the War in Ukraine

Much like the pandemic, the escalation of conflict in Ukraine since February 2022 affected resilience and national mobilisation efforts for all the countries examined. So far, key insights include enhanced risk to offshore infrastructure, including oil and gas pipelines and underwater fibre-optic cables. Since the sabotage of the Nord Stream 1 and 2 pipelines, new targeting norms appear to be emerging in which adversaries and allies alike seem increasingly willing to target islands, port and harbour infrastructure, energy systems, submarine fibre-optic cables and other offshore telecommunications infrastructure.⁷⁷ For Australia—with the world's seventh-longest coastline at over 25,000 kilometres, and more than 92,000 kilometres of fibre-optic cable connecting the country internationally and linking coastal cities—the implications of a change in global targeting norms are very significant.⁷⁸ Neither Home Affairs nor the ADF are currently resourced for continuous overwatch or protection of this national asset.⁷⁹

Targeting space-based infrastructure (using cyber or kinetic means) has also been a feature of the war in Ukraine, with communications satellites targeted by cyber-attacks early in the conflict, and jamming of GPS becoming widespread as the war continues. The implications of loss of GPS coverage—which would paralyse EFTPOS, smart-city infrastructure, transport logistics and other critical functions—would be profound for Australia. Space-based assets are increasingly vulnerable as targeting of space systems becomes more widespread. On the ground, targeting electrical grids (through missile strikes, cyber-attacks, and sabotage) has been a feature of Russia's campaign against Ukraine, while sabotage of railways, bridges, storage depots and air bases has formed part of Ukraine's response (including, allegedly, on Russian territory). The need to protect both space-based and terrestrial space infrastructure in the face of such threats has been a key lesson.⁸⁰

A further lesson from Ukraine is the centrality of manufacturing capacity to support large-scale, high-intensity attrition warfare, especially given the heavy ammunition usage that has depleted stocks across NATO and is stressing manufacturing capacity and supply chains. One study

in 2022 noted that the return of industrial warfare puts a premium on the ability to mobilise manufacturing surge capacity, and that the offshoring of Western manufacturing capacity in recent decades hampers the ability to ramp up production.⁸¹ The study noted that, in contrast to the Second World War, when the United States quickly converted a robust civilian manufacturing base to military production, it is now both harder and much slower to mobilise industry when the manufacturing base would have to be built from scratch.⁸²

Stockpiles, and replenishment rates, of key systems and supplies also emerged as a key resilience lesson from Ukraine, enabling national mobilisation at speed—including territorial defence and disaster response for those countries able to respond quickly. Second-order effects on key commodities including grain, fertiliser, natural gas, and a range of strategic minerals also emerged as important impacts of the war, as did the threat to nuclear power plants in Ukraine, which prompted a re-emphasis on large-scale nuclear/radiological civil defence and preparedness requirements.⁸³

Finally, multiple NATO nations, including Finland and Sweden (both of whom joined NATO after the full-scale invasion), have examined national mobilisation through the lens of deterrence through resilience, territorial defence, national cohesion and the ability to rapidly scale up the personnel base via the generation of trained reservist personnel. Finland and Sweden both have robust selective service schemes, while the Baltic states have extensive defence league and conscription capabilities, all of which provide a deep pool of potential recruits for expansion in time of war. Australia lacks an equivalent and, although its circumstances are different (and would therefore imply a different approach to both national service and territorial defence), national service is an area that seems worthy of significantly greater attention.

Part 4—Conclusions and Recommendations

As this article suggests, the 'uncertain and threatening' environment identified in recent Australian strategic policy documents continues to intensify. In this environment, mobilisation for conflict (or for crisis short of conflict), along with national resilience, will require a more extensive, robust, well-resourced approach than in the recent past—especially if Australia seeks to future-proof national resilience and mobilisation capacity against emerging threats. This applies both to external threats and to internal security, to countering foreign influence and to protecting the civil and human rights of all Australians. National mobilisation—for defence and for a broader range of national objectives—is thus a whole-of-community effort that will require focused leadership at every level of Australian government and civil society. Accordingly, government should seek to ensure that both Defence and Home Affairs have access to the necessary subject matter expertise, specialised personnel and critical skills, in order to be effective in this rapidly evolving environment.

All the comparative examples studied in this article incorporate a functional or categorised list of resilience functions and/or critical capabilities. Australia could benefit from aligning its framework with the NATO resilience agenda, noting the need to include supply chains and offshore infrastructure as additional categories. In addition, the functions of national resilience (identified in the Singaporean, Baltic and Taiwanese models) could be used to develop and assess resilience capabilities across interdepartmental lines of activity.

In the context of national mobilisation for total defence, many of the countries studied (including Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Greece, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden, Singapore, Taiwan and Turkey) currently enforce some form of conscription, with or without the option to undertake civil defence or emergency service. In addition, several NATO countries (Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the United States) have legislation enabling mandatory military service in the event of conflict.

In Australia, national service has a long and sometimes controversial history. Future national service—which might include civil defence, working with state emergency services, or similar resilience tasks—would also be politically fraught unless approached through an open, nonpartisan national discussion. As the comparative cases

show, universal male conscription is not necessarily the only (or the most desirable) option. Full or partial selective service, with multiple modes of service (full-time/part-time, Reserve service, civil defence association, emergency services) for both men and women might make more sense in the Australian context, subject to further analysis.

Strong local associations, community organisations and civil society participation are a feature of several Baltic states' approaches to resilience, as in Singapore and Taiwan. Cooperation among civil society groups, state emergency services, territorial defence and regular or reserve military units provide both improved national resilience in the event of crisis, and a deeper pool of potential personnel for military and civil defence tasking in time of conflict.

A feature of several nations' efforts to psychologically prepare the public for national mobilisation has been the issue of civil defence and resistance handbooks using online, broadcast and physical media. A version of this was attempted, to a limited degree, in Australia during the pandemic and in the early years of the Global War on Terrorism. Lessons from these previous instances of partial national mobilisation—both positive and negative—would be well worth studying ahead of any future large-scale mobilisation requirement.

Finally, as noted at the beginning of this article, national resilience and mobilisation capability rest on policy settings for health and education (at both state and Commonwealth level), innovation policy (including intellectual property and copyright protection), industrial policy, critical technologies and commodities policy, biosecurity legislation, energy policy (including energy import and export policy and climate or emissions policy), border security legislation, critical infrastructure policy, and emergency powers and regulatory authorities. Several of these areas lie outside the immediate remit of a national resilience effort, but all would influence the ultimate success or failure of such an effort.

Recommendations

Based on the above, Australian planners and policymakers may wish to consider some or all of the following recommendations:

- Update the pillars of national security identified in Strong and Secure (2017) to align with more recent legislation, with the findings of the 2020 and 2023 strategic reviews and the 2024 National Defence Strategy, and with allied approaches to national resilience and mobilisation.
- Consider developing another, comprehensive national security strategy document to update the previous strategy, perhaps with a commitment to regular comprehensive updates. This would of course be distinct from the National Defence Strategy in that it would sit at the overall level of national security policy, rather than military strategy.
- Develop a robust model for national resilience and national mobilisation within an integrated overall layered defence and national security framework.
- Where appropriate, establish collaborative relationships with NATO-accredited COEs and the European COE for Countering Hybrid Threats.
- Consider significant enhancements to supply chain resilience, including stockpiling of critical resources and protection of offshore infrastructure.
- Develop a set of principles for countering foreign influence in a future crisis while protecting the civil and human rights of all Australians and rebuilding trust in institutions.
- Develop a national mobilisation plan—covering both defence and a broader range of national objectives—as a whole-of-community effort, engaging leaders at every level of Australian government and civil society.
- Develop measures to ensure that the departments of Defence (including the ADF), Home Affairs and Prime Minister and Cabinet have access to the necessary subject matter expertise, specialised personnel and critical skills, in order to be effective in this rapidly evolving environment.

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Endnotes

- 1 This paper is an updated and revised version of a draft paper previously prepared by the author, but never published, in support of the Department of Home Affairs' National Resilience Task Force in 2023. No funding was received for the earlier research, and the author declares no conflict of interest or other sources of funding.
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The First Half Measures: The Australian Militia and the Fitful Path to Mobilisation, 1939–1941

Dayton McCarthy

Australia awakened slowly. The outbreak of the war did not bring an immediate threat to the safety of the people living in Australia ... clearly the first care of a nation on entering war was to make certain that home defence measures were adequate to meet any probable threat. But after the first fortnight of war, it was difficult for either the Government or its critics to find clear evidence that any immediate threat existed.¹

Introduction

The late Jeffrey Grey, in his seminal work *A Military History of Australia*, wrote that 'Australia was not prepared for war in 1939. It was not much better prepared when the war came to Australia's shores at the beginning of 1942'.² The first part of this statement was an indictment of the neglect of defence matters by successive federal governments during the straitened interwar period, although there was a belated improvement when the threat of a second war with Germany seemed too imminent to ignore. The second part of Grey's assertion relates to the home defence preparations taken between Australia's declaration of war on Germany in September 1939 and Japan's entry into the war in December 1941. During this period Australia raised and despatched overseas four

expeditionary divisions, distinguished from their First World War antecedents with the nomenclature of 2nd Australian Imperial Force or '2nd AIF'. In parallel, Australia had created a large Militia-based home defence organisation.³ In doing so it repeated the mistakes of the previous war wherein two separate military entities were created, each competing for the same finite pool of manpower and resources. Invariably, while no clear threat to Australia existed, the expeditionary forces received higher priority than the Militia at home. Such a situation was largely unavoidable due to the strictures of the *Defence Act 1903*, which forbade the use of the Militia outside of Australian territory. Moreover, competing priorities for manpower from war production industries would affect not only the size but also the quality of training provided to the part-time Militia forces as the government sought to reduce the impost that military training for home defence placed on the economic life of the nation.

Grey is correct in concluding that the neglect of the Militia as part of these home defence actions—despite almost two years' preparation time—was laid bare in 1942. However understanding the context of this period is important. The Australian Government had to balance overseas commitments, the switch to a war economy to support the wider war effort, and home defence. This article will discuss the part-time component of the Australian Army—the Militia—between 1939 and the end of 1941. This period may be seen as one of 'half measures' that laid a foundation, albeit a most imperfect one, for the Militia to build upon when it was mobilised fully from December 1941 in response to the imminent Japanese threat.

Pre-war Plans and Belated Preparations

To understand the period covered in this article, one must first appreciate the state and structure of the Army in 1939, the pre-war plans to counter raids or invasion, and the military preparations that had been undertaken since 1936. The interwar period was not a happy one for either the professional or part-time Australian soldier. Successive reductions in the defence budget allocation had negative impacts on equipment purchases, conditions of service, and funded training periods. Professional soldiers were forced to take unpaid leave, and promotion opportunities dried up. The key source of planned manpower for the interwar Militia (during this

time it was also referred to as the Citizen Forces), the Universal Training Scheme, was suspended in 1929. From this point, the Militia became a volunteer force competing with other forms of recreation. Militia training in the early 1930s was limited to six days of camp and six days of training at the local drill hall or depot. With high unemployment due to the continuing effects of the Great Depression, part-time military service could jeopardise civilian employment prospects, so only those with secure jobs and financial status could afford to indulge in citizen soldiering. The Militia, which continued to be structured on a 1920 plan of five infantry and two cavalry divisions, became a very hollow 'nucleus force' with a preponderance of officers and NCOs. To put this seven-division 'nucleus force' into perspective, the strength of the Army in 1935 was 1,810 permanent soldiers (staff officers, trainers, and a cadre of fortress troops to maintain coastal fortifications) and 26,270 Militia.⁴ This hollowness was not treated with undue alarm by successive Australian governments; they were focused on financial restraint, secure in the belief that the framework of imperial defence, most notably the 'Singapore Strategy', would allow sufficient time to mobilise and flesh out these skeleton formations with soldiers.⁵

This situation remained until 1933–1934, whereupon successive crises in Europe triggered greater government and public consciousness of defence matters. Even though the Army vote increased from this time, the priority was improving the fixed coastal defences.⁶ Despite this, the authorised establishment and actual achieved strengths of the Militia grew substantially in the latter half of the 1930s. In 1938, Cabinet approved increasing the Militia's authorised strength from 35,000 (despite rarely achieving 70 per cent of that) to 50,000.⁷ With new conditions of service measures supported by sustained recruiting, by March 1939 the Militia had filled its newly authorised establishment of 70,000.⁸ This seemed like an impressive reversal of fortunes, but the quality of training achieved left much to be desired. Decades of neglect and underfunding could not be remedied quickly, even it were possible within the small annual training allocation.

From 1936, Militia training became more closely aligned with its stated wartime role. For most Militia units, regardless of location, this role would be the defence of the key manufacturing and port areas of Sydney and Newcastle. These tasks were specified within several contingency plans (collectively known as the 'Plan of Concentration') that were developed by the Army in the late 1920s and updated throughout the next decade.⁹

These plans were predicated on the Army leadership's belief that it must prepare for an enemy multi-divisional landing, close to these key centres, which was intended to achieve a rapid, decisive victory (notably, this posture was contrary to government guidance to structure the Army to repel small raids).¹⁰ The plan stated that the capture of Sydney 'would cripple the industrial life of the country, and ... the moral effect alone ... may well be sufficient to force the Commonwealth to sue for peace'.¹¹ In response, the New South Wales based 2nd Military District allocated responsibility for the defence of Newcastle to the 1st Division and for the defence of Sydney to the 2nd Division.¹² The 1st and 2nd Cavalry and the 4th Division augmented the forward positions and provided the mobile reserve.¹³ As the plan required the equivalent of two corps (one each for the defence of Newcastle and Sydney) but no corps headquarters were in place, in 1938 all permanent force district commandants were promoted to Major-General and given responsibility to command all troops in the district in time of war.¹⁴ As both corps' tasks were located in New South Wales, the proposal to solve the span of command issue was to have two senior Militia officers on the unattached list (that is, not currently assigned to a position) assigned to command the field force elements comprising the bulk of the Army's combat power.¹⁵ Major-Generals Thomas Blamey and Gordon Bennett would command the Sydney and Newcastle corps respectively.¹⁶ In recognition of the proposed wartime role of the New South Wales formations, in January 1935, officers of the 1st and 2nd Divisions conducted a senior officers' tactical exercise, directed by the Chief of General Staff. The exercise plan was to repulse a landing of 20,000 men with 54 field guns and 72 machine guns in the Sydney region. The enemy—'Northland'—was a thinly veiled Japan. In the late 1930s, several militia camps also incorporated beach defence/anti-landing serials into the training.¹⁷

With the higher military direction to focus explicitly on coastal defence in accordance with the war plans, what was the actual training standard achieved on these exercises? The 1938 Squires Report provides some insights. Lieutenant-General EK Squires, a British regular officer, was appointed Inspector General of the Australian Military Forces (AMF) in 1938. After a six-month inspection tour of military dispositions throughout the country, he submitted a report to the Australian Government in December 1938. The Army's stated role was to protect key locations from raids and provide a basis for expansion to generate a field army in a relatively short time. The plan of concentration noted that if the strategic indicators gave

seven weeks' warning, it would take, from the point in time the government decided to mobilise, three weeks to assemble all Militia units allocated to the Sydney/Newcastle task and a further three weeks to concentrate them into defensive positions.¹⁸ This would, all things considered, have allowed for one week of training. In effect, the Militia would go to war with whatever level of training it had attained at the time. Squires determined that the Army's preparations to date had equipped it to be neither a trained 'force in being' nor large enough to be a basis for expansion. Squires noted and commended the 'keenness of all ranks, and considering their very limited opportunities for training ... the standard of efficiency attained'; however, this training was 'not more than enough to produce a partially-trained soldier'. Beyond the lack of key weapon systems such as anti-tank and Bren guns, Squires deemed the Militia's readiness to be poor. Its training was undermined by poor annual camp attendance rates; he ascertained that even a militiaman who had completed all required home and camp training would require weeks of intensive further training to be combat ready.¹⁹

If the training of soldiers and units was deemed inadequate, lacking too was the development of middle and senior ranking Militia officers. If the Army was to raise its five divisions to their war establishments, it also needed to train the Militia officers who would be required to staff the brigade, divisional—and, inevitably, corps—headquarters upon mobilisation. This need had been recognised by the Army for some time, but the funds and facilities had not been available. In July 1938, a Command and Staff School was established at Paddington to provide military training to both Militia and permanent officers. The school would equip Militia officers with the staff duties, administration, logistics and professional knowledge to be staff on formation headquarters, as well as preparing majors for promotion to lieutenant colonel and senior Militia officers to command divisions. This training was put into effect from early 1939 when several Militia officers went on full-time duty as staff officers on formation headquarters or as adjutants within units: this would release Staff Corps captains to undertake key roles in higher headquarters.²⁰

In spite of some improvements in the later years of the 1930s, structurally the Army in 1939 looked very much as it did in the decades prior: a multi-divisional, partially trained Militia-based force barely supported by a minuscule spine of full-time professionals in key enabling roles. As James

Morrison's PhD thesis observed, despite the Militia numbering 78,000 men immediately before the outbreak of war, 'this seemingly impressive number belied its capability [as] militiamen were only funded to attend one course per year'.²¹ In addition to providing an assessment of the military readiness/training situation, the Squires Report had resulted in some beneficial changes. Among these was the creation of a permanent, albeit small, field force. This would become the famous Darwin Mobile Force (DMF), a combined arms battalion group, whose soldiers (in) famously had been enlisted as artillerymen to avoid the strictures of the Defence Act. It deployed to Darwin in March 1939.²² Squires had also recommended the simplification of higher command arrangements that reduced the span of command of Army Headquarters. Most notably, this advice resulted in the creation of regional commands (based loosely on the old state-based military districts) that controlled subordinate combat units within each command. Under this arrangement, regional commands became responsible for administration as well as operational command of subordinate units. For Eastern Command, based on New South Wales, this was a particular burden. In addition to the administrative and operational command of the Militia divisions located within it, Eastern Command was the focal point of the pre-war plans: it had the operational responsibility for the defence of the key terrain of Newcastle-Sydney.²³

Not Quite 'Business as Usual' – Initial Actions and Competing Demands

When Prime Minister Robert Menzies made his radio broadcast on 3 September 1939 informing the Australian population that the country was now at war with Germany, he asked for 'calmness, resoluteness, confidence and hard work'. Indicating that the coming war would require not just a military contribution but rather the fruits of the full economic weight of the nation, Menzies asserted that:

*our staying power, and particularly the staying power of the mother country, will be best assisted by keeping our production going; by continuing our avocations and our business as fully as we can; by maintaining employment and with our strength.*²⁴

The speech—later characterised as ‘business as usual’—provides some context for the decisions made by the Australian Government in the early years of the war. Economic concerns and domestic political sensitivities about military commitments—particularly any discussion of conscription—played heavily in the minds of Menzies’s Cabinet. Australia had already made tentative responses to the rapidly deteriorating international situation before the formal declaration of war. In late August, the Darwin defences were bolstered and the permanent coastal fort garrisons augmented by Militia volunteers.²⁵ This change in posture had been facilitated by the 1938 decision of the Minister for Defence, Harold Thorby. He had approved an amendment to the Australian Military Regulations and Orders to allow for Militia soldiers to volunteer for a period of full-time military service to assist the permanent forces in guarding vulnerable points *before* the ‘precautionary stage’ (see below) had been proclaimed.²⁶

Adjustments to force disposition were consistent with the guidance on ‘the measures involved in passing from a state of peace to a state of war’ set out in the Commonwealth War Book and its subordinate volume, War Book of the Australian Military Forces. The Commonwealth War Book, still an incomplete document by 1939, set out the measures required by the military and the state and federal governments at each stage of the continuum from peace to war.²⁷ This included executing the ‘precautionary stage’ according to the War Book, which proclaimed that the Militia had been called for war service and ordered to attend such activities and locations as directed by the Military Board (the Army’s highest decision-making body comprised of senior army officers and chaired by the Chief of General Staff). In some ways, this proclamation had legal/procedural significance rather than military relevance: even after the 3 September declaration, the government mobilised only 8,000 soldiers nationwide for a period of just 16 days.²⁸ In parallel, subordinate plans had been developed by each of the state-based military districts; in essence, these contingency plans operationalised (and localised) the higher-level intent of the War Book. For example, the draft mobilisation plan and a plan for the immediate actions following the ‘precautionary and war stage’ (P&W) for the 2nd Division sat within the 2nd Military District’s raft of plans. These plans nested with the overall divisional concentration plan (for example, while the 2nd Division’s mobilisation/assembly point was Holsworthy/Liverpool, each unit had its own assembly point co-located

within its catchment area).²⁹ As noted above, because of Squires's recommendations, the 2nd Military District would become Eastern Command, the centre of gravity for home defence during this period.

Each regional command had its own P&W plan that detailed which Militia units would conduct those tasks deemed necessary for the opening stages of conflict, namely the augmentation of the fixed coastal defences and the provision of security troops for vulnerable points (vital asset security in modern parlance).³⁰ The P&W plan provided details on assembly areas; actions to be taken to enlist soldiers for war duties (including the home addresses of doctors to be contacted for immediate medical attestations); the issuing of rations, weapons and ammunition; and movement plans from the assembly point to the deployment area—usually a combination of tram and marching. The engineering annex detailed the priority tasks of wiring and defensive construction that were to be completed along the beach areas in the first four days. The plans were duly activated and they were deemed fit for purpose: Eastern Command noted that its plan was executed 'in a modified form to suit the needs of the situation' from 24 August 1939.³¹ Key staff were activated by safe hand letter, and in turn notified their soldiers by runners or telegrams. These troops were used to protect vulnerable points such as railway bridges and radio and cable stations, in addition to manning and protecting the fixed coastal defences and anti-aircraft batteries. In the 2nd Division catchment, militiamen also guarded Victoria Barracks in Paddington, Admiralty House, the ordnance store at Leichhardt, the ammunition store at Moorebank, the Mascot airfield, and oil ports on the southern side of Sydney Harbour.³² Such tasks were replicated around the country. In his historical examination of the Victoria-based 3rd Division, Albert Palazzo notes that it conducted similar P&W tasks, including rounding up German citizens, guarding internment camps, and protecting aerodromes, oil refineries and battery factories.³³

Already at this early juncture, the government had agreed to the Military Board's plans to use men of the Army Reserve to form eight static garrison battalions, thereby freeing up the active Militia to perform its mobile field force role. The Army Reserve was the organisational entity that acted as a pool for ex-AIF soldiers or former militiamen, although once war was declared, veterans could and did join the Reserve 'off the street'. Those men deemed 'Class A'—that is, of good health and under 45 years of age—were allocated as unit reserves to an active Militia unit. Those classified as

'Class B'—aged between 45 and 60—were assigned to man the garrison battalions. Two such battalions—the 2nd and 11th Garrison Battalions—were formed immediately in Sydney, and these older soldiers commenced a two-week training course in mid-October. From 3 November, these garrison battalions would relieve permanent and Militia soldiers conducting static guard duties around Sydney.³⁴ Likewise, in Southern Command, the 3rd and 9th Garrison Battalions were raised immediately after the outbreak of hostilities and were deployed to protect the Port Phillip Fortress.³⁵ By 1942, all regional commands had raised several such garrison battalions. Indeed, in that year there were 13 coastal defence and five internal security battalions.³⁶ The latter protected vital points and guarded prisoner-of-war and internment camps. From 1940, regionally based garrison brigades were formed to command the battalions, so that a brigade could command a mix of both coastal defence and security battalions.³⁷ Although the performed role was static, the garrison battalions themselves were not. As they were part of the Army, they could be redeployed to different parts of the country. For example, the 19th Garrison Battalion, raised in August 1940 from across southern Western Australia, variously served across the breadth of that state, from Albany in the south through to Geraldton and northwards to Broome.³⁸ It is clear that secondary home defence tasks were plentiful, necessitating the relatively high number of garrison battalions raised. Such formations also made good use of older veteran soldiers, gainfully employing them while also freeing up younger militiamen for service in the divisions which were earmarked for a mobile field force role.

Soon after the outbreak of war, the government had first intended to call up the Militia by battalions in drafts of 10,000 men, for a period of 16 days' training. This plan had pros and cons. The period of service was short enough to not interfere unduly with the militiaman's civilian occupation. Militarily, however, the proposal was seen by many officers as not providing training of sufficient duration (six weeks was recommended) and as retarding the development of higher commanders because it called up battalions rather than brigades.³⁹ Even with consideration of civilian industry at the forefront, there were widespread reports of militiamen failing to attend the training period for fear of retribution from their employers. Even so, on 15 September the government decided to widen the scope of military training and announced both the call-up of the entire Militia (in two batches of 40,000 men for one month of training) and the raising of the 6th Division for the 2nd AIF. The Military Board stressed that the priority

was to build up the Militia with a baseline of training. In September 1939, the strength of the Militia was about 80,000 men, which amounted to about 40 per cent of its full mobilisation strength of four infantry divisions, two cavalry divisions, a near-division's worth of mixed brigades and corps troops. While middle and senior ranking Militia officers were overwhelmingly First World War AIF veterans, most of the Militia's rank and file were inexperienced, having been in uniform for less than a year. Likewise, the dearth of Staff Corps officers to act as the key divisional, brigade and regimental staff officers hampered the potential efficiency of the Militia.⁴⁰ With the announcement of an expeditionary force in September, it was inevitable that it, and not the home forces, would become a higher priority for manpower and resources, as had been the case in the previous war.

Initially it was hoped that half of the new 6th Division would hail from the Militia; in the end it was around a quarter.⁴¹ Nevertheless, if the Militia's contribution to the rank and file of the 6th Division was underwhelming, importantly it contributed qualitatively, with some of the Militia's best senior and regimental officers joining the expeditionary force. With the raising of each successive 2nd AIF division, the hard-won expertise of these part-time officers was lost from the Militia, stunting its development as a competent home defence force. This was despite government insistence that raising the separate expeditionary force would not, and must not, interfere with the training of the Militia.⁴² By 15 November 1939 tens of thousands of militiamen were in training camps around the nation. With the month-long courses for the Militia (each Militia battalion hosted and executed its own training) as well as the quartering and training of the 2nd AIF battalions, the military camps and depots around nation were full; showgrounds, racecourses, sports ovals and other suitable vacant blocks of land were acquisitioned for military training.⁴³

For Militia units in training, weapons (especially mortars, anti-tank guns, Vickers machine guns and technical components of artillery pieces) equipment and clothing were in short supply. Once the 2nd AIF divisions deployed to the Middle East, it would rely on the British Army to equip it with modern weapons.⁴⁴ The Militia was equipped with First World War vintage webbing and equipment. This was still better than the situation faced by some recently raised AIF units wherein soldiers commenced training in their civilian clothes.⁴⁵ Likewise, there were many instances of 'robbing Peter to pay Paul' with transfers of key personnel from the Militia to the AIF;

pressures on the finite numbers of officers of the Staff Corps to provide staff for both Militia and AIF battalions (and importantly the Militia and AIF formation headquarters); demand for the permanent instructional staff to run an expanding series of courses; and Militia officers going on full-time duty to fill positions previously held by the permanent officers and senior NCOs.

Further announcements in October 1939 placed more pressure on the Army's infrastructure and personnel. Specifically, the government directed that, from January 1940, the Militia would again be called up in tranches of 40,000 men, this time for three months' training. This expanded training period would progress the Militia's standard from individual to unit-level collective training. Indeed, it was hoped (surely unrealistically) that Militia units might even aspire to divisional-level training.⁴⁶

'An effective scheme of universal training?'

The Introduction of Compulsory Service

Whatever its deficiencies, the Militia was able to conduct the initial (albeit low level) home defence actions as required in the pre-war plans. It also provided significant numbers of officers and non-commissioned officers for the 6th Division. It nevertheless continually struggled to achieve its remit. Pre-war neglect was most evident in the lack of training areas and equipment, as well as the incapacity of regional headquarters to manage the simultaneous needs of the 2nd AIF and Militia units within their remits. For example, the government explicitly linked the chosen number of 40,000 militiamen for each training tranche with the capacity of existing camp resources and training areas to host 2nd AIF training simultaneously.⁴⁷

During these first months after the declaration of war the Menzies government assured the Labor opposition that there would be no conscription for overseas service. However, this assurance had its basis in political expediency rather than the existence of any legislative prohibition against conscription. Indeed, Menzies had earlier reminded them, in early September 1939, that certain provisions of the Defence Act—namely the universal obligation for citizens to serve within the Commonwealth in time of war—were now operative. As Paul Hasluck observed in his official history, the Menzies government had intimated that:

*preparations would be made for an extension of forces and the Government would not hesitate to reintroduce an effective scheme of universal training and service as it became feasible to do so.*⁴⁸

Thus, contentiously the government announced the recommencement of the Universal Training Scheme (UTS) in October 1939.

The UTS, which had been suspended but not formally abolished in 1929, would take on a different flavour to the scheme which had been implemented 10 years earlier. Commencing in January 1940, this second version of the UTS called up all unmarried men who turned 21 in the year ending 30 June 1940 for 10 weeks of training before being placed into the Militia Reserve. These trainees were called 'universal service personnel' (USP), a term deliberately chosen to avoid the politically charged word 'conscripts'.⁴⁹ The training period consisted of 58 days of individual and sub-unit collective training at a military camp, with the remaining 12 days spent with the trainee's Militia unit to (hopefully) achieve unit-level collective training.⁵⁰ After the completion of the 10-week camp, USP had an ongoing requirement to complete an annual 12-day refresher camp and 12 days of home training.⁵¹ In imposing this requirement, the UTS was designed to ameliorate the wastage in the Militia caused by transfers to the AIF, loss to civil industry of militiamen in reserved occupations (some 174 occupations were so defined and thus exempt from call-up), and married militiamen opting to transfer to the Militia Reserve due to the financial hardship incurred by 10 weeks' training at pay rates lower than those of their civilian occupation.⁵² Every three months thereafter, further tranches of USP would be called up and commence the 10-week training cycle.⁵³

Prior to each intake of trainee USP, Militia units conducted a 14-day course for officers and NCOs (and aspirant officers and NCOs) to prepare them for instructional duties.⁵⁴ The ongoing requirement to conduct instructor courses ahead of each successive intake existed because so many units lost their trained instructors to the 2nd AIF. In some Militia units, key staff went on full-time service to plan and facilitate the intake and training program. The growth of the Militia, accelerated by the universal service intakes, and the ongoing contribution of the Militia to 2nd AIF enlistments, is well illustrated by the Dapto-based 3rd Battalion (The Werriwa Regiment) war diary over an 18-month period:

Nov 1939: The unit went into camp at Dapto for 1 month.

13 Jan 40: The first of the U.S [universal service] personnel called up for training, and the unit went into camp at Glenfield for three months.

Apr 1940: At the completion of this camp, a large proportion of USPs, also a number of VEs [voluntarily enlisted Militia], NCOs and Offrs transferred to AIF.

8 Dec 1940: The unit went into camp at Wallgrove with a new draft of USPs for 90 days.

13 Jun 41: The unit went to Greta for a camp of 90 days and the third draft of recruits were taken on strength.⁵⁵

Such was the continual wastage of trained Militia personnel to the 2nd AIF (and due to various exemptions) that the government continued to broaden the eligibility criteria for universal service. In mid-1940 it extended the call-up to all unmarried men and childless widowers aged between 18 and 35. After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the government called up Classes 2 and 3—that is, married men and childless widowers aged between 35 and 45, and married men and widowers (with children) aged between 18 and 35.⁵⁶

The entire period of the UTS was characterised by the old ‘two army’ problem that had plagued the Army during the previous war, but this time with even more organisational schisms. From early 1940 onwards, six different types of army service existed: officers, NCOs and soldiers in the various components of the Permanent Military Forces; volunteers in the 2nd AIF (who may have been former permanent force or Militia members); volunteers in the Militia; universal service trainees in the Militia; volunteers in the Militia Reserve (many of whom were serving in the garrison battalions); and universal service trainees in the Militia Reserve who had completed their three months of training. From May 1941, an additional category was added when the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC) (an organisation started in July 1940 under the auspices of the Returned Soldiers’ League) became part of the Army. The VDC was open to males aged between 18 and 65 years and was designed to augment the Militia and garrison battalions in home defence. Attracting many former 1st AIF men, the VDC reached its apogee in late 1942 when fears of Japanese invasion were strongest. Immediately after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the VDC provided coastal observers,

guards for vulnerable points such as water and power stations, protection parties for key aerodromes, and personnel for roadblocks.⁵⁷ After fears of invasion subsided, the VDC progressively decreased in size after 1943.⁵⁸

From 1940 until mid-1941, the Militia maintained a three-monthly training cycle. Although the primary focus was conducting basic training for the USP, evidence suggests that the home defence role was incorporated into the collective training regime. By early 1941, the defence plans for New South Wales had been adjusted to place the 1st Division and the 1st Cavalry Division forward to cover the wider Newcastle-Sydney-Port Kembla area, with the 2nd Division designated the Eastern Command reserve.⁵⁹ Reflecting these roles, the culminating activity of the 10-week camp of the 36th Battalion (a unit of the 2nd Division) in October 1940 was a hasty defensive exercise in the Newcastle Bight sector.⁶⁰ During its May 1941 camp, the 35th Battalion (another unit of the division) conducted a defence of the bridge crossing the Nepean River. This involved a counterattack on an enemy force holding the Campbelltown water supply channel, and an advance contact to locate and destroy an enemy force seeking to capture a railway bridge.⁶¹ Despite such training, the ability of the 2nd Division to discharge this mobile defence role before 1942 was in doubt. In his appreciation of the situation upon assuming command of the 2nd Division in July 1940, Major-General James Cannan wrote that:

*Infantry brigades' staff have not had an opportunity of functioning in field manoeuvres. Div[isional] and field artillery brigade staff have not had an opportunity of functioning in co-operation with infantry in field manoeuvres. Divisional staff have not functioned in the field. Units are not now in possession of necessary war equipment.*⁶²

Cannan assessed that while the division could conduct a fixed defensive role, 'any action requiring manoeuvres will be difficult'.⁶³ Such criticism was not isolated to the 2nd Division. When Major-General Stanley Savige took command of the 3rd Division in January 1942, he scathingly wrote that the air of peacetime lack of urgency amounted to nothing more than the 3rd Division 'gathering mushrooms and chasing rabbits'.⁶⁴

The on-again, off-again nature of the Militia training regime persisted until matters came to a head in August 1941. At this point, the Military Board recommended that the duration of training periods be increased 'to raise the efficiency of the Militia forces'.⁶⁵ The training cadres of each

unit (that is, all officers and NCOs above the rank of corporal and some key specialists and administrative personnel) were to be called up for full-time service immediately. First-time trainees (that is, those who had not completed a previous 70-day training block) would be called up for a camp period of 180 days (six months). Those who had completed a previous three-month camp would be called up for a second camp of 90 days duration, timed to coincide with the latter half of the six-month period of training for new USP. It was hoped that this latter period (wherein the two training cohorts were grouped together) could complete collective training from company through to divisional level. Reservists on unit lists were to be called up to complete an annual refresher period of 12 days. Service corps called up personnel as required to support the conduct of the above infantry training. Senior officers and those either currently serving on, or earmarked for, formation headquarters were to attend schools and courses and conduct an attachment to a headquarters as a 'staff learner'.⁶⁶ This new training regime commenced on 1 October 1941. For many Militia soldiers, their period of full-time war service began at this time. In the same month, the Menzies government was defeated and a Labor government, led by John Curtin, came to power.

'The Mackay Principle'

One may gauge the true state of the Militia by the observations made by Lieutenant-General Sir Iven Mackay, who returned to Australia from the Middle East in August 1941 as the newly appointed General Officer Commanding-in-Chief Home Forces (GOC-in-C Home Forces). This position, created in response to concerns about the true state of home defence preparations, reported directly to the Minister for the Army, Percy Spender, and had 'operational command over all military forces ... allotted to the defence of the mainland'. It nevertheless remained subordinate to the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Lieutenant-General Vernon Sturdee.⁶⁷ After visiting a number of units, Mackay recorded in February 1942 (mere weeks before the fall of Singapore) that the Army must disabuse itself of the idea that preparations to date were sufficient. While he considered the organisation 'satisfactory', he noted that the 'prevailing atmosphere ... of peace' was resulting in a lack of drive. Notwithstanding deficiencies in uniforms and equipment, Mackay blamed Militia officers and NCOs for not developing junior leaders, not planning

decent training, resting on their laurels and accepting a low standard of dress and bearing in their units. Noting that the expanded six-month training program was the 'absolute minimum' to conduct individual and collective training, Mackay wrote that the Militia could no longer be viewed as a basis for expansion with ample warning time to ready and equip itself, but rather as a force in being. Tellingly, he observed:

*The employment of Home Forces must be governed by the principle that the forces can be used only as they are at the given moment and not as they are planned one day to be. This principle applies to planning, organisation, mobility weapons and other equipment. All policy must therefore be short term, in anticipation of meeting the enemy at any moment.*⁶⁸

With the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941, the 'given moment' had come. By this time, 211,000 men had been trained via the Militia camps and 132,000 men were currently in camps or on full-time duty.⁶⁹ The CGS, Sturdee, proposed a total Militia strength of 246,000 men, whereas a deficit of 114,000 men existed at this time. As previous call-outs had failed to make up the constant wastage to the 2nd AIF, key industries and compassionate exemptions, the Militia call-up was extended to include older men, widowers with children, and youths reaching 18 years of age in 1941.⁷⁰ The Military Board also released instructions forbidding transfers from the Militia to the 2nd AIF until further notice and cancelled leave for Militia personnel in camp.⁷¹ By January 1942, the total number of Militia in camp or on full-time service had risen to 184,821: an increase of some 50,000 men in the space of one month.⁷²

Over the next few months, the Directorate of Military Operations and Plans at Land Headquarters, working in concert with the various regional commands, activated and brought existing Militia units up to their war establishment. Once mobilised, the Militia units served on a full-time basis and could be deployed anywhere in Australian territory. Further, after amendments to the Defence Act in February 1943, Militia could now serve anywhere in the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA).⁷³ For home defence (and not including 2nd AIF personnel, garrison battalions or personnel manning the fixed defences), in January 1942 the Militia comprised the following:

- Northern Command (Queensland): 11th, 29th and 7th Infantry Brigades, 1st Cavalry Brigade

- Eastern Command (New South Wales): 1st and 2nd Infantry Divisions, 1st Cavalry Division
- Southern Command (Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia): 3rd and 4th Infantry Divisions, 2nd Cavalry Division, 22nd Mixed Brigade, 3rd Infantry Brigade
- 7th Military District (Northern Territory): 23rd Infantry Brigade (AIF) commanding the 43rd and 27th Battalions
- Western Command (Western Australia): 13th Infantry Brigade, 109th Anti-Tank Regiment, 10th Reconnaissance Battalion, 25th Light Horse Machine Gun Regiment, 44th Battalion.⁷⁴

Dudley McCarthy, in his volume of the official history, wrote:

*on paper the home forces of February 1942 appeared fairly formidable; in reality deficiencies in strength, training and particularly equipment were likely for some months to make them less powerful in the field than perhaps three well-trained, well-equipped divisions.*⁷⁵

Upon mobilisation, the Militia, which had waxed and waned in strength due to 2nd AIF enlistments, the ebb and flow of short-duration universal service trainees, and the exemptions for industry and compassionate reasons, readied itself for its home defence role. It was by now an organisation marked by the youth of its soldiers (a by-product of the universal service scheme) and the over-age nature of its officers, whose younger and abler brethren had joined the 2nd AIF. Mackay, again stressing the principle that a nation can only fight with the force it has at the outbreak of hostilities, observed that the Militia 'would only be an army with light weapons' whose preparedness would improve 'the longer the Japanese delayed their attack'. Should the Japanese attack imminently, Mackay continued, Australia would have no alternative 'but to use the [Militia] as it stands today'.⁷⁶

Conclusion

From 1939 onwards, the Militia went through several expansions, contractions and restructurings, resulting in regroupings; linking and de-linking of units; transfer of units from one formation or location to another; and, from 1943, the mobilisation and then movement of units from Australia into the SWPA. The relatively stable unit and brigade structures seen during the two interwar decades would be replaced by one of constant reorganisation, and by 1944 the Militia would bear little resemblance to its interwar self. The fates of the Militia units varied widely. The 3rd, 5th and 11th Divisions would serve overseas from early 1943 until the end of the war. In contrast, the 1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions would not leave Australia's shores (although subordinate formations and headquarters would be detached for overseas service) and would be disbanded during 1944–1945.

What is the assessment of the Militia during the period from late 1939 to December 1941? Undoubtedly it took a distant second place to the 2nd AIF from late 1939 onwards. With no threat to the homeland but with a requirement to contribute to the wider war effort through expeditionary forces, it is difficult to suggest that this should have been otherwise. As James Morrison observes:

the first two years of the war revealed the disparity between a desire to revive the Militia and the limited means this could be achieved alongside raising, training and sustaining the AIF.⁷⁷

Yet there had been sufficient half measures taken to ensure the Militia could undertake immediate security tasks at the outbreak of war. Likewise, the training tranches and universal service call-ups built up a force that not only continued to supply the AIF but was reduced constantly due to reserved occupations and hardship exemptions. When the Japanese threat became more apparent from December 1941, the success or otherwise of this half-measure was scrutinised for the first time. Over two years, a large partially trained force had been generated but it was not a combat-ready one. It would require equipment and vehicles, further training and the infusion of qualified officers for its formations to function in the manner intended. In summary the Militia's path to mobilisation over this period was fitful and prolonged—and not wholly fit for purpose.

About the Author

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Endnotes

- 1 Paul Hasluck, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series Four: Civil, Volume I, The Government and the People, 1939–41* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1956), p. 157.
- 2 Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia* (Melbourne, Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 143.
- 3 The word 'Militia' or 'militia' appears variously in upper and lower case within relevant literature. For the purposes of this paper, it is used as a proper noun.
- 4 Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official Year Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 29–1936 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1936), p. 344.
- 5 For greater detail of the interwar period see Grey, pp. 125–140; and Craig Wilcox, *For Hearths and Homes: Citizen Soldiering in Australia, 1854–1945* (St Leonards: Allen and Unwin, 1998), pp. 88–97.
- 6 David Horner, 'Australian Strategic Planning between the Wars', in Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey (eds), *Serving Vital Interests: Australia's Strategic Planning in Peace and War. Proceedings of the Australian Army History Conference Held at the Australian War Memorial, 30 September 1996* (Canberra: UNSW, Australian Defence Force Academy, 1996), p. 9.
- 7 James Morrison, 'The Australian Militia at War 1939–1945', PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2022, at: <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.4/100338>.
- 8 'Report on the Activities of the Australian Military Forces, 1929–1939 by Lieutenant-General Sir Carl Jess, Parts I–IV' (henceforth Jess Report), AWM1, 20/9, p. 37. For example, Jess notes that by June 1937, most Militia units had reached their new permitted strength and ceased recruiting, even maintaining waiting lists. The second expansion to 70,000, announced in November 1938, was achieved in March 1939. See Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics, *Official — Book of the Commonwealth of Australia*, No. 32–1939 (Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1940), p. 234.
- 9 'Lecture on the Plan of Concentration, 1933', AWM 54, 243/6/150.
- 10 See Albert Palazzo, 'Failure to Obey. The Australian Army and the First Line Component Deception', *Australian Army Journal* 1, no. 1 (2003).
- 11 'Lecture on the Plan of Concentration, 1933', p. 3.
- 12 The administration of the Army was based on military districts that largely equated to state boundaries. Hence the 1st Military District in Queensland, the 3rd Military District in Victoria and so on.
- 13 'Concentration of the Australian Land Forces in Time of War', AWM 54, 243/6/6, pp. 10–11.
- 14 Jess Report, p. 44.
- 15 Palazzo, 'Failure to Obey'.
- 16 Horner, 'Australian Strategic Planning between the Wars', p. 10.
- 17 Claude Neumann, *Australia's Citizen Soldiers, 1919–1939: A Study of Organisation, Command, Recruiting, Training and Equipment*, MA thesis, University of New South Wales (Duntroon), 1978, p. 205. In addition, David Horner notes such exercises were not realistic in terms of the militia formations being able to undertake these tasks. Until the surge in funding in the last years of the decade, the Militia was not manned, trained and equipped appropriately. See Horner, 'Australian Strategic Planning between the Wars', pp. 5–8.

- 18 'Lecture on the Plan of Concentration, 1933', p. 5.
- 19 'First Report by Lieutenant-General E.K Squires, CB, DSO, MC, Inspector-General of Australian Military Forces, December 1938', AWM 54, 243/6/58.
- 20 Jess Report, pp. 49, 53.
- 21 Morrison, 'The Australian Militia at War', p. 22.
- 22 The DMF was a company-sized grouping with attached mortars, machine guns and artillery. In order to circumvent the strictures of the Defence Act, its infantry soldiers were enlisted as artillerymen. The force was disbanded and its members redistributed to other units in the AIF and Army; its defensive role was replaced by the newly raised Darwin Infantry Battalion. See Graham R McKenzie-Smith, *Australia's Forgotten Army, Volume 1. Defending the Northern Gateways. Northern Territory and Torres Strait, 1938 to 1945* (Chapman: Grimwade Publications, 1994), pp. 13–21.
- 23 Albert Palazzo, *The Australian Army: A History of Its Organisation* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 128–129.
- 24 'Prime Minister Robert G. Menzies: Wartime Broadcast', Australian War Memorial website, at: https://www.awm.gov.au/articles/encyclopedia/prime_ministers/menzies.
- 25 Previously the DMF deployed to Darwin in March 1939. See McKenzie-Smith, *Australia's Forgotten Army, Volume 1*, pp. 13–21.
- 26 See 'Military Board Proceedings 1938 Volume 1', Agendum 145/1938, 'Guards for Vulnerable Points', 27 October 1938, NAA A2653.
- 27 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, pp. 122–123.
- 28 See Gavin Long, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series One, Volume I, To Benghazi* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961), p. 34; and Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, pp. 122–148.
- 29 'Eastern Command "G" Branch Registry Files', '2nd Division AMF Mobilisation Orders for First Line Component', 14 March 1939, AWM 193.
- 30 'Eastern Command "G" Branch Registry Files', '2nd Division Provisional Orders for Mobilisation of Units required for the 2nd District Base Defence Scheme', October 1938, AWM 193.
- 31 'Eastern Command "G" Branch Registry Files', 'War Measures Instituted since the Outbreak of War', 20 November 1939, AWM 193.
- 32 '11th Garrison Battalion, October–December 1939', AWM 52, 8/7/15/1; 'Eastern Command "G" Branch Registry Files', Item 148, Part 3, '2nd District Base Defence Scheme Appendix III, List of Vulnerable Points', AWM 193.
- 33 Albert Palazzo, *Defenders of Australia: The Third Australian Division, 1916–1991* (Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2002), p. 93.
- 34 'Pay for AIF', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 November 1939.
- 35 Palazzo, *Defenders of Australia*, p. 93.
- 36 Palazzo, *Australian Army*, p. 138.
- 37 For example, the 1st Garrison Brigade, formed in Brisbane in October 1940, commanded the 1st and 15th Garrison Battalions (internal security) and the 14th Garrison Battalion (coastal defence). See 'War Diaries of the 1st Garrison Brigade', AWM 52, 8/7/1.
- 38 McKenzie-Smith, Graham R., *Australia's Forgotten Army, Volume 2. The Ebb and Flow of the Australian Army in Western Australia, 1941 to 1945* (Chapman: Grimwade Publications, 1994).
- 39 'Training of Militia. Employers' Duty', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 September 1939.
- 40 Long, *To Benghazi*, p 40.

- 41 Ibid., p. 61.
- 42 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, pp. 162.
- 43 In addition to the various Militia mobilisation plans, each military district was required to maintain its version of 'Overseas Plan 401', which was the 'considered plan for the enlistment, concentration, equipping, training and despatch for an expeditionary force overseas'. This plan, however, was predicated on the assumption that 'Australian territory is not threatened' and the Militia was not activated. As such, all the carefully researched and detailed preparations for likely staging, accommodation and training areas were for naught as the 2nd AIF now competed with the Militia for these areas and resources. See 'Eastern Command "G" Branch Registry Files', Item 342, '2nd Division District Base Overseas Plan 401', AWM 193.
- 44 'Eastern Command "G" Branch Registry Files', 'War Measures Instituted since the Outbreak of War', 20 November 1939, AWM 193.
- 45 Ian Kuring, *Redcoats to Cams. A History of the Australian Infantry, 1788–2001* (Loftus: Australian Military History Publications, 2004), p. 116.
- 46 'Eastern Command "G" Branch Registry Files', 'War Measures Instituted since the Outbreak of War', 20 November 1939, AWM 193.
- 47 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, pp. 162.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 For a discussion on the charged nature of the conscription debate and the introduction of universal service, see Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, pp. 161–167.
- 50 'Military Board Proceedings 1940 Volume 1', Agendum 31/1940, 'Policy to Be Adopted for the Future Training of the Militia', 26 January 1940, NAA A2653.
- 51 Palazzo, *The Australian Army*, p. 138.
- 52 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, p. 163.
- 53 The scheme was not quite 'universal' insofar that in rural Militia catchments there was a five-mile limit from place of residence to the depot; anyone residing outside the limit was exempt.
- 54 'Military Board Proceedings 1940 Volume 2', 'Increase of the Australian Military Forces to 250,000. Raising and Training of Personnel', 19 July 1940, NAA A2653. The additional two weeks of training for officers and NCOs accounts for the shorthand of 'three months training' seen in some sources when describing the UTS.
- 55 '3rd Infantry Battalion, August 1937–July 1942', AWM 52, 8/3/39/1. Prior to intensification of training after the fall of Singapore, few Militia battalions maintained a war diary. The 3rd Battalion was one of these exceptions.
- 56 Dudley McCarthy, *Australia in the War of 1939–45, Series One: Army, Volume V, South-West Pacific Area—First Year, Kokoda to Wau* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1959), p. 11.
- 57 'Eastern Command, December 1941–April 1942, Duties to be performed by VDC', 19 December 1941, AWM 52, 1/7/4.
- 58 Bill Storer, *Military Forces in New South Wales: An Introduction: Part 2, 1904–1948* (Charlestown: The Army Museum of New South Wales, 2003), pp. 91–93.
- 59 See History Committee of the 35th Infantry Battalion, 'The 35th Infantry Battalion, AIF', manuscript, n.d., AWM MSS 1107; and McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*, p. 12.
- 60 Stan and Les Brigg, *The 36th Australian Infantry Battalion. The Story of an Australian Infantry Battalion and Its Part in the War against Japan* (Sydney: The 36th Battalion Association, 1967), p. 7.
- 61 History Committee of the 35th Infantry Battalion, 'The 35th Infantry Battalion, AIF',

- manuscript, n.d., AWM MSS 1107.
- 62 2nd Australian Division General Staff Branch, 'An Appreciation by GOC 2nd Division at Sydney July 31st, 1940', AWM 52, 1/5/3/1.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 Palazzo, *Defenders of Australia*, p. 103.
- 65 'Military Board Proceedings 1941, Volume 5', 'Future Training of the Militia Forces', 6 August 1941, NAA A2653.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 'Military Board Proceedings 1941, Volume 5', 'Instructions for General Officer Commanding in Chief, Home Forces', 22 September 1941, and 'Appointment of GOC-in-C Home Forces', 14 October 1941, NAA A2653.
- 68 'Papers of Lieutenant-General Sir Iven Mackay', Item 419/673, diary entry 2 February 1942, AWM 3DRL/6850.
- 69 Hasluck, *The Government and the People*, p. 559.
- 70 McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year*, p. 11.
- 71 'Eastern Command, December 1941–April 1942, War Diary', entries for 8, 9 and 10 December 1941, AWM 52, 1/7/4/1.
- 72 Paul Hasluck, *Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series Four: Civil, Volume II, The Government and the People, 1942–1945* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1970), p. 18.
- 73 Ibid., pp. 341–342. The 'South West Pacific Zone' included New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and most of the Dutch East Indies.
- 74 McKenzie-Smith, *Australia's Forgotten Army, Volume 2*, pp. 7–12.
- 75 McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area*, p. 8.
- 76 Morrison, 'The Australian Militia at War', p. 50.
- 77 Ibid., p. 46.

Mobilising Space for Army: Space Assets, Space Data, and Space Workforce on the Ground

Cassandra Steer

Introduction

Modern militaries have developed a high dependency on space-based services for all operations during peacetime, times of tension or competition, and times of conflict. Satellites are critical for providing a range of data and supporting technologies, many of which have little or no redundancy in terms of non-space-based alternatives. This observation encompasses the entire range of military activity: encrypted and classified communications, navigation, situational awareness, monitoring adversary movement, deploying precision-guided weapons, intelligence-gathering and meteorological data, and the ability for deployed soldiers to communicate with families at home across peace, competition and conflict. All of these needs are served by satellite capabilities, only parts of which are sovereign owned and operated. For Army, this high dependency has implications in the case of rapid mobilisation, both in terms of strengthening operations and in terms of vulnerabilities, both of which will be explored in this paper.

Mobilisation is defined in this paper according to Defence's 'Preparedness and Mobilisation' doctrine, where mobilisation is described as a shift in the usual peacetime balance between civil and Defence needs, in favour

of Defence needs at a time of crisis. These needs 'may require greater capability and a more comprehensive national support base than is normally available to Defence'.¹ This situation necessitates taking capability away from the civil workforce, production and services. The extent of this shift towards Defence needs can occur along a spectrum. The doctrine describes the spectrum of mobilisation as 'the process of transition between preparedness and the conduct of a specific operation', comprising four stages.² The first is 'elective Defence mobilisation'. During this stage, operations may be launched without budget supplementation and so Defence's financial reserves may need to be called upon. Examples of this are the range of small natural disaster response operations (bushfires, floods etc.) and peace operations. The second stage is 'Partial Defence Mobilisation'. This stage of mobilisation requires budget supplementation and an increase in functional inputs to capability (FIC), as well as likely mobilisation of industry or national resources. Examples of this stage are the early part of Australia's operations in East Timor and more recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. 'Defence Mobilisation' is the third stage and is much more intense than prior stages. It requires the preparation of all capabilities, a call out of Reserve forces, significant budget supplementation, and increases to FIC (an extension of capabilities may also be required). An example of this stage of mobilisation is the introduction of conscription to expand the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for Vietnam.

The fourth stage is known as 'National Mobilisation'. It is the most extreme form of mobilisation and would lead to significant impositions on the general public. Also known historically as 'total defence' (such as was employed by the Australian Government during the Second World War), it entails full government control over the entire nation's civil workforce and production. Peter Layton's historical comparison of mobilisation efforts suggests that, while there was sufficient societal will for government to deliver a policy of total national mobilisation at the peak of the Second World War (in particular after the attacks in Darwin), it would be difficult to achieve similar levels of social commitment in today's context. A modern government would therefore struggle to enforce total national mobilisation.³ However, as pointed out in one RAND study, total defence concepts remain a key frame of reference because they offer a way to ensure that not only are armed forces prepared to become actively engaged when the nation's security requires it 'but the entire nation is, that is, individuals, community/volunteer groups, local governments,

businesses, key industries, and state and municipal governments'.⁴ The necessity of all these individual and collective parts of the nation being prepared to become actively engaged is especially true as Australia finds itself in a multi-polar or possibly 'networked' geopolitical reality, where civil society, academic experts, the private sector and other non-state actors are highly influential in shaping global strategic and political realities, and are all intertwined with Defence. As Layton puts it:

*An Australian national mobilisation in a networked future would be whole-of-society by design, make use of market forces to allocate scarce resources, and have governmental controls that encourage business and workforce participation through financial incentives.*⁵

In the 2024 National Defence Strategy (NDS), the term 'mobilisation' does not appear, but the concept of 'national defence' shares striking similarities with the definition of mobilisation under the doctrine. In the NDS national defence is defined as 'a coordinated, whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach that harnesses all arms of national power to defend Australia and advance our interests'.⁶ A paper by the Asia-Pacific Development, Diplomacy and Defence Dialogue (AP4D) has identified how this 'whole-of-nation' approach has been echoed in many public policy statements by Prime Minister Albanese, Foreign Minister Wong, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Defence Marles, and gives the following definition:

*Whole-of-nation refers to coordination with tools beyond the immediate control of government. In international policy this involves the Australian Government engaging consistently and broadly with state and territory governments and with nongovernment actors such as business, the tertiary sector, NGOs, community and diaspora groups, media, sports and cultural organisations.*⁷

Certainly when it comes to high-tech threats, such as cyber and the loss of space-based services, the private sector specifically will need to be prepared to mobilise. This is particularly the case in regard to the first and second stages of mobilisation described in the doctrine. Indeed, Australia's 2023–2030 Cyber Security Strategy includes civil, commercial and defence entities and organisations, not only because the private sector is vulnerable to cyber interferences but also because it may hold the key to contributing to Defence and other national cybersecurity needs.⁸ The

extent to which cyber-threats and cybersecurity pervade people's lives and impact Australia's national wellbeing has led to an integrated approach under this strategy. Space-based services permeate Australia's national security in similar ways, and a greater awareness is needed of space technologies as critical infrastructure: we all need to think about space, a little bit all of the time, in the same that way we think about cyber, a little bit all of the time. What this means for Army is the focus of this article.

As a starting point, it is important to understand that space systems comprise more than just 'satellites'. Rather, space systems encompass four segments:

1. The space segment, including satellites and spacecraft
2. The ground segment, including satellite dishes and data processing or management
3. The link segment, which is the communication link between a satellite and the ground station. All satellites need to send and receive data and instructions, and the majority of them do so by way of radio frequency (RF)
4. The human segment, including operators, data processing experts, and users. This includes soldiers, sailors and aviators, as well as civilians. The majority of space systems today are 'dual use', providing the same service to military and civilian end users simultaneously. This has implications for targeting and grey zone operations designed to interfere with space systems because the impact on civilians must be taken into account under the laws of armed conflict.⁹

In a scenario where Army is required to mobilise rapidly—whether in response to civil and natural disaster needs, national or regional security crisis, or conflict—space systems are an integral support to multiple aspects of Army's needs. But currently Australia has no sovereign-owned satellites, and space services for military needs are purchased as data or as timeshare access to partner country owned satellites, or provided in return for access to Australian ground infrastructure and data management. Mobilisation of space technologies and a skilled space workforce will therefore be necessary to support Defence needs in times of competition, crisis or conflict.

This article will first consider how space-based technologies support Army and the ADF more generally. It will then discuss the context of mobilisation and resilience in our 21st century geopolitical context, including how space-based technologies fit into Australia's integrated, focused armed forces under the new 2024 NDS. It will then identify how Army needs to think about mobilisation of (a) space-related assets, (b) space data and (c) people, who are the operators and users of space capabilities. To be clear, mobilisation of space-related assets includes the ground segment, such as major satellite dishes on Australian or foreign territory, which may not always comprise military assets. It may also include mobile ground stations, such as any vehicles which carry smaller satellite dishes for use during deployment, and small personal units like satphones or navigational equipment. Mobilisation of space data includes the ability to task satellite systems such that geospatial intelligence (GEOINT) data can be gathered, and assured access to secure communications and navigation can be provided. Given that Australia currently has no sovereign-owned space assets, the ADF is dependent on relationships with foreign government and commercial partners, which leaves Army vulnerable to loss of service or poor-quality data. And mobilisation of the people who are the operators and users includes Army personnel, Defence personnel broadly, contractors, and civilians in the private and research space sectors.

Space on the Ground: How Space Supports Army

As recognised in the 2023 Defence Strategic Review (DSR), space-based services and technologies are key enablers and supporters of all Defence operations. Indeed, the DSR identified the importance of space and cyber as both enabling and operational domains, equally important as the three traditional domains maritime, land and air. Although space and cyber already formed part of a joint force design, one key recommendation from the DSR was to move from a 'joint' to an 'integrated force'¹⁰ and, relatedly, to move Space Command from Air Force to Joint Capabilities,¹¹ a change which was prudently implemented in July 2023.

By taking an integrated rather than joint approach, it becomes even more evident that space and cyber, while different in nature to the three traditional domains, are integral to all modern military operations. It is true that they are separate, strategic domains which need greater

investment into developing capabilities, as well as specific technical skill sets and a specialised workforce in order to protect against attacks and interferences. But they have become contested strategic domains unto themselves precisely because of how important they are as supports to operations in the other three domains. The most effective way to compromise an adversary's ability to see, hear, navigate, operate certain weapons, or even access some command and control systems is to compromise their space systems, through jamming signals, 'dazzling' remote sensing instrumentation on an Earth observation satellite, 'spoofing' positioning data, attacking a ground station, or undertaking a cyber attack.¹² The intended results are always terrestrial.

In many ways it is difficult to distinguish how space-based services and technologies are integral to Army in ways that are different from the other armed services. As Army considers preparing for potential mobilisation across civil sectors for its needs in times of competition, crisis or conflict, however, there must be awareness of the role space-related assets, data and workforce already play and could potentially play in fulfilling Army's needs. In the case of mobilisation, this requires an appreciation of risks and dependencies, as well as opportunities for engaging private sector capabilities and workforce. This is particularly important given the shift under the 2023 DSR and the 2024 NDS to an 'integrated, focused force' instead of a domain-specific force.¹³ Under the 2024 strategy, the capability priorities include space and cyber capabilities that strengthen 'the ability to project force and decision advantage'—specifically:

Space capabilities that enhance intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, provide resilient communications and counter emerging space threats through:

- continued investment in Australia's first sovereign-controlled satellite communications system, enhancing ADF communications in the Pacific and Indian Ocean regions;
- the Deep-space Advanced Radar Capability, which is a collaborative project with the UK and US, providing greater situational awareness in space;
- investment in geospatial intelligence capabilities; and
- investment in space control capabilities, providing the Government with options to assure Australia's access to space.¹⁴

These space capabilities, and associated efforts to assure Australia's access to space, are all about ensuring continued support for Army (and the other two armed services). Indeed, the capability priorities for Army listed in the 2024 NDS all have heavy, built-in dependencies on satellite technologies, including littoral manoeuvre capability, long-range fires, precision strike missiles, combat reconnaissance vehicles, and uncrewed tactical systems.¹⁵ To understand how these Army capabilities depend on satellites, it may be helpful to identify satellite services as falling into three main categories. The first is 'position, navigation and timing', or PNT. These satellite systems require a 'constellation' or group of satellites, which, combined, can provide precise and accurate location and timing information. **Positioning** is the ability to precisely determine one's location and orientation. **Navigation** is the ability to determine both one's current and desired position and apply corrections to course, orientation and speed to attain the desired position—from anywhere in the world, from sub-surface to surface, and from surface to space. **Timing** is the ability to acquire and maintain accurate and precise time from a standard (such as UTC), anywhere in the world. PNT systems include global navigation satellite systems, of which the Global Positioning System (GPS, owned and operated by the US military) is one example. Others include the Chinese-owned Beidou, the European-owned Galileo, the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS), the Japanese-owned Quazi-Zenith Satellite System, and the Russian-owned GLONASS. Aside from more obvious navigation uses for combat systems and individuals, some examples of PNT applications are situational awareness; GPS-guided weapons; autonomous or uncrewed vehicles; and precision timing that underpins digital payment systems and the international stock and trade markets.

The second main category is communications satellites, including telecommunications and internet. Satellite phones have been used in a civilian context for decades by farmers and those in extremely remote areas, as well as in military operational contexts. Advanced communications are increasingly satellite based, as is internet access, provided by commercial operators such as Optus or Starlink.

The third category is 'Earth observation' (EO), or satellite remote sensing, which is key to GEOINT and to intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) more broadly. EO satellites also provide weather and meteorological information which can be critical for safety and planning during operations

on land, at sea and in the air. The key regional EO systems are the European-owned Copernicus, the Indian owned RISAT and EOS systems, the Japanese-owned Himawari, and the US-owned Landsat and Landsat Next programs. There are also several commercially owned EO systems.

It is hard to conceive of an Army operation or exercise that does not depend on each of these types of satellite systems in multiple ways. The level of critical dependency, often coupled with low levels of redundancy in the case of a loss of service, is not necessarily reflected in a sufficient level of space literacy across the armed forces.¹⁶ This was highlighted by then Chief of Army Lieutenant-General Rick Burr at the 2022 Air and Space Power Conference:

Space provides the higher-ground advantage over land forces. Space power enables land forces to be connected and disposed of simultaneously through access to space-based systems for global positioning, navigating and timing, satellite communications, targeting intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance mapping and weather forecasting. The generation of space power will require more, though, than just the employment of space systems. It will demand a coherent, joint and integrated culture in the space domain. Increasing the awareness of space power within Army will be a critical part of this cultural development.¹⁷

The majority of satellite services today are also dual use; that is, a single satellite system may be providing services both to military and civilian end users as clients. Of the nearly 10,000 operational satellites estimated to be in orbit in mid-2024, only 554 are dedicated military satellites, owned by nine countries.¹⁸

A further complicating factor is that the vast majority of current operational satellite systems are also commercially owned. Until the beginning of this century, only nation states had the technological and economic wherewithal to access space, but as technologies have advanced, satellites have generally become smaller and cheaper to build and launch. Further, commercial entities have overtaken governments in designing, building and operating advanced space capabilities.¹⁹ Even access to a launch provider has become cheaper due to the impact of commercial launch companies like SpaceX, RocketLab and United Launch Alliance (all US companies). Their modern launch vehicles and increased frequency

of launch availability have collectively reduced the cost of launch per kilogram by almost a factor of 10 in the last 15 years.²⁰ This has seen a rise in the notion of ‘space as a service’ gaining traction, whereby militaries procure space data and space services from commercial providers, without having to procure an actual satellite system.²¹ While this is a cost-convenient option, it raises vulnerabilities in the event of military counter-satellite operations, and the dependability of such services if they were to be subjected to deliberate military interdiction.

There is no doubt that exquisite, dedicated satellite systems for government purposes are still being designed and built by civil space agencies and some militaries around the world, but these are in the vast minority of operational satellites today. And many sovereign satellite systems are acquired through government contracts to commercial entities. The planned dedicated military satellite communication system JP9102, comprising a constellation of three satellites and several ground stations, was a case in point. It was contracted to be built by Lockheed Martin Australia under a \$4 billion contract with Defence, and would therefore have qualified as a sovereign-owned constellation of satellites, even though it would have required ongoing contracting with Lockheed Martin personnel for its operation and support.²² Capability acquisition and contracting with the private sector is ‘business as usual’ for Defence, but with the cancellation of JP9102 in October 2024, there are currently no plans to acquire other sovereign space systems. Instead, purchasing ‘space as a service’ appears to be the preferred approach. This may be considered a form of mobilisation even in peacetime, since it requires drawing from the civil commercial sector for Defence needs. The risks and opportunities of this dependence on industry partners and service providers therefore needs to be fully understood, and will be further unpacked in the following sections that deal with mobilising space assets, space data and a space workforce.

The prevalence of ‘space as a service’ is particularly salient in the sense that much existing thinking about mobilisation focuses on industrial and primary sectors, whereas in fact the provision of services is a critical piece of the puzzle for mobilisation. This includes distribution services, communications, transport, utilities, information technology (IT), accommodation and food services, health services, retail, finance and insurance, and construction.²³ Indeed, the services sector forms the

largest and wealthiest part of 21st century societies, with over 80 per cent of Australia's GDP and 90 per cent of employment in Australia being in service industries rather than manufacturing or goods.²⁴ When it comes to the military space capabilities that Army, Air Force and Navy depend upon, these are all essentially services which Australia either purchases at a direct cost to the taxpayer from allies (and their respective private industries), or receives from partner nations in return for use of Australian ground infrastructure and data management. For example, much of the crucial EO information that Australia relies on for its weather, agriculture, mining, policing, intelligence, and response to flooding or bushfires comes from an agreement to access data from the European Commission's Copernicus Sentinel satellites.²⁵ In return for this access, CSIRO, Geoscience Australia and the New South Wales, Queensland and Western Australian governments all support the Copernicus Australasia Regional Data Hub, where the data is downlinked, processed and made available for Australasia, South-East Asia, the South Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Australian Antarctic Territory.²⁶ Australia also has a timeshare arrangement on the commercially developed NOVASAR-1 satellite, to collect data and monitor the Australian environment and disasters for 10 per cent of its time in orbit—as do the United Kingdom, India and the Philippines.²⁷ Australia depends on Japanese, US and European satellites for *all* its weather information, which is a critical service for Defence operations.²⁸ And for GEOINT in particular, there are strong intelligence sharing agreements through the Combined Space Operations (CSpO) partnership, involving Australia, Canada, France, Germany, New Zealand, the UK and the US.²⁹ In this partnership, Australia is a beneficiary and user of EO data, but not a contributor.

This heavy reliance on foreign and commercial providers for critical space data puts Australia—and the ADF in particular—at great risk. The continued, reliable provision of these critical services cannot be assumed to remain secure and stable. If any of our partner nations task their satellites for a natural disaster response or an urgent national or regional security need, Australia risks losing access. If any of them were to change their data policies, or commercialise what is currently government owned, Australia would lose existing access or have to pay for it. Even if this situation were to be temporary, the effects could be dangerous to potentially catastrophic.³⁰ There are also significant data-quality risks when it comes to commercially provided space data. Because there is no national or global oversight of

the companies offering EO data, or of the quality or trustworthiness of the data being provided, there are risks of low-quality, unreliable, corrupted or inaccurate data.³¹

The intertwined, dual-use nature of space systems and the dominant role of commercial actors means that the ADF's intersection with industry is both unavoidable and complex. In relation to preparedness and mobilisation, this means Army has to adopt agile thinking and approaches to how it intersects with the private space sector when it comes to space assets, data and workforce. The 1991 Wrigley Report to the then Hawke Labor government highlighted that '[t]he core role of the military profession [was] not to fight the nation's wars on its own, but work as part of a "national security team"'.³² Because of the prevalence of commercial space services, mobilisation requires preparing civil society as much as preparing the armed forces, which in turn necessitates closer relationships between civil and military organisations. This speaks to the nature of modern mobilisation efforts more generally. However, the changes in our geopolitical realities mean that a broader approach may be necessary when considering the kinds of scenarios that may lead to the need for mobilisation than was the case historically.

Australian Mobilisation and Resilience in the 21st Century

National security issues that might require a partial or full national mobilisation are now defined much more broadly than in the past. They include resilience to climate disasters such as floods and bushfires, food security, cybersecurity broadly and, as the international community learned recently, the ability to respond to global health pandemics. Mobilisation plans therefore need to include social issues and concerns.³³ While this is a whole-of-government responsibility and does not fall solely on the shoulders of the Australian Army, it is a factor that Army must remain cognisant of when preparing for mobilisation.

This broad definition of national security issues means there may be more and different scenarios that trigger the need to mobilise in favour of Defence needs than there were historically. On top of this, the context of current geopolitics further raises the likelihood of mobilisation. The strategic view of Australia's defence has shifted slightly with changes of government over the past decade, yet there have remained some constants, which (according

to the DSR) are projected to continue into the next decade. Since the 2013 Defence White Paper, the collective security of the Indo-Pacific region has been Australia's core 'strategic geographical framework'.³⁴ The shift in 'strategic weight' from West to East that was identified in that paper is now increasing, with forecast economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region identified as an opportunity for Australian investment. At the same time, however, the 2023 DSR highlighted increased tensions in the region, and replaced 'Asia-Pacific' with 'Indo-Pacific'. This nomenclature that has become more popular with India's rising power, and an acknowledgement of the strategic importance of both the Indian and Pacific oceans, and interests held by the US and Europe in this expanded region.³⁵ Building on the 2013 White Paper's foundation, the DSR acknowledged that tensions in the region a decade later are increasingly complex, being 'economic, military, strategic and diplomatic—all interwoven and all framed by an intense contest of values and narratives'.³⁶ It may be a complicating factor that Australia's own economic prosperity is interdependent with other countries in the Indo-Pacific region; however, this interdependency may also contribute to greater collaboration, even in times of competition. Importantly, the DSR recognised that the ADF must depart from the longstanding assumption of a 10-year timeframe to prepare for a major conflict, and highlighted the changing character of threats and conflicts as a result of disruptive technologies across all five domains—which include space and cyber.³⁷ Recognition of this competition, a condensed timeline for potential conflict, and the role of space and cyber as key domains within this context, are all built into the 2024 NDS. Australia's primary area of military interest is defined as the Indo-Pacific, but there is also the important acknowledgement that 'developments in cyber, space, nuclear and long-range precision strike mean Australia's security interests are not bound by geography alone'.³⁸ Critically, the shift from a domain-specific force to an integrated force includes integration 'across five domains—maritime, land, air, space and cyber—with the capabilities that are vital to the ADF's posture and preparedness'.³⁹ The 2024 NDS also highlights six capability effects that an integrated force must be able to deliver in order to be fit for purpose across all domains and enablers. They are the projection of force; holding a potential adversary's forces at risk; protecting supporting critical infrastructure; sustaining protracted combat operations—especially in circumstances of disruptions to command and control networks, infrastructure, logistics networks and communications systems; maintaining persistent situational awareness;

and achieving decision advantage.⁴⁰ All six of these capability effects have heavy dependencies on space services and data such as PNT, advanced satellite communications, and EO data, even where it is capabilities in the other domains that will directly deliver those effects.

The strategic environment, and the impact of high-technology threats on a condensed and unpredictable timeline for conflict preparedness, is similarly highlighted by a range of academics and strategic thinkers.⁴¹ It is clear that preparedness—‘accelerated’ or otherwise—must take into account threats to critical space capabilities. And because much of the space workforce is employed commercially, and many space-based services are purchased from commercial providers, all three of the armed services must be cognisant of their dependencies on space and cyber, and prepare for the potential for mobilising civil space capabilities and space workforces to the benefit of the nation in a time of crisis. The following sections consider the ways Army can approach mobilisation of the private sector with regard to space-related assets, space data and a space workforce.

Mobilising Space-Related Assets

Although Australia has no sovereign military space assets orbiting the planet, it does have sovereign space-related assets on the ground. This is where Army comes into its own by being able to incorporate civil and defence capabilities for Defence mobilisation needs. Army houses outstanding expertise in managing ground segment infrastructure (for example, satellite dishes on bases in Australia) for receiving data from communications satellites and EO satellites, and this may present opportunities for joining up with private sector infrastructure if the need presents itself in a crisis scenario. Famously the Joint Defence Facility Pine Gap is a joint US and Australian base on Australian soil which contributes to satellite operations for geosynchronous intelligence satellites developed by the US Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). It is also a ground station for receiving satellite data used for US signals intelligence, geolocation of potential targets, satellite communications interception, nuclear monitoring and missile launch warning.⁴² Pine Gap has been described as ‘the CIA’s most important technical intelligence collection station in the world’.⁴³ US personnel at Pine Gap include staff from the National Reconnaissance Office and detachments from the US Army, Navy and Air Force; and Australian personnel also come from all three of our armed

forces. The intelligence gathered through the Pine Gap infrastructure serves Australia's intelligence needs as well. This means that if the satellites or the link segment were to be targeted or interfered with by an adversary of the US, Australia would risk loss of access to that same data. Given the important role of signals intelligence (SIGINT) personnel within Army's ranks, Army has a particular interest in this vulnerability, particularly as the intelligence gathered from these US satellites informs Army's approach to military operations. While the US has cutting-edge counterspace capabilities and can protect its space-based assets to a certain extent, there is no doubt that deliberate interferences are occurring regularly.⁴⁴ In the event of a crisis or conflict situation, commercially owned infrastructure may need to be available to provide necessary redundancy. This could occur in response to the potential loss of critical data, or (in an extreme scenario) an attack on the ground station infrastructure at Pine Gap. It is difficult to understand the complexities of this kind of commercial integration from open-source information alone, but taking steps to achieve such commercial integration is necessary to ensure successful mobilisation of non-Defence space assets that would serve Army's interests and needs.

Other forms of ground segment assets include mobile ground stations or receivers. The majority of Army equipment has mounted GPS receivers and much of it includes mounted satellite communications receivers. The fully equipped soldier carries personal receivers for these satellite services as well. While the maintenance of redundancy and resilience for these technologies is routine for all Army operations (including training personnel to be able to navigate with physical maps and compasses), it is important to properly consider how civil or commercial infrastructure could support Army's needs in a crisis scenario. The scenario may be as simple as an Army deployment to assist in a bushfire or flood, or a situation of damage to Army equipment. But if the scenario is more complex (for example, a circumstance of increased competition of conflict), it is critical that commercial infrastructure is sufficiently cyber hardened and protected against other forms of interference such as jamming. Achieving such quality assurance might go over and above existing industry standards, and thus preparing the civil and commercial sectors for mobilisation would include requiring the highest possible standards from them. To a degree, such a requirement falls within scope of the updated Security of Critical Infrastructure (SOCi) Act, which has included the space sector as a new sector since 2022.⁴⁵ Among other things, this

legislation requires that any space researchers or commercial providers of space-related services must employ strict cybersecurity standards and background checks on staff, and declare the nationality of staff members and clients, even if they do not have government as a client. It is therefore not a responsibility for Army but is another factor that must be taken into account in terms of future thinking and preparedness plans.

Future ground segment capabilities must also take into account the need for interoperability with allies and their systems. In the past, the lack of interoperability has led to increases in cost and decreases in effectiveness. This was evidenced, for example, when the Australian Army sent equipment to Iraq in 2003 in support of US operations, only to find that the ADF equipment was not interoperable with US equipment and infrastructure, rendering it impractical.⁴⁶ Lessons have obviously been learned and implemented since then; however, this is not always the case for the space ground segment. In the case of PNT, for example, measures must be taken to ensure that ground and mobile infrastructure has redundancy built in by including receivers that are compatible with 'friendly' regional global navigation satellite systems (GNSSs) such as Galileo, the Quazi-Zenith Satellite System and the IRNSS, rather than simply GPS. Currently many systems which depend on GPS do not have in-built receivers that are compatible with alternative GNSSs.

Because of its prevalence as the main GNSS across much of the globe, GPS is incredibly vulnerable to both deliberate and inadvertent interruptions or spoofing (sending false signals so that it is difficult to know which positioning signal is correct). In the Russo-Ukraine war, GPS has already been targeted by Russian electronic warfare (EW) activities through spoofing and jamming, impacting not only Ukraine's defence but also commercial airline operations for a number of companies operating in nearby countries.⁴⁷ Deliberate interference may be difficult to detect. Even if it is easily attributable, it may take some time before users notice they are being sent off course, even in the context of Army manoeuvres and operations.⁴⁸ GPS jammers designed to interfere with ground stations and mobile GPS receivers are very cheap and easy to acquire, and may have inadvertent knock-on effects when employed in a civilian context. This is another reason why Army (and indeed the ADF as a whole) has a vested interest in ensuring the highest possible standards of protection against attacks or inadvertent interferences in private sector infrastructure, as a measure of preparedness and possible mobilisation.

Army is not only a user of space services provided by others but also has strengths in ground-based space domain awareness (SDA). There is open-source evidence that space systems are consistently targeted as an effective means of compromising an adversary's ability to navigate, communicate, and deploy forces and weapons.⁴⁹ The ability to accurately track what is happening in the space domain is therefore an essential capability. Australia's geography is particularly suited to 'look up', because there is largely unimpeded access to over one-third of the orbital paths covering the globe. Open skies and large areas of sparsely populated land mean there is little physical or signal interference with SDA infrastructure. SDA includes monitoring space traffic (space situational awareness, or SSA) as well as monitoring counterspace activities. Space traffic is a concern because of the sheer scale of objects orbiting Earth. As of mid-2024 there were approximately 10,000 operational satellites in orbit, but this number increases considerably every month due to the rate at which launches take place globally. In the first 50 years of human space activity, there were only some 2,000 launches. By 2023, however, the world had recorded approximately 6,500 launches, with around 200 launches per year carrying multiple satellites and payloads for multiple clients, whether commercial or government.⁵⁰ Additionally there are an estimated 160 million pieces of debris, including large defunct satellites, small objects that break off in the course of routine launches, and small to very small objects (down to 1 millimetre) which are the result of collisions or breakups. Notably, over 100 million of these smallest objects are impossible to accurately track.⁵¹ In low earth orbit (LEO), where the highest concentration of space traffic is, these objects are moving at 7 kilometres per second, so even an object of 1 centimetre in size can cause lethal damage to a satellite if it collides. SDA data is something all militaries need, and something Australia can contribute to partnerships with nations on which it largely depends on for space services. The ability of the ADF, and in particular of skilled Army personnel, to deliver SSA data to partners is a strength that can be capitalised on, and has been highlighted both in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update⁵² and in Space Command's 2022 Space Strategy,⁵³ although the status of the previously announced JP9360 (SDA) is now unclear. But even with increased Defence investment in this capability, there is already (and will continue to be) partial dependence on commercial providers of SSA data. In Australia, LeoLabs is the key commercial player. This is a company that has existing ties with US Space

Command and a growing relationship with the ADF.⁵⁴ Mobilisation may mean further integrating LeoLabs infrastructure into ADF infrastructure.

Aside from SSA data, SDA includes the ability to understand the development of space-based counterspace technologies and is critical to both deterring attacks on space systems and responding if necessary. To maximise this capability requires monitoring the launches of new space objects by potential adversaries, especially if such objects enter an orbit uncomfortably close to space assets owned by partner nations, or if they undertake unusual manoeuvres within an orbit, such as has been demonstrated by China and Russia.⁵⁵ In December 2023, it was announced that AUKUS partners had entered into a new trilateral agreement to develop the Deep Space Advanced Radar Capability (DARC) to monitor potentially hostile activity as far out as geosynchronous orbit.⁵⁶ Being able to monitor activity and attribute irresponsible actions will contribute to deterrence against threats to space assets. This is something to which Army can contribute a skilled workforce, including for managing the ground infrastructure. In terms of how to mobilise such a workforce, the challenges of retaining space-related skills in a competitive labour market will be addressed below.

Another important, though much smaller, part of the ground segment is launch. Although Australia does not currently have any sovereign launch capacity, there are three 'spaceports', or commercial space launch sites, under development in Australia. Two of them (Equatorial Launch Australia in Arnhem Land, Northern Territory, and Southern Launch in Whalers Way, South Australia) provide a launch site but no launch vehicles; in other words, they operate similarly to an airport, and provide a site from which clients can launch their own vehicles. In 2022, NASA launched several small sub-orbital sounding rockets from the Equatorial Launch Australia site,⁵⁷ and the commercial launch company HyImpulse launched from Southern Launch's test site in 2024.⁵⁸

Should the ADF develop a sovereign launch vehicle in the future, use of a commercial launch site could be a service procured as and when needed. Alternatively, procuring a launch from a commercial launch operator may prove to be a more efficient choice than acquiring a launch vehicle, especially as the extent to which the ADF will need to launch regularly from its own soil is unclear. Indeed, such procurement could be considered to be an ongoing form of Stage One or Stage Two

mobilisation under the doctrine (that is, 'Selective Defence Mobilisation' and 'Partial Defence Mobilisation'), especially if in-built agreements can be reached to provide assurance that, in times of crisis or conflict, Defence's launch requirements will be prioritised over commercial or foreign clients' needs. A third spaceport, being developed by Gilmore Space in Queensland, aims to provide a launch site for the company's own-designed rockets as well as for launch vehicles owned by paying clients.⁵⁹

There are some who advocate for the development of 'tactically responsive' rapid launch as a solution for scenarios where a satellite has been targeted or a service has been lost due to an unintentional event such as collision with space debris. Tactically responsive space (TacRS) was demonstrated in the US in 2023 with VICTUS NOX, when the US Space Force issued an order for launch. In this instance, the commercial companies they had engaged (Firefly Aerospace and Millennium Space Systems—the latter is a Boeing company) were reported to have launched within 27 hours.⁶⁰ However, it is important to understand that the full timeline involved was actually closer to a year. To begin the process, contracts needed to be awarded, a satellite pulled from an active production line to have specifications added, and regulatory approvals sought and granted (including RF spectrum allocation, launch and operation permits, and certification for launch vehicle). After all of these processes, the companies entered a 'Hot-Standby Phase', ready to receive an order to activate at any moment. When that call was received, it took 57 hours to pull the satellite from the factory to a launch site, conduct final testing, fuel the launch vehicle, and be ready to await an order to launch. When Space Force finally gave the order to launch, the launch vehicle was ready within 24 hours, and the approved window for launch was three hours later. This final phase of activation represented a record-breaking window of time to complete a process that had previously taken weeks. In combination, however, the whole process took far longer than the vaunted 27-hour activation rate that inspired excited headlines.

While VICTUS NOX demonstrates the existence of an extremely impressive capacity to launch a replacement satellite capability in the event that one were to be permanently lost, it must be seen within the context of a highly mature relationship between US Space Force and specific commercial space companies. These relationships are built on prior trusted associations between US Air Force Space Command and its

partner companies (particularly among the leadership, many of whom previously worked for NASA or the US military). These companies had achieved many years of proven success with their respective satellite operations and launch capabilities. Further, the TacRS example involved the launch of a relatively small, replicable satellite into LEO, where systems are often made up of large constellations of small satellites.

Given that the satellite manufacturing industry in Australia is still in its nascent stages and necessarily limited in size, and that there is (as yet) no local launch capability, the timeline for Australia to achieve TacRS is extremely long. Indeed, there is no indication that government has an appetite to prioritise this capability and, there are no current plans to develop sovereign military space systems. If priorities shift, or if, for example, Australia were to revisit the plan for a sovereign EO system (which would serve national security needs as well as civil sector needs) there is no guarantee that Australia's system could be replaced at anything like the rate already demonstrated by the US. The trouble is that a sovereign EO capability tends to involve exquisite, dedicated satellites (rather than off the shelf) and would likely operate at higher orbits than LEO. These characteristics make a government EO system intrinsically more difficult to replace quickly, even if access to rapid launch were possible.

There are options available to Australia to achieve a military space capability that do not involve the development of sovereign launch vehicles. Rather than building dedicated military satellites that are LEO constellations, and then seeking to develop an Australian TacRS capability, it would be more cost-effective, faster and more feasible for Australia's boutique-sized Army to acquire certain space services from trusted partner countries or companies which operate in LEO, and which carry the economic burden of maintaining or replacing their system, and ensuring it has other features to support redundancy. Indeed, this is one way in which the private sector can be integrated into an Army mobilisation plan, by determining which companies can fulfil Army's needs, by prompting the cultivation of relationships that are independent of any specific acquisition contract, and by advocating for cybersecurity standards and protections against interference that will meet Army's and the ADF's requirements. Among these measures, relationship building with the commercial space sector may be one of the most important aspects of preparedness.

Mobilising Space Data

Space capabilities provide data, so it is necessary to consider the extent to which Australia's space data is, or needs to be, sovereign produced and managed, in both the civilian and military sectors. With no current sovereign Australian satellite systems, and the overwhelming commercialisation of space data and services globally, the ADF—and therefore Army—continues to depend on foreign and commercially provided space data. This situation creates enormous risks. For Army, there needs to be sufficient understanding of the existing risks of (1) loss of access; (2) loss of service due to deliberate interference with a foreign sovereign or commercial provider's space capabilities; and (3) poor-quality service or data from a commercial provider. Mobilisation will require increased reliance on the commercial sector to mitigate these risks, including the capacity to achieve a rapid reaction time, whether in response to domestic civilian contingencies or (even more critically) in wartime. This is where Army's intersection with the space industry comes into focus, particularly its implications for national mobilisation efforts.

The character of war continues to change as space capabilities become more and more integrated with military operations and therefore become vulnerable to interference or attack. At the same time, the highly commercialised nature of the space sector globally and locally in Australia means that Army has no choice but to interact with, contract and use the services of commercial space providers. This is the crux of the 'space as a service' concept. As well, if any of Australia's partner nations were to change their domestic policies and commercialise what was previously a sovereign-owned space asset or service, Australia would be forced to contract with those commercial providers. Relying on commercial providers creates vulnerabilities in terms of the accuracy and quality of the space data being relied upon for Army operations, and the risk of unattributed or undetected interference with the data. For example, there is a known instance of a commercial satellite image being manipulated to remove clouds before being supplied to an Australian government agency, thereby compromising the integrity of the data.⁶¹ Sufficient geospatial data expertise within Army's internal workforce is necessary in order to mitigate this risk with respect to EO data, and similarly to understand and mitigate data risks when it comes to PNT and satellite-based communications.

Despite inherent risks, the dual-use nature of space services and space data has the potential to create promising opportunities to engage the private sector in support of mobilisation efforts. The availability of private sector space technologies mitigates the necessity for Army to procure end-to-end technologies to gain the same services. The fact is that the private sector will continue to carry the weight of Australia's small space industry, which means that a whole-of-nation approach to fulfilling Army's space data needs is unavoidable. Similar to space-related assets, it is possible that Australia is already in a first (selective) or second (partial) stage of mobilisation with respect to some space data needs. It is therefore necessary to build trusted relationships and protocols with commercial space entities, including stringent cybersecurity requirements, *now* in a time of peace, in order to be prepared for mobilisation in the face of crisis or conflict. In making such preparations, it is important to realise that one of the biggest challenges facing Australia is how to protect its armed forces from the loss of critical services and data caused by attacks on the allied and commercial space systems upon which our nation depends. Because Australia is so highly dependant on others for its space data and services, it can be difficult to identify how it can best contribute to protecting those systems and services. This challenge is made even more complex in regard to protecting commercially provided space data. Nevertheless, it is arguable that—if there is indeed a selective or partial mobilisation of space data currently underway, there may already be a corresponding responsibility of commercial providers to protect that data against nefarious interference. As highlighted above, assured access to space is recognised in the 2024 NDS as a critical component of an integrated force, given the importance of space-based services to all other domains. This policy position aligns with the publicly available eManual on Space Power, which gives the following definition of space control:

Space control involves offensive and defensive operations to ensure freedom of action in space by defeating efforts to interfere with or attack Australian or allied space systems and, when directed, deny space services to a competitor.⁶²

One area where Australia could effectively exercise space control is through EW, which is one of the most effective forms of counterspace interference. Indeed, EW can contribute to deterring other kinds of attacks on space systems, as it includes use of the electromagnetic spectrum for

observing, jamming and manipulating an adversary. Equally, counter-EW missions can protect against an adversary's access to the electromagnetic spectrum, and can also protect personnel and equipment from the potential impacts of an EW attack by an adversary. EW can also be employed to respond to attacks in any other domain. In this regard, EW can be seen as a sovereign data capability. In 2021, under the Morrison government, Defence Project 9358 was announced 'to explore options for the acquisition of a ground-based Space Electronic Warfare capability'⁶³ and thus expand EW's effectiveness more completely into the space domain. While there is limited information in the public domain as to where this program stands today, it is potentially a move towards a sovereign counterspace capability. There may be a role for this capability, and for existing Army EW skill sets, in protecting commercially provided space data, as a correlative responsibility when commercially generated data is mobilised for Defence needs.

Mobilising the Space Workforce

If mobilisation 'consciously shifts the boundary between the military and civilian sectors in favour of the former',⁶⁴ this is especially true when it comes to a space-capable workforce. It is already clear that the ADF competes with the private sector for technically skilled individuals, particularly when salaries can be higher in the private sector.⁶⁵ This is a challenge even in terms of increasing the number of reservists. This is particularly the case because the private sector is likely to service any Defence shortfall through a contracted solution. Therefore, it may become increasingly difficult to convince individuals to enter military service as reservists rather than to simply provide their professional expertise through a contractual relationship with Defence. However, in reality the private space and cyber sectors are likely to be unavoidably drawn in if there is a crisis or conflict in the region. As highlighted above, the extent to which the ADF already engages with the private sector with regard to cyber and space technologies in particular, and the fact that this trend will accelerate in years to come, makes this inevitable. Indeed, the 2024 NDS makes clear that the translation of disruptive and new technologies into ADF capability will require close partnership with Australian industry.⁶⁶ Such partnerships will be underwritten by the standards imposed by the SOCI Act, discussed above.⁶⁷

As noted above, the relationships that Army forges with commercial entities are critically important to the generation of space capability in support of the national interest. This goes two ways: in terms of the generation of doctrine and protocols for integrating private sector employees into Army operations and space capability needs, and in terms of Army becoming more adaptive and agile in supporting private sector decision-making and the generation of risk profiles. Currently, under political shifts and major federal budget cuts to direct investment in space research and development,⁶⁸ many in the private space sector have their eyes on Defence as the only real government client and the greatest source of space funding in the country. However, the commercial space sector must also understand the implications of working closely with Defence, and wherever Army is engaging with contractors or space service providers, there is work to be done to create a mindset in those partners that mobilisation is possible in the next decade, and what it is likely to entail.

Another consideration is the nationality of space companies and of their staff. As noted above, the AU\$4 billion contract to develop sovereign satellite communication program JP9102 went to a US prime. Generally speaking, many companies with existing Defence contracts fall under foreign parent companies, with one estimate that only 10 per cent of ADF contracts are with Australian-owned companies.⁶⁹ While choices may sometimes be limited, there are economic as well as security benefits to Army working closely with companies that are truly, or at least mostly, Australian. Indeed, this may be a factor of vital importance in the case of mobilisation. A foreign company can pull out of Australia if it determines the risks in a crisis or conflict scenario are too great, leaving a potential hole in both civilian and military capabilities. The competition for talent between Defence, large consulting companies and dedicated space companies may be softened if there were clear space career pathways within Army (and across the ADF). Without a space trade, highly skilled individuals will be moved across Army into different posts and positions that may not be related to their skill—and passion—in space technologies and the space domain. This situation creates a risk to the ADF and puts Australia behind our counterparts. Space Command must ensure future recruitment, training and sustainment of space specialists is possible. Indeed, creating a space stream for ADF personnel that is applicable across all three armed services is one of the stated priorities of Major-General Greg Novak, the Army officer who is currently Commander of Space Command.⁷⁰ While there may be a

perception of a risk of losing skilled Army personnel to Space Command, an alternative view is that Army benefits from a newly integrated ADF. Space Command can provide space-literate input into operations in the other domains, and ensure use of space systems for those operations is coordinated with Australia's international partners, upon whom the country depends for much of its space technologies. Similarly, as this author submitted to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, when it comes to a skilled space and cyber workforce:

Space and ICT/cyber security should be more closely integrated. The greatest threats to any space system are cyber threats, and Defence personnel with the necessary training and skillsets to work in cyber operations are a great asset to space operations ... The two capability areas need not compete with each other, rather they complement each other.⁷¹

Conclusion

In many ways, consideration of how to leverage space-based capabilities for Army in a scenario requiring mobilisation is no different from consideration of how those capabilities support the other two armed services. It may seem that many of the considerations discussed here are therefore generic to the ADF as a whole. However, in the context of the shift towards an integrated rather than a joint force (as underscored in the DSR and 2024 NDS), this article has highlighted that space, much like cyber, must be integrated into Army's thinking and planning at all levels. It has also shown that preparing for mobilisation must take into account the vulnerabilities of Army's dependencies on others for many of its space capability needs, as well as the opportunities provided by the highly skilled workforce within Army.

Defence's preparedness and mobilisation doctrine states that '[m]obilisation is the process of transition between preparedness and the conduct of a specific operation'.⁷² Preparedness includes not only exploring the capacity to scale existing capabilities and infrastructure within Defence but also the ways in which the private sector, researchers and wider Australian society can be leveraged for national defence needs. Preparedness is therefore key to mobilisation, but at the same time:

it is unrealistic to expect the entire force to remain in a high state of preparedness in perpetuity ... Critically, preparedness is bounded so that Army can meet short notice contingency requirements, within budget and resource allocation (ready now), while also maintaining its capacity to pursue necessary modernisation projects and initiatives to meet the requirements of the objective force (future ready).⁷³

In this context, Army must be consistently prepared for either war or peace, and it must integrate space-related assets, space data and space workforce into that preparedness. The dual-use nature of most space data and services, combined with the overwhelming commercialisation of space, may mean it is easier to mobilise in the face of crisis or conflict. Indeed, the extent to which there is already such great dependency on commercial partners may mean that Australia is already in a selective or partial phase of mobilisation. The task for Army, as part of an integrated force, is to be cognisant of the risks associated with this trend, including the risk of poor-quality data, and competition for a skilled space workforce. In order to prepare Army and the private sector equally for the possibility of (further) mobilisation, strong, trusted relationships must continue to be forged with the research sector and commercial space sector, and high cybersecurity and infrastructure security standards must continue to be required of non-government actors, even outside the context of Defence contracts and acquisitions. None of this is a responsibility only for Army. But one way Army culture can shift more seamlessly to an integrated force structure is by implementing these approaches in the context of existing interactions with the private sector when it comes to space infrastructure and space workforce.

This goes in part to a larger discussion on which capabilities and infrastructure need to be sovereign, which can be relied upon from partner nations in return for other services or workforce, and which can be acquired from the private sector. When it comes to space services and space technologies, these decisions need to be fully informed and go beyond the limited 'lines of effort' described in the Defence Space Strategy and the eManual on Space Power. Both of those documents have an overwhelmingly space-centric lens, rather than a broader perspective on the criticality of space as a support domain. In this sense, Army strategists can contribute to the development of Space Command thinking, now that it falls under Joint Capabilities Group.

National defence and mobilisation are always a response to external events, and are shaped by those events, making it very difficult to plan in advance.⁷⁴ Given the possibility that Australia may need to mobilise in response to increased tensions and a potential conflict in the region, Australia's regional trade dependencies mean there will be enormous impacts on Australian supply chains as well as increased scrutiny as to the national provenance of technologies, and cybersecurity requirements. The nature of high-tech threats in the space and cyber domains means that timelines for preparations and planning are inevitably condensed. As such, 'space' must be brought down to the ground, and Army is well suited to contributing to this shift in understanding across the entire ADF.

About the Author

Dr Cassandra Steer is Chair and founder of the Australian Centre for Space Governance. Globally recognised for her expertise in space governance, space law, and space security, she has published widely on these topics, including the application of the law of armed conflict and use of force in outer space. She has consulted on these issues to the UN Institute for Disarmament Research, the Australian, Canadian and U.S Departments of Defence, the Australian Space Agency and Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. She has taught space law and space security at McGill university, the ANU College of Law, the National Security College and the Australian Defence College.

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- 73 Jarrod Brook, 'You May Not Be Interested in Preparedness, but Preparedness Is Interested in You', *Land Power Forum* (blog), 10 June 2021, at: <https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/library/land-power-forum/you-may-not-be-interested-preparedness-preparedness-interested-you>.
- 74 Layton, *National Mobilisation during War*, p. 49.

The Concept of Mobilisation and Australian Defence Policy Since Vietnam: Lessons and Cautions for Army in the post-DSR World

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For the past five decades, Australian defence policy has focused on potential low-level threats from a small or middle power in its immediate region, and on the ability to sustain (relatively small) elements of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) on often quite lengthy operations overseas. While the latter certainly stressed parts of the force, throughout this time Australia could draw on discretion about its commitments,¹ the ADF's overall capability edge over regional forces, and the deterrent value of the US alliance to limit escalation and the overall scale of conflicts it engaged in, or prepared for. Throughout this time, more substantial challenges were acknowledged as a future possibility that would only emerge with significant warning.

Today, much of this has changed. The 2023 Defence Strategic Review (DSR) focuses the ADF on the possibility of great power conflict in our immediate region, finding 'that the ADF as currently constituted and equipped is not fully fit for purpose'.² In part, this is a judgement about the types of capabilities held in today's ADF. In part, it is about the ability of the ADF as a whole to operate in major conflict, rather than generating

smaller task groups. In part, it is also about the readiness and size of the ADF relative to the scale required for possible major conflict. It is therefore unsurprising that there is renewed interest in mobilisation, including in Australia's own experiences from World War I, World War II and Cold War examples, and in the past and present approaches of international partners.

This article begins by arguing that while mobilisation is a national challenge, it can take very different forms and have very different purposes when mapped against force structure and preparedness outcomes. Hence, the term 'mobilisation' may obscure as much as elucidate practical implications, especially at the levels of force design and preparedness which are of particular relevance to Army. The second part reviews Australian policy of the last five decades in light of these different forms of mobilisation. The third part maps these considerations against current strategic challenges, followed by conclusions for Army as it considers the implications of mobilisation in the current era.

Three Different Forms of 'Mobilisation'

The Encyclopedia Britannica defines 'mobilisation' as the:

*organization of the armed forces of a nation for active military service in time of war or other national emergency. In its full scope, mobilization includes the organization of all resources of a nation for support of the military effort.*³

'Mobilisation' thus has connotations of a nation and its armed forces moving from a peacetime to a wartime footing, and of raising forces for imminent, major war—of shifting resources from civilian to military uses. In addition, there is an important temporal aspect to mobilisation. 'Mobilisation' is contingent on, and a reaction to, a crisis or conflict; it implies a fast movement driven by urgent strategic need; while nonetheless also inevitably taking time.

Common Elements: Contingent Nature, Readiness-Size Trade-off and Civilian Resources

From a conceptual and planning perspective, it is useful to think about the process of mobilisation—in temporal as well as resource implications—as moving up a scale of readiness, whether that is at the level of a unit,

Army, or nation as a whole. Given the demands of training, personnel movement and maintenance or renewal of equipment, military forces cannot be permanently kept at the highest levels of readiness. The same is true for nations, as military expenditure above a certain level comes at the cost of the economic dynamism and growth that ultimately sustains the long-term defence potential of a nation. Such a concern, for example, motivated the Eisenhower administration to reduce military expenditure even as the 'Cold War' was at some of its tensest points in the 1950s. Readiness costs, which means that there is a fundamental and inescapable trade-off in defence planning between readiness and force size.

In that sense, 'mobilisation' is about moving from the peacetime point of that trade-off—which will in general emphasise size over readiness—to a wartime point which increases readiness overall by drawing on new resources previously devoted to civilian use. As a policy and planning challenge, the key questions of mobilisation relate to the appropriate peacetime balance between readiness and scale to maximise the overall potential of the force *after* mobilisation; how to manage the strategic risk that arises from the reliance on mobilisation decisions being taken at the required time; and what practical preparations today may ease the future transition from peacetime to wartime posture.

The concept of a 'real option'⁴ is useful in this context: investments today that do not provide direct use but provide the opportunity for further investments at a later time, and that can be triggered once new information is available. In a military context, reserve units, capabilities 'fitted-for-not-with' certain systems, contracts placing civilian transport services on retainer, or spare industrial capabilities in, for example, munitions plants, are all examples of capability investment that are 'real options'.⁵ Hence, investment in 'real options' for mobilisation can also operate at different time scales—akin to the way that investments in readiness, in acquisition or in research and development are investments into capability across different time scales for the baseline force. Over short time scales, this might constitute investment in additional reserve units; over the very long term, as was Eisenhower's argument, the best investment into the nation's ability to mobilise may well be to reduce today's defence expenditure burden on the economy.⁶ In his seminal book *Military Readiness*, Richard Betts usefully distinguishes 'operational readiness' as the readiness of active duty forces; 'structural readiness' in the form of formed units

(in the reserves); and ‘mobilisation readiness’ as the ability to convert civilian resources of personnel and industry into new military capacity.⁷

Whatever the time scale over which mobilisation is anticipated, however—whether days of tactical warning, or years of strategic warning—a force which maximises the benefits of mobilisation is one which, as a whole, is held at as low a readiness level as is still prudent for a given assumed length of warning time. The tension inherent in this balancing effort needs to be managed, as it cannot be eliminated.

Raising New Forces, Activating Reserves and Maximising Civilian Support to Operations

Shifting resources from civilian use to military use, the contingent nature in reaction to external threat, and the concept of ‘real options’ are key elements for understanding mobilisation in general. But within this broad conceptual envelope, it is useful to distinguish between three different types of mobilisation, which all have these general characteristics but which differ significantly in relation to the reaction time required to increase capability after warning, and the practical measures required for implementation.⁸

The first is mobilisation as the *raising of new forces* by drafting new personnel into the armed forces, and producing new equipment—emphasising ‘mobilisation readiness’ in Betts’ terminology. Australia’s raising of the 1st and 2nd Australian Imperial Force in World War I and World War II is a good example of this kind of mobilisation, which also was the focus of much interwar defence planning. Investments in training establishments, spare industrial capacity and raw material stocks are possible ‘real option’ investments that could support such mobilisation, as well as investment in long-lead items. Here, Army traditionally differs from other services—in particular Navy and, in recent decades, Air Force—insofar as the ‘long-lead item’ most relevant for land forces traditionally relates to the generation of trained and experienced personnel rather than equipment (or ‘platforms’).⁹ Hence, historically, systems prepared for this type of mobilisation included ‘skeleton units’ of officers and senior non-commissioned officers who would be ready to receive and train enlisted personnel as part of the mobilisation process. As demonstrated by World War I, World War II and even today’s travails in Ukraine, the time required for mobilisation in this sense would be measured in months at best (e.g. for training new infantry), and years

for many other capabilities (including scaling ammunition production). This kind of mobilisation requires 'strategic warning' of a growing threat, making political will (rather than tactical surprise) a key consideration.

The second type is mobilisation as the *activation of reserves*, which is a more relevant approach if warning is measured in days or weeks rather than years—or 'structural readiness' of formed units in Bett's terminology. Most countries under persistent, direct land threat have standing armies that may be little more than a training and initial screening force, with the wartime army largely consisting of mobilised reserves—European Cold War militaries, South Korea and Israel being good examples. Rather than skeleton units, reserves in this case are formed units (if not always equipped to the latest standard, for largely financial reasons).¹⁰

If the activation of reserves is a key component of a country's defence posture, the timing of that activation—and the length for which it can be sustained—become crucial questions for strategic as well as economic reasons, with far-reaching implications for crisis management and overall strategy. For example, calling up a large part of the working population can effectively stall the economy, making the need to end major wars quickly a key consideration in, for example, Israel. The act of mobilisation also becomes an important strategic development with implications for crisis management (as demonstrated to tragic effect in the outbreak of World War I in 1914 and, through decisions to delay, in the Yom Kippur War of 1973). Further, the need to mobilise increases the challenge of managing the risk of strategic surprise. Both the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the Yom Kippur War led to significant attention in NATO on how to manage the risk of surprise attack through improved intelligence and force posture.¹¹ In the Cold War, NATO thus developed formal, graduated levels of warning that guided readiness and mobilisation, and which became important strategic signals in their own right.

Third, mobilisation can also refer to *maximising civilian support* to sustain military operations. In the Australian and US contexts of recent decades, this form of mobilisation is largely limited in approach to surging commercial support.¹² For countries that prepare to fight on their own territory, however, it can be far more extensive. It can entail the incorporation of military considerations into civilian infrastructure design, such as bridge loadings; creating military infrastructure as part of civilian

networks, such as rail heads, telephone cables,¹³ fuel pipelines, hospital surge wings, or even whole canals;¹⁴ and drawing on pre-identified civilian equipment such as rolling stock, trucks, aircraft,¹⁵ construction equipment, and even stocks of office supplies and bedding.¹⁶ Again, European countries in the Cold War made significant use of this type of mobilisation, aided by significant state ownership of major utilities.

Maximising civilian support thus entails its own distinct preparations and investments. Insofar as a state will need to continually assure access to essential health, transportation and emergency services to the population, mobilisation efforts can operate in direct tension with the two previously discussed approaches. Therefore, it requires a national approach to workforce management of essential professions. To some extent, the practical steps required to maximise civilian support to military operations will require similar processes to those used for civil defence or resilience measures—one example being the incorporation of air raid shelters in public (and sometimes private) facilities, as occurs in South Korea, Israel and Finland. In addition to close interdepartmental liaison, maximising civilian support requires a broad geographic presence that, in the German Cold War example, took the form of army liaison commands and dedicated mixed civil/military maintenance squads stationed in every Kreis (county/shire).¹⁷ It also requires legal and organisational structures to prepare for the timely requisition of civilian equipment, including trucks, facilities or aircraft, for military use.

All three of the above approaches are thus forms of mobilisation, as each trades readiness for scale by relying on the shift of civilian resources to military use in case of conflict. All three of them require significant investment—financial as well as organisational—in ‘real options’ to prepare for and enable mobilisation. But, as is evident from the discussion above, the kinds of investments required for *raising new forces*, for *activating reserves* and for *maximising civilian support* often have conflicting implications for specific elements of the mobilisation system—such as whether to establish military reserves as skeleton or fully formed units, or to increase or reallocate personnel from training units. Distinguishing between these different types of mobilisation therefore aids understanding of the operational benefits, strategic constraints and costs involved in mobilisation in a specific situation. And they are also areas where Australian policy of the last five decades has more useful history

to offer—in practical or precautionary terms—than might be suggested by the absence of the term ‘mobilisation’ in many key documents.

Mobilisation in Australia’s Defence Policy after Vietnam

For most of the past 50 years, Australia’s defence policies were based on the strategic judgement that while lesser contingencies were credible in the shorter term, higher levels of contingency would only arise in the longer term, after an extended period of strategic deterioration.¹⁸ A strategic warning period of 10 to 15 years was envisaged. Intelligence analysis would provide this warning, leading to a timely response by the government through the expansion of the ADF. These were the tenets on which Defence developed the concepts of ‘core force’ and ‘expansion base’. Because the 1987 White Paper clarified that priority should be given to shorter-warning, low-level conflict, the importance of reserve units that could be activated to fulfil pre-assigned roles in specific scenarios increased, as did the reliance on the ‘national support base’.

Core Force and Expansion Base in the 1970s and 1980s

By the 1970s, a key tenet of policy was that the time it would take to develop ADF capabilities from a very low or non-existent base would be longer than the time scales over which it was possible to make confident intelligence assessments about the emergence of serious threats to Australia. From such considerations emerged the principle that the ADF should be able to handle credible lesser contingencies that could emerge at short notice, while maintaining an expansion base of sufficient capacity to allow timely expansion in the event of strategic deterioration. An advantage of this approach was that other departments within the machinery of government accepted it as a convincing framework within which Defence could argue for levels of funding. Much of this approach was set out in the 1976 Defence White Paper.¹⁹

Army’s interpretation of the ‘core force’ concept meant that each of the three regular brigades (or ‘task forces’ at the time) of 1st Division should have a specialised focus to maintain different expertise: 3rd Task Force in Townsville was the ‘Operational Deployment Force’ for short-warning contingencies and tropical operations (and held at high readiness); 6th Task Force in Brisbane maintained skills in open-country

and built-up area combat as well as amphibious operations; and 1st Task Force focused on mechanised operations.²⁰ Before the 1987 Defence White Paper, Army's overall force structure concept was set down in the *Army Development Guide*, which envisaged that, after strategic warning, Army would grow to an 'Objective Force' of five divisions.²¹

The late 1970s and early 1980s were not the first time Australia had included mobilisation in its defence policies; nor was Australia the first country to do so. But unlike the British Commonwealth and the United States, which during the interwar years could base their mobilisation planning on prospective threats from Germany and Japan, Australia after the Vietnam War did not have a clear future adversary to plan against. This was the whole point of the core force concept.²² For example, in 1981 the Department of Defence explained:

*The core force is not a static entity maintained against the day when warning of a particular threat is declared to have been received. Rather, the expansion base provided by the force-in-being is continually being developed in response to changing circumstances including both strategic and technological. The expansion capacity of the Defence Force will depend on many factors such as the extent of the developing threat, the civil resources that are mobilised and directed to its development and the extent of support in the community. Numerous study treatments have demonstrated the futility of relying on simplistic analysis techniques drawn from peace-time derived data for assessment of expansion capacity.*²³

George Cawsey (then First Assistant Secretary Force Development and Analysis, and later Deputy Secretary), had earlier commented:

*The [core force] notion is essentially simple; in a sense it is almost a null concept. Essentially all forces anywhere are core forces which can be expanded, contracted or changed in concept to meet a variation of the strategic conception either in a time of peace, threat of war or time of war. Core force is just another pair of portmanteau words which can if necessary be defined accurately, but I think ... it is unnecessary to do so.*²⁴

The challenge of mobilisation planning also attracted academic attention. Suggestions for giving it a clearer focus took two complementary approaches: to more clearly define specific scenarios

as a focus for planning,²⁵ and to integrate mobilisation into a wider concept of deterrence by denial.²⁶ JO Langtry and Desmond Ball developed these approaches in more detail,²⁷ building on ideas on how to implement conventional deterrence in the Australian context.²⁸ Central to their arguments was the use by Australia of:

*specific capabilities that will cause a potential aggressor to respond disproportionately in terms of the cost in one or all of money, time, materiel, and/or manpower in order to gain the advantage.*²⁹

Notably, the ideas developed by Ball and his other colleagues were focused on future rather than present threats, and hence closer to the concept of dissuasion (of the emergence of new enemy capabilities)³⁰ rather than deterrence in a more limited sense (i.e. of hostile enemy actions themselves). Robert O'Neill made this distinction at the time, when he wrote that:

*we are concerned with deterrence, but in most cases it is not deterrence of the use of forces which exist but deterrence of the development of forces which could project substantial combat power across the great distances which separate Australia from any potential enemy nation.*³¹

Potential enemies would thus be forced to undertake military build-ups of a kind that would provide unambiguous warning, a longer reaction time, and more information about the enemy challenge.³² This would create the conditions for Australian forces to be built up in an appropriate, more balanced fashion.³³

While developing the concept of mobilisation was thus a subject of academic debate, in practice force expansion received little analytical or policy attention. This was in part due to the assessment within Defence that the need for serious expansion would be too far into the future to command priority. There were, nevertheless, some attempts to address mobilisation. These included efforts to rewrite and update the Commonwealth War Book (a detailed guide to national mobilisation), an activity that was abandoned before completion.³⁴ There were also broad-based conceptual studies of the principles of force expansion and, for example, a study of Australia's future needs for air defence. Occasionally force expansion was raised in the context of new major capital equipment projects, but in practice this consideration remained at the margins.³⁵ None of this work had a lasting effect, except perhaps to reinforce the view that there was little priority for more extensive analysis.

Reserves and National Support Base after the 1987 White Paper

Ultimately, disagreements between the Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Force on priorities for the development of the ADF led the Minister for Defence in 1985 to commission an independent review of Australia's defence capabilities. This review, conducted by Paul Dibb, was critical of Army's interpretation of strategic guidance, and reset the framework for the Army's development, including for force expansion.³⁶ In effect, the subsequent 1987 Defence White Paper reinforced the priority of low-intensity, short-warning conflict for Australian defence planning, including for the Army. In consequence, the activation of fully formed reserves, and preparations to draw on the national support base for operations, took precedence over force expansion.

This meant that the focus of reserves shifted from 'mobilisation readiness' of skeleton units to 'structural readiness' as a follow-on force. Reserve forces would be activated in case of regional conflict, and would be used for the security of ADF bases in the north of Australia, including through the regional surveillance units. In this framework, the size of the Army Reserve was thus directly related to the installations and settlements that the government would wish to protect in conflict in the north, and less related to being able to grow into a hypothetical future force. The Dibb Review also recommended that reserve units in peacetime be allocated their wartime roles,³⁷ a call that is repeated in the DSR.³⁸ One assessment is that the Dibb Review 'generated considerable angst for the Army' but that it also 'left the Army and the ADF well placed to move forward with the development of more robust capabilities for offshore deployments later on'.³⁹

The 1987 White Paper announced legislation to enable a more flexible call-out of reserves, and closer integration of regulars and reserves both in the 1st Division and in Logistic Support Force.⁴⁰ Other developments, especially since the 2000 White Paper, included a greater focus on the use of the reserves to round out units of the regular Army, including at times of high operational demand.

In 1991, the 'Ready Reserve' was introduced as a (short-lived) means to broaden recruitment, save costs and better align readiness options between the regular force and conventional reserves. At the time, Defence stated that 'Ready Reserve forces may become a widely used means of

mapping an expanded force structure in the event of changed strategic circumstances'.⁴¹ A later review found that Ready Reserve units cost about 60 to 65 per cent of equivalent regular units. Army focused most of its use of the scheme on infantry, as developing reservists' skills in more technical branches proved more difficult. One challenge of the scheme was that reservists were not geographically concentrated, which made it harder to train at unit level.⁴² Later decisions, especially since the 2000 White Paper, placed greater focus on the use of the reserves to round out units of the regular Army, including at times of high operational demand.

The challenges that arose in responding to a short-warning, low-level conflict in Australia's north made it both necessary and possible to rely on civil support to ADF operations in and movement into that region. Likewise, the 1990 report *The Defence Force and the Community*⁴³ by Alan Wrigley (a former Defence Deputy Secretary) proposed greater use by the ADF of civil infrastructure and industry (and greater use of the reserves). As part of the Commercial Support Program that arose from the 1990 Wrigley Review and 1991 Force Structure Review, Defence's logistics activities were separated into those deemed 'core' and those deemed 'non-core'. The latter were market tested and, if the costings suggested it, the activities thus identified were outsourced. Likewise, the 1997 Defence Efficiency Review (DER) found that considerable savings could be made through a combination of integrating support services, civilianisation, and further market testing and outsourcing. Logistics concepts increasingly reflected assumptions about the broad use of commercial support for ADF operations. This development that was strengthened by the DER, which led to the establishment of the 'National Support Division' in ADF Headquarters—a term and function that the DSR recommended be resurrected.⁴⁴ David Beaumont defines the 'national support base' as:

the sum of organic Defence capability (and not just capability resident in the military, but also the Department), support from coalition forces and host nations, and support that is provided by national industry and infrastructure.

It is the available strategic logistics capability, including that which is inorganic to the military, that, properly empowered, acts as a 'shock absorber' when a nation encounters a military threat.⁴⁵

But as became apparent in the lead-up to the 1999 East Timor operation, the assumption that civil support would be available to the ADF in many ways remained just that, as organic logistic capability was cut but not replaced by sufficient practical preparations to implement the new approach. In practice, implementation of the concept of the 'national support base' focused less on developing new mechanisms to increase civilian support to Defence in wartime, and more on the shift of Defence organic logistics capability into the civilian economy. In doing so, Defence lost sight of the DER's finding that '[a] fundamental element of defence policy for industry should be to use the widest possible range of industrial support in peace *because that will be necessary in war*' (emphasis added).⁴⁶ In the Australian context, the challenges posed by this aspect of mobilisation are amplified by the structure of the domestic defence industry.

Sovereign Defence Industry as a Fundamental Input to Capability

Industrial capability and capacity to provide systems and hardware for defence use is a fundamental requirement for *raising new forces*, for the *activation of reserves*, and for *maximising civilian support*. The 1987 Defence White Paper stated that 'wherever possible Australian firms will be prime contractors on major projects and Australian industry involvement will be a major factor in selection new equipment', as the 'benefits to industry in peace will be returned as increased capability in time of hostility'.⁴⁷ Government intentions at this time were to explicitly build self-reliance and, implicitly, to facilitate mobilisation should the circumstances require it.

Structural developments in the domestic defence industry since the 1980s have overturned that ambition, resulting in a sector that is skewed towards the participation of large offshore primes and their local subsidiaries established to support specific programs. The reorientation of the Australian defence industry commenced with the partial privatisation of Australian Defence Industries (ADI) in 1999 and was reinforced through the Kinnaird Review in 2003. The Kinnaird Review recommended that at least one off-the-shelf option to be included in all capability business cases.⁴⁸ Government did not object to the sale of the remaining Australian component of ADI to French interests in 2006, and the sale of Tenix Defence to British interests in 2008. Subsequently the 2008 Mortimer Review reinforced the primacy of off-the-shelf solutions as the basis for force structure capability development.⁴⁹ The result has been the hollowing-out of more enduring domestic capability and

capacity, a situation which was mirrored within the broader industrial base with the demise of Australian car manufacturing in the 2010s.

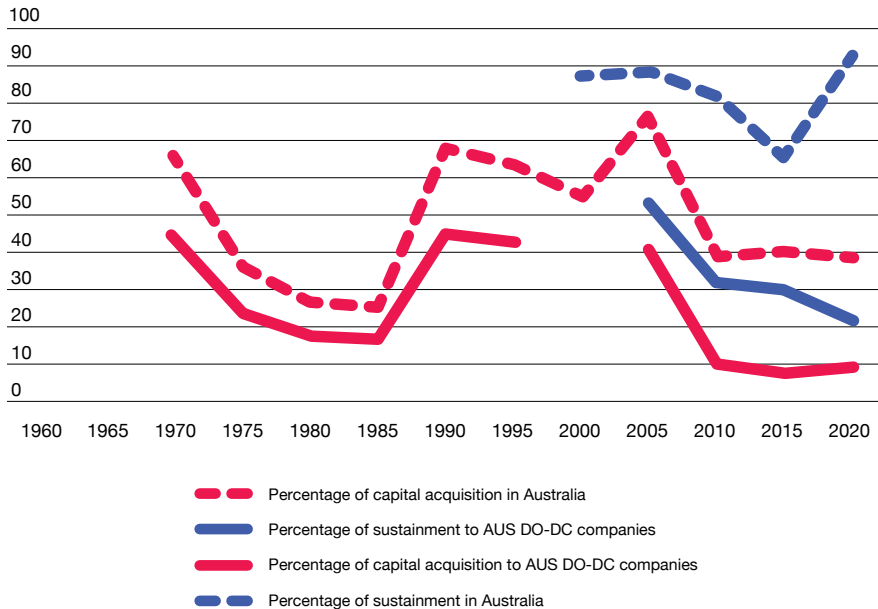


Figure 1: Percentage of acquisition and sustainment contracts placed with Australian owned and controlled companies between 1970 and 2020-50

The consequences of this restructuring of the local industry were twofold—each of which reinforced the other on a cyclical basis and progressively decreased national capacity while increasing the challenges for any future mobilisation activity. Specifically, sale of the two largest Australian defence companies significantly reduced both the capability and the capacity of indigenous entities to develop and deliver defence systems and hardware. Meanwhile, the involvement of foreign suppliers, including their domestic subsidiaries, inevitably increased. The implementation of the recommendations of the Kinnaird and Mortimer reports made off-the-shelf offerings the default solutions for defence capability. This development reduced the potential for domestic companies to develop and supply product, and to contribute to the Australian force structure from indigenous sources. Australian companies were therefore demoted to the status of,

at best, subcontractors to the foreign primes. The results can be seen in Figure 1: Percentage of acquisition and sustainment contracts placed with Australian owned and controlled companies between 1970 and 2020- with the reduction of acquisition and sustainment activities contracted to Australian domestically operating, domestically controlled (DO-DC) companies by the Department of Defence, and reduction in domestic capital acquisition overall.

Recognising that certain military capabilities are more important for operational success than others, successive Australian governments have attempted to ensure that related industrial capabilities are maintained in country. In 2007 the Defence Industry Policy Statement (DIPS) highlighted 'Priority Local Industry Capabilities' as being capabilities 'that confer an essential security and strategic advantage by resident in country'.⁵¹ This theme was continued in the 2010 DIPS in the description of 'Priority Industry Capabilities' as 'those industry capabilities which would confer an essential strategic advantage by being resident within Australia and which, if not available, would significantly undermine defence self-reliance and ADF operational capability'.⁵² Subsequent policy statements continued the intent for, in 2018, 'Sovereign Industry Capability Priorities' for local industry capabilities that 'are operationally critical to the Defence mission'⁵³ and, in 2024, the more nebulous 'Sovereign Industry Development Priorities' as 'industrial capabilities [Defence] needs to deploy a defence capability if, when and how the Government directs'.⁵⁴

One other development was the categorisation of industry as a 'Fundamental Input to Capability'⁵⁵ (FIC) in the 2016 DIPS. This initiative was expected to 'drive more formal consideration of industry impacts through the early stages of the capability life cycle',⁵⁶ but how this was to be achieved was never defined. Consequently, the way in which industry might be developed to support defence priorities was not progressed and the policy did not address weaknesses in the structure of the domestic defence industry. This overall lack of direction vis-à-vis the defence industry is more recently amplified in the 2024 Defence Industry Development Strategy in that neither the role nor the contribution of industry as a FIC rates a single explicit mention.

For Army, the industrial challenges with respect to mobilisation have thus been ill defined, and despite decades of defence industry policy,

the ability of the domestic industry to surge is limited. Recent efforts to maximise 'Australian Industry Content' and to spread the economic benefits across the country (as represented in decisions associated with Army vehicle acquisitions) has seen Thales, Rheinmetall and Hanwha establish manufacturing facilities in Australia.⁵⁷ However, each is sustained by only one or two programs, and none have any long-term commercial certainty. This situation is exacerbated by the loss of the domestic automotive industry, the cessation of complementary commercial vehicles activities, and the reduction in relevant skills and capacity.

Mobilisation and Credible Contingencies Today

Today Australia's strategic situation is significantly more challenging than when Australian policy last engaged with the different approaches to mobilisation discussed above. China's military capabilities now give it the potential to conduct and sustain sophisticated operations against Australia's interests, were it to develop the motive and intent to do so. Warning time must now reflect the time scales within which motive and intent can change, which are much shorter than the time needed for an adversary to develop capabilities to be used directly against Australia where they do not already exist. This leads to the conclusion that warning times now would be much shorter than those assumed in the era of 'core force' and 'expansion base'. In addition, contingencies even in the shorter term could be conducted at high levels of technological sophistication and lethality. Further, assessment of motive and intent is inherently difficult and subject to ambiguity, as recently demonstrated by the Russian build-up of forces before invading Ukraine in February 2022. Although some degree of political warning could be anticipated, an obvious warning threshold would likely again be absent, which could result in strategic surprise. Yet the consequences of getting it wrong would be severe, much more so than in the past.

Mobilisation Planning in the National Defence Strategy

Based on the considerations outlined above, there is a need for the Defence, the ADF and Army to have the capacity to surge and to sustain the higher rates of effort that short-warning contingencies would require. They also need to be able to operate at a scale commensurate with the size of adversary capabilities that could be deployed against Australia. This requirement in turn implies that the spectrum of readiness across

the different elements of the ADF should be different from that of the past. At the same time, with the growth of Chinese forces and defence industrial capacity, the warning time for a major threat has become shorter than in earlier decades. This situation amplifies the importance of formed reserve units and civilian support as the key pillars of future mobilisation efforts. It requires procedures to be developed and tested, well in advance, to ensure that such surge, if required, would be successful.

The contingencies that comprise the defence planning base are not publicly known, but the DSR and the 2024 National Defence Strategy (NDS) imply that they consist of a set of different levels of operation, with less demanding campaigns forming the basis for the shorter term and more serious contingencies beyond that.⁵⁸ We might conclude too that the planning base recognises the likelihood that China's capacity for military action will continue to grow.

There is, however, little available to the public about what the new strategic environment and the strategy of denial mean in practice for readiness, sustainability, surge capacity and force expansion.⁵⁹ The NDS says only that the strategy of denial requires 'appropriate levels of preparedness',⁶⁰ and that the reform agenda encompasses 'force posture, preparedness and employment reform to ensure Defence's disposition, size, strength and readiness enables the Strategy of Denial'.⁶¹ The 2024 Integrated Investment Program (IIP) elaborates a little on this:

*ADF reservists will continue to form an essential component of the Defence workforce, representing thousands of personnel fully trained and ready to serve. Coming from all walks of life, reservists will continue to contribute their unique combination of skills, knowledge and experience to Defence's mission.*⁶²

Specifically on the topic of the Army Reserve, the IIP says:

*Investment in the Army Reserve will deliver enhanced domestic security and response capabilities, which will strengthen its ability to provide security for northern bases and critical infrastructure and help it prepare for potential future contingencies.*⁶³

The investment program includes between \$200 million and \$300 million over the 10-year period of 2024–25 to 2033–34 for recapitalisation of the Army Reserve.⁶⁴

In brief, much depends on the contingencies in the planning base. These will determine not only the most appropriate force structure and its profile with respect to readiness and sustainability, but also the capacity of industry to increase its support to the ADF, especially as regards ammunition and other consumables. The latter raises questions of risk management: where should Defence strike the balance between stockpiles of consumables, stocks of components or raw materials, an indigenous capacity to surge production, reliance on overseas suppliers, and costs?⁶⁵

Mobilisation in Possible Contingencies

A key consideration that arises from both international and Australian examples of mobilisation discussed so far is that a close link to operational planning is crucial for effective mobilisation planning and the management of the trade-offs that reliance on mobilisation entails. For the purpose of this article, a broad taxonomy of contingencies comprises the separate needs to protect and promote Australia's interests in the event of maritime coercion or limited (e.g. special forces or air) attack on Australia's coastline or overseas territories, and to conduct littoral operations in the South Pacific. Both classes of contingencies could occur at a variety of levels of intensity, and would in part require similar capabilities. Such contingencies would, however, differ notably in the risk to deployed forces and the availability of civilian support.

Already the need to counter maritime coercion and to provide for coastal defence would require protection of the bases from which Australian maritime power can be projected, and of other critical infrastructure across the country. The use of the reserves for this task has become well accepted, as advocated for example in the Dibb Review⁶⁶ and as emphasised in the DSR.⁶⁷ In terms of the three classes of mobilisation discussed earlier in this article, this kind of response falls into the category of *activation of reserves*. That is, formed units, already familiar with and trained in their responsibilities and areas of operation, would take up their duties. One should expect that the levels of readiness now required for such units would be higher than in earlier decades, and that the geographic expanse that will require active protection now also includes critical infrastructure in the south-east and south-west of the continent.

It appears that Defence planning is based on this approach and also includes the use of reserve units in an enabling capacity, such as in the provision of enhanced logistic support. Forward-deployed forces within Australia would also increase the demands for civilian support. This requirement too needs to be planned for, as has been recognised over many years (although whether the contemporary focus on this is sufficient is not clear). This set of needs invites the observation that special reserve units could be formed within private companies—for example the trucking industry or civilian airfield operators—to be activated when contingencies required it.

Equipment holdings for reserve units would need to be more complete, with much less sharing of equipment between units, especially for specialist equipment such as secure communications that could not be quickly acquired from industry. Looking to Cold War examples of other countries, it is worth further examining the question as to what extent the equipment of such units might be drawn from civilian equipment pre-identified for requisition in wartime. It is beyond the scope of this article to provide a view on whether the extra \$20 million to \$30 million per year for recapitalisation of the Army Reserve over the forward 10-year period would be sufficient for this capability. In reality, this figure could well fall short of what would be required if Army prioritised post-mobilisation size over readiness of the regular force.

A second significant role for land forces will be littoral operations in the South Pacific, especially to secure lines of communication to Australia's north and east and to forestall or respond to possible hostile lodgements. Australia's regular forces would likely have the prime responsibility for such operations, given the need for high levels of training for joint, combined operations that would be involved; and because the difficulty of manoeuvre in the presence of hostile forces would likely mean that there would be a strong incentive to move forces early in a conflict. Nevertheless, irrespective of the military logic, the political and diplomatic difficulties and uncertainties of deploying to sovereign states could well lead to reluctance to make early decisions on such deployments.

Because the island states in the South Pacific have limited civil resources upon which deployed Australian and allied forces could draw, there may be a case for planning to use specialist reserve units to provide services

(e.g. medical support) that ADF operations in Australia itself could draw on from civilian sources. This situation reinforces the conclusion that the specialisation and structuring of reserve units for specific operational tasks, in specific geographic areas and in support of specific regular forces will be an increasingly important characteristic of overall force design.

It is also possible that, in response to maritime coercion, Australian forces would seek to operate out of forward bases in South-East Asian countries to Australia's north. In this context, there could well be a role for the Army in contributing to the security of such bases, but the logistic capability of host nations there is significantly larger than that in the South-West Pacific. Both the deployment of Australian forces and their contribution to host-nation protection would occur only if the host government agreed. The degree of speculation associated with such possibilities does not allow useful conclusions about mobilisation, other than to observe that, if there were such deployments, they would be yet another drain on resources. This is because they would require the same capabilities as protection of bases and coastal defence in Australia itself⁶⁸—a realisation that further emphasises the need to maximise the size of the total post-mobilisation force.

Of note, conflict in Taiwan would be a serious development, and Australia would likely feel obligated to contribute to operations in support of those under attack. However, rather than constituting additional tasks for land forces, such contributions would likely be in the hosting and support of US long-range strike forces in Australia, and during maritime operations (including those Australian operations mentioned above), to secure the continent and its lines of communication.⁶⁹

Beyond this, there is also the question of the extent to which the planning basis should include defence of the Australian homeland against major assault.⁷⁰ The view expressed in the 2023 DSR that such a contingency is remote is broadly consistent with the policy judgements of the 'core force' and 'expansion base' era. This remoteness continues to suggest, therefore, that capabilities developed or maintained for such a strategic deterioration should be at a minimal level and command low priority. The increased need for large-scale activation of the reserves suggested by the contingencies discussed above raises questions about whether the reserves could continue to fulfil the major role of expansion base they

have played in the past. A particular conclusion is that, while the situation should be subject to periodic review, there is a stronger case for focusing preparations for force expansion on the demands of personnel replacement and reconstitution in response to (possibly protracted) short-warning conflict, rather than on massive expansion of the force as a whole.

Conclusions: Implications for Army

Applying the mobilisation categories of *activation of reserves*, *civilian support*, and *force expansion* to contingencies derived from consideration of Australia's new strategic circumstances thus brings no surprises in the principal observation: a prudent approach to contingency planning means giving an increased emphasis to activation of reserve forces and to planning for civilian support to deployed forces. If further and more detailed analysis shows that today's Army Reserve would not be sufficient in number to undertake the responsibilities given to them, consideration should be given to raising more reserve units *now*. This leads to the conclusion that, depending on the desired size of the post-mobilised force, there is likely to be a strong argument to shift resources from the regular force to the reserves.

However, it is important to recognise that the move to a defence posture and strategy that relies heavily on mobilisation involves issues that go beyond just the force structure. It is far from clear that Defence's present governance arrangements are adequate, either in general or for the specific issue of mobilisation.⁷¹ Any discussion of how to prepare for mobilisation would do well to keep in mind the first recommendation of the DER of 1997: 'The Defence Organisation should be organised for war and adapted for peace'.⁷² The deterioration in Australia's strategic circumstances since this observation was first made makes the observation even more relevant today.

As the threat of war would bring with it a need for mobilisation, the defence organisation needs to think of itself more as a mobilisation organisation. As far back as 1980, Desmond Ball wrote:

Departmental thinking today is dominated by the concerns of peacetime management. Insofar as the military considers the requirements of mobilisation and possible war-fighting,

such consideration is almost entirely in terms of hardware and of equipment acquisition lead-times. ... [T]here is evidently an assumption prevalent within the Australian Defence Force to the effect that organisation, command, and staffing, personnel and infrastructure arrangements are either zero or at least very short lead-time items.⁷³

Australia's strategic environment, and the focus of the defence organisation on it, have changed significantly since the greater urgency instilled in the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, and it would be good if the departmental mindset outlined by Ball were no longer the case. More likely, progress to date will have been uneven, and some of the trends that need to be reversed are very longstanding. For example, the public consultation process of the 2016 White Paper highlighted that decades of 'rationalisation' of reserve bases had led to a growing gap between the Australian population and the ADF.⁷⁴ An Army that relies on mobilisation of any of the three types discussed herein will have to reverse that trend.

For Australia, the strongest historical connotation of 'mobilisation' is force expansion—an association that dominated Army force structure planning as recently as the mid-1980s. However, the analysis above suggests that this should not remain the strongest focus in contemporary circumstances. Major power conflict involving Australia today could emerge over timelines akin to what was considered 'short-warning conflict' in the past. While this warning time is likely to be measured in weeks or even months, such conflict would require the ability to activate large reserve forces, and to draw on significant civilian support for operations in Australia. Hence, the creation of these reserve capabilities, and maximising the legal and organisational ability to draw on civilian infrastructure and equipment, should be the priorities for mobilisation planning today.

This does not mean that force expansion is completely irrelevant. In the Cold War, conventional fighting in the northern hemisphere was expected to lead to nuclear escalation after the initial weeks or, at most, months of fighting. Hence, the raising of new units—or 'mobilisation readiness'—was considered superfluous (and a practical impossibility, at least in Europe), and there were no significant preparations or plans to raise new forces in case of conflict. Today conflict may well be protracted, with fewer incentives for escalation of nuclear use to a scale that would render significant conventional operations impossible.

In protracted conflict, there may thus be a need to raise some new units to reconstitute and replace losses, and possibly to allow rotation of deployed forces for rest and recuperation.⁷⁵ In addition, changes in the strategic environment may well create new demands for wartime or peacetime deployment that could require an increase of the force for specific tasks: establishing permanent garrisons on Christmas and Cocos islands, or possibly—if agreement was reached—on the territory of countries to Australia's north, for example. Hence, it would be prudent to identify credible contingencies of this kind as part of Defence strategic planning.

But planning for force expansion should *not* be seen as a substitute for addressing the need to create the forces required now, and the challenges of doing so. In this context, difficult questions may lie ahead about whether it is possible, with today's demographics (and in light of persistent challenges of recruitment and retention despite increasing financial incentives), to raise the required regular and reserve forces through an all-volunteer force. In part, this raises the question of what the acceptable recruitment standards should be for a force that relies on mobilisation. But an increasing number of other Western democracies have concluded in recent years that similar demographic and strategic challenges require an increased reliance on conscription: Norway, Denmark and Taiwan have taken decisions to increase service times, increase numbers called up or include women in the draft; Lithuania and Latvia have reintroduced conscription; and in Germany, Romania and the Netherlands there are proposals from defence ministers to reintroduce conscription, albeit along Scandinavian models of a selective draft that preferentially calls up those among the whole cohort who state their willingness to serve.⁷⁶ Given persistent recruitment shortfalls, one may well ask at what stage Australia, too, might conclude that the potential of the all-volunteer force has reached its limit.

The 2024 DIPS states that 'Defence industry is essential to ... the development, delivery and sustainment of capabilities Defence relies on'.⁷⁷ This reliance is even greater during mobilisation when personnel numbers, and the number of platforms and systems to be utilised by those personnel is increasing. It is greater still during conflict as both platforms and consumables need to be replenished. In this sense, industry is more than just a FIC but a 'capability in its own right'.⁷⁸ As the demands on industry for mobilisation in the land domain will be partly different from, and

partly overlap with, the sea and air domains, Army needs to understand the industrial requirements and capabilities available to it, where offshore supply chains are sufficient and where domestic manufacture is a necessity.

The industrial system will need to adapt during periods of tension and conflict to provide the outputs upon which an expanded, high-tempo Army will rely. But the ability of the industrial system to adapt is an important constraint both on mobilisation and on the types of forces Australia can raise and sustain. It is therefore useful in this context to think of defence industry as comprising three different industries: for military platforms, for consumables (including ammunition), and for systems (especially sensor and communications) that are often dual use.⁷⁹ Newly raised forces—and existing forces after attrition and depletion of stocks takes its toll—will likely heavily lean into such capabilities that can be produced domestically and thus may have to be equipped, structured and operated quite differently from the way in which regular and even reserve forces do today.

Beyond examining mobilisation as an approach to force design and sustainment, it is also important to understand and manage mobilisation as a process that has to balance strategic, political and resource implications. Operationally the nature of littoral warfare in an age of long-range precision strike will likely create first-mover advantages.⁸⁰ Visible mobilisation measures are important signals to possible adversaries, and further examination is warranted of the potential value of formal—and publicised—levels of readiness as a tool of crisis management. Politically, governments will, however, also be concerned about controlling escalation, and the economic costs of such a step. Managing these tensions will require analysis of the signalling, military, economic and political aspects of different parts and phases of the mobilisation process—and how they would interact with the flow of US forces into Australia that would likely be a concurrent development in a crisis. Many such differences may be domain specific, and hence a worthwhile area for examination to understand the strategic characteristics of land power in the new environment.

In general, this assessment reinforces the need for politically and operationally realistic exercises to explore the strategic implications of mobilisation—as well as to put the mobilisation system itself under realistic stresses. Traditionally, realistic tests of strategic logistics have not been an important element of major Australian exercises, including in the Kangaroo

series for operations in the defence of Australia. Australia has never had an equivalent of NATO's Cold War Reforger⁸¹ exercises, or of the large strategic mobility exercises that NATO has started again since 2014. There will be significant resource requirements for such exercises and, given the importance of Army's reserve units, Army will have to play a major role.⁸²

The consideration of mobilisation in defence policy is far from new for Australia. However, developing an effective system that can deliver significant capability through mobilisation in contemporary circumstances would be. As the policies discussed in this article form part of the intellectual and organisational legacy within which the Army operates today, it would do well to understand which approaches worked or not, and why.

About The Authors

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Endnotes

- 1 As often expressed in the phrase 'wars of choice'.
- 2 Department of Defence, Defence Strategic Review (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2023), p. 7.
- 3 'Mobilization', Britannica, at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/mobilization> (accessed 15 May 2024).
- 4 Avinash K Dixit and Robert S Pindyck, *Investment under Uncertainty* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).
- 5 In civilian contexts, certain financial instruments but also oil exploration licences or the purchase of vacant land are such 'real options'. T Copeland and V Antikarov, *Real Options: A Practitioner's Guide* (New York: Texere, 2001); M Amran and N Kulatilaka, *Real Options: Managing Strategic Investment in an Uncertain World* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1999).
- 6 In 1952, US defence expenditure in the context of the Korean War was 13.9 per cent of GDP (SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, at: <https://milex.sipri.org/sipri>).
- 7 RK Betts, *Military Readiness* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1995), pp. 40-43.
- 8 For example, what was effectively a mobilisation that focused on the activation of reserves in 1999 for East Timor saw many ADF training establishments denuded of personnel to round out operational forces. If it had been necessary to sustain this mobilisation for an extended period of time, the ability to raise new forces would have been significantly affected.
- 9 While force expansion has not received much analytic attention in recent decades, one paper that sets out a useful parametric model after the Cold War is JA Dewar, SC Bankes and SJA Edwards, *Expandability of the 21st Century Army* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 2000). One of its findings—the benefit of relatively large materiel holdings from Cold War times—would be unlikely to hold true today.
- 10 For discussion of the role of mobilisation in Cold War defence planning in Europe, see for example RP Haffa, *Rational Methods, Prudent Choices: Planning U.S. Forces* (Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1988); WP Mako, *U.S. Ground Forces and the Defense of Central Europe* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1983); J Simon (ed.), *NATO–Warsaw Pact Force Mobilization* (Washington DC: National Defense University, 1988); and Barry R Posen, 'Is NATO Decisively Outnumbered?', *International Security* 12, no. 4 (1988), pp. 186–202.
- 11 The classic text on the implications of surprise attack for defence planning is RK Betts, *Surprise Attack: Lessons for Defense Planning* (Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 1982).
- 12 Of note is that in the United States, the Defense Production Act gives government the ability to direct industry to give priority to military orders over civilian ones.
- 13 One of the authors has memories, as a conscript in the 1990s, of accessing the regular German copper phone network via concealed junction boxes, dispersed throughout the landscape in hedges among agricultural fields, to establish communications for battalion HQ.
- 14 The Elbeseitenkanal in Northern Germany, running 115 km due south from the Elbe along the former inner-German border, was partly built to provide a major tank obstacle on the North German plain; its shores can be forded by tanks from west to east but not the other way around.
- 15 E.g. the US Civil Reserve Air Fleet (<https://www.amc.af.mil/About-Us/Fact-Sheets/Display/Article/144025/civil-reserve-air-fleet/>).
- 16 An anecdotal example, according to a family member of one of the authors, illustrates

the extent this can reach: a medical reserve unit had almost no organic equipment but could, with requisition orders for specific trucks and buses and drawing on timber, typewriters, and bedding held on stock for the purpose by local stores, equip railway cars and fishing boats with makeshift stretchers to create an evacuation route from Schleswig-Holstein to Britain (and did practise doing so).

- 17 Tasks of these units included working with counties to incorporate military considerations in infrastructure (such as bridge loadings, prepared explosive chambers, or integrated concrete tank barriers), and maintaining buried caches of supplies, including explosives, for demolition work.
- 18 Following the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, Australia's Fraser government was concerned that this action could well presage further Soviet expansion, through Pakistan, to reach the Indian Ocean. The government increased the defence budget of that year and instructed Defence to plan on significant further annual increases over the forward five-year program. Major expansion of the Army Reserve was envisaged. In the event, little of this happened, as the federal budget came under pressure and it became apparent that Australia's initial response had been an overreaction, and that the Soviet Union was becoming bogged down in Afghanistan. Nevertheless, there had been sufficient confidence in the level of future funding for the government to make major commitments to significant air and maritime capabilities, such as the F/A-18 new tactical fighter aircraft.
- 19 Department of Defence, *Australian Defence* (Canberra, 1976).
- 20 Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army, Australian Centenary History of Defence*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 234–235.
- 21 On the challenges of Army to relate its force design to policy guidance in the 1970s and 1980s, see David Connery (ed.), *The Battles Before: Case Studies of Australian Army Leadership after the Vietnam War*, Australian Military History Series No. 3 (Canberra: Army History Unit, 2016), pp. 1–25.
- 22 See Stephan Frühling, *Defence Planning and Uncertainty* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 67–89.
- 23 Department of Defence in Official Hansard Report, 18 March 1981, p. 1612, quoted in Ray Sunderland, *Australia's Defence Forces—Ready or Not?*, Working Paper No. 94 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1985), pp. 6–7.
- 24 Testimony of GF Cawsey, First Assistant Secretary, Force Development & Analysis Division, Department of Defence, in official Hansard Report of the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs & Defence, *Inquiry into Australia's defence procurement programs and procedures*, 9 November 1978, p. 1070, quoted in JO Langtry and Desmond Ball, *Australia's Strategic Situation and its Implications for Australian Industry*, Reference Paper No. 38 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1980), p. 10.
- 25 Ross Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence* (St Lucia: University Press of Queensland, 1980), esp. pp. 275–294; Ray Sunderland, 'Problems in Australian Defence Planning', Canberra Paper No. 36 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1986), esp. pp. 67–82; Ray Sunderland, *Selecting Long-Term Force Structure Objectives*, Working Paper No. 95 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1985).
- 26 See Langtry and Ball's discussion of the relationship between deterrence and 'war-fighting', itself based on distinctions en vogue at the time among American theorists of nuclear strategy. JO Langtry and Desmond Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment* (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1979), pp. 9–21.

- 27 Langtry and Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment*. Their ideas were endorsed by both the Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence (Joint Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defence, *Australian Defence Force—Its Structure and Capabilities* (Canberra: Parliament of Australia, 1984), p. 83) and the Labor Party (Desmond Ball, 'Labor's Policy of Self-Reliance and National Defence: A National Effort for a National Defence', in John Reeves and Kelvin Thomson (eds), *Policies and Programs for the Labor Government* (Blackburn: Dove Communications, 1983), pp. 113–131), but the concept was incompatible with the growing emphasis placed on short warning time, low-level contingencies in Australian defence planning and thus did not become highly influential in practice.
- 28 For a good overview on that discussion, see Michael Evans, *Conventional Deterrence in the Australian Context*, Working Paper No. 103 (Canberra: Land Warfare Studies Centre, 1999), esp. pp. 18–28.
- 29 Langtry and Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment*, p. 22.
- 30 Richard L Kugler, 'Dissuasion as a Strategic Concept', *Strategic Forum* 196 (2002); Jonathan Hagood, 'Dissuading Nuclear Adversaries: The Strategic Concept of Dissuasion and the US Nuclear Arsenal', *Comparative Strategy* 24, no. 2 (2005), pp. 173–184.
- 31 Robert O'Neill, *The Structure of Australia's Defence Force*, Working Paper No. 10 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1979), p. 8.
- 32 Desmond Ball and JO Langtry, 'Development of Australia's Defence Force Structure: An Alternative Approach', *Pacific Defence Reporter* 9, no. 3 (1979), pp. 7–16.
- 33 Langtry and Ball, *Controlling Australia's Threat Environment*, p. 23.
- 34 The Commonwealth War Book provided a summary of important actions to be taken by government departments in the event of a need to put the whole nation on a war footing—that is to say, in a situation of national crisis where there was a need for policy and economic coordination and industrial mobilisation. A copy of the 1956 War Book is available, including in digital form, at the National Library of Australia (Bib ID 1182487) and at: <https://seapower.navy.gov.au/media-room/publications/cwealth-war-book>.
- 35 One of the authors recalls, for example, the debate about Army's proposal for trucks, tractors and semi-trailers. In brief, the Defence policy position was that, in contingencies, the ADF would necessarily rely heavily on the civil infrastructure, including the transport industry. It was appropriate, therefore, to exercise this reliance in peacetime.
- 36 Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1986). Page 84 states: 'This Review has substantial reservations about the conceptual framework of the Army Development Guide'.
- 37 *Ibid.*, pp. 80, 85–86, 154; Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1987), p. 55.
- 38 *Defence Strategic Review*, p. 58, para. 8.30.
- 39 John Blaxland, *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard* (Port Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 59. This book provides a valuable perspective from an Army point of view of much of the period discussed in this paper.
- 40 *The Defence of Australia*, pp. 59–60.
- 41 Department of Defence, *Ready Reserve Program 1991* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1991), p. 12.
- 42 For an extensive discussion of the practical experience of the scheme, see Lt Gen John Coates and Hugh Smith, *Review of the Ready Reserve Scheme* (Canberra: UNSW Canberra, 1995).

- 43 Alan Wrigley, *The Defence Force and the Community: A Partnership in Australia's Defence* (Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service, 1990).
- 44 *Defence Strategic Review*, p. 82.
- 45 David Beaumont, 'The Strategic Shift and Rethinking the National Support Base', *Defense.info*, 25 May 2019, at: <https://defense.info/re-shaping-defense-security/2019/05/the-strategic-shift-and-rethinking-the-national-support-base/> (accessed 24 April 2024).
- 46 Department of Defence, *Defence Efficiency Review* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1997), p. E-5.
- 47 *The Defence of Australia*, p. x.
- 48 Department of Defence, *Defence Procurement Review* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2003).
- 49 Department of Defence, *Going to the Next Level: The Report of the Defence Procurement and Sustainment Review* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2008).
- 50 Graeme Dunk, 'Operational and Defence Industry Sovereignty', PhD thesis, Australian National University, 2024. The data for the construction of this graph has come from a wide variety of sources, including Defence Annual Reports, Defence White Papers, and www.austender.gov.au. Data for the period 1970 to 1995 for acquisition contracts awarded to Australian-controlled companies has been generated by using the involvement of Australian companies in Collins-class submarine A11 as a baseline.
- 51 Department of Defence, *Defence and Industry Policy Statement* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2007), p. 4.
- 52 Department of Defence, *Building Defence Capability: A Policy for a Smarter and More Agile Defence Industry Base* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2010), para. 4.9.
- 53 Department of Defence, *Defence Industry Capability Plan* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2018), p. 8.
- 54 Department of Defence, *Defence Industry Development Strategy* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2024), p. 17.
- 55 The full range of fundamental inputs to capability are personnel, organisation, collective training, major systems, supplies, facilities and training areas, support, command and management, and industry.
- 56 Department of Defence, *Defence Industry Policy Statement* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016), p. 19.
- 57 Thales manufactures Bushmaster and Hawkei vehicles in Bendigo, Victoria. Rheinmetall manufactures the Boxer Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle (CRV) at Redbank, Queensland. Hanwha will manufacture the Redback Infantry Fighting Vehicle (IFV) at Avalon, Victoria.
- 58 For example, the DSR sets out three distinct time periods for defence planning: 2023–2025, 2026–2030, and 2031 and beyond (p. 25). It is important to recognise that the contingencies outlined above would be quite different from those of the 'Core Force' and 'Expansion Base' era even though there are some superficial similarities. There would be the risk of high levels of lethal force even in the shorter term, and the warning times for more significant combat would not be the 10-plus years of earlier policies.
- 59 The concept of 'Strategy of Denial' has emerged from analysis supporting defence policy since the 2020 Defence Strategic Update, as well as from Australian National University academic work: see Paul Dibb and Richard Brabin-Smith, *Deterrence through Denial* (Australian Strategic Policy Institute, 2021). This paper was the subject of a meeting between the authors and a Defence team led by the Chief of the Defence Force later in 2021.

- 60 Department of Defence, National Defence Strategy (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2024), p. 24.
- 61 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- 62 Department of Defence, Integrated Investment Program (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2024), p. 17.
- 63 *Ibid.*, p. 55.
- 64 *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- 65 Note that the DSR calls for 'enhanced sovereign defence industry capacity in key areas' (p. 32). Also see pp. 38 and 45, and pp. 81–82 for 'Accelerated Preparedness'.
- 66 Dibb, Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities, pp. 78–86, 150–159.
- 67 Defence Strategic Review, p. 58. Paragraph 8.30 states that 'Enhanced domestic security and response Army Reserve brigades will be required to provide area security to the northern base network and other critical infrastructure, as well as providing an expansion base and follow-on forces'.
- 68 On force structure implications of possible Army forward presence, see Andrew Carr and Stephan Frühling, Forward Presence for Deterrence: Implications for the Australian Army, Occasional Paper No. 15 (Canberra: Australian Army Research Centre, 2023).
- 69 In terms of a large-scale and primarily land conflict in the Indo-Pacific that might involve Australia, a North Korean attack on South Korea is the only credible contingency. However, for the most part, since the end of the war in Vietnam, Australian governments have shown little appetite for sending ground forces off shore for high-intensity conflict. Notwithstanding the ambiguity of the 2016 Defence White Paper on defence priorities (see for example Department of Defence, 2016 Defence White Paper (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2016), p. 71), policy in practice is well summarised in the 2000 Defence White Paper: 'We have, however, decided against the development of heavy armoured forces suitable for contributions to coalition forces in high intensity conflicts' (Department of Defence, Defence 2000: Our Future Defence Force (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 2000), p. 79). See also Dibb and Brabin-Smith, Deterrence through Denial, pp. 14 and 15, for a discussion of Taiwanese and Korean contingencies.
- 70 The DSR states on p. 25: 'While there is at present only a remote possibility of any power contemplating an invasion of our continent, the threat of the use of military force or coercion against Australia does not require invasion'.
- 71 See Richard Brabin-Smith, 'Do We Already Need the Next Defence Review?', *The Strategist*, 1 March 2024, at: <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/do-we-already-need-the-next-defence-review/>.
- 72 Defence Efficiency Report, p. E-2.
- 73 Desmond Ball, 'The Australian Defence Force and Mobilisation', in Desmond Ball and JO Langtry (eds), *Problems of Mobilisation in Defence of Australia* (Canberra: Phoenix Defence Publications, 1980), p. 23. For other discussions of manpower considerations in force expansion at the time, see for example Babbage, *Rethinking Australia's Defence*, pp. 184–208; JO Langtry, *Manpower Alternatives for the Defence Forces*, Working Paper No. 2 (Canberra: Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, 1978).
- 74 Peter Jennings, Andrew Davies, Stephan Frühling, James Goldrick, Mike Kalms and Rory Medcalf, *Guarding against Uncertainty: Australian Attitudes to Defence*, Report to the Minister for Defence (Canberra: Department of Defence, 2015), pp. 5–13.
- 75 Noting that some of the most effective Ukrainian units have reportedly been in the line for up to two years, it would not be unreasonable to expect rotation on a similar timeline in Australia's case.

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Re-raising the Seventh Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment

Shane Gabriel

This article comprises a reflective piece on the re-raising of 7 RAR in 2006-07. BRIG Shane Gabriel was the battalion's first CO following its re-raising, and subsequently led elements of it into Afghanistan in 2008-09 as CO of Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force – One. While the Australian Army Journal is and will remain a scholarly, peer-reviewed publication, throughout its long history it has been pleased to publish such reminiscences on significant moments in Army's history. In light of Army's research into Mobilisation, the re-raising of 7 RAR offers a comparatively recent example of how Army has expanded, in a short period, to fulfil the direction of the Government. BRIG Gabriel, therefore, has graciously provided the below reflection on the process by which 7 RAR was re-raised, and the key lessons learned that may inform future such tasks.

Introduction

Seventh Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (7 RAR) was originally raised in 1965 for service in the Vietnam War, completing two tours before being linked with 5 RAR in 1973 with the reduction of the Army following that conflict and the cessation of National Service. 5/7 RAR maintained the core identity and traditions of both battalions

for the next 33 years and provided Army's sole mechanised infantry battalion for most of this time. Both battalions were de-linked at a small parade at Robertson Barracks in December 2006 as the Army expanded in response to new strategic challenges.

This reflection provides a personal perspective on the key factors and actions involved in the re-raising of 7 RAR. To provide an understanding of the decisions taken in this effort, some context is provided to inform the rationale of the time, including aspects of the Army-level plan that provided the framework for subsequent decisions. Notwithstanding these institutional factors, the considerations and decisions taken at the brigade and battalion levels were the primary drivers to this outcome from the tactical-level perspective.

The Howard government direction to expand the Army in 2006 and the establishment of the Enhanced Land Force program reflected the challenges of multiple concurrent commitments at that time. Army was heavily committed to operations at the battle group level in southern Iraq, Afghanistan and Timor Leste, with smaller scale missions in Baghdad and Solomon Islands. Not as well publicised, but as much a draw on Army resources, was the training establishment expansion to account for expanded and achieved recruiting targets.

Apart from the number of concurrent deployments, their six-month duration exacerbated the pressures to prepare force elements due to the consequent high tempo of preparing, deploying and redeploying that multiplied the demands on formations. The 1st Brigade was particularly stretched due to these aggregate effects as the sole mechanised formation. In response to these pressures and complementing the earlier Hardened and Networked Army initiative, the Enhanced Land Force program aimed to raise two additional infantry battalions with a proportionate number of combat service support positions.

Government approval was initially for one battalion, with subsequent approvals pending achievement of this objective. Significant command focus was directed to this outcome to alleviate operational pressures and achieve the full scope of the Enhanced Land Force program. The Chief of Army directed that the first action was to de-link 5/7 RAR and form two mechanised infantry battalions within the 1st Brigade.

The Chief of Army took a detailed personal interest in all aspects of the re-raising, making his intent clear for 7 RAR to be raised to a credible level as soon as practicable to trigger the subsequent government approvals. This oversight was important in focusing priority across Army, but had the unintended consequence of staff at various levels adhering literally to the Chief of Army approved Enhanced Land Force actions and schedule as designed within Army Headquarters. There soon emerged counter-productive effects that could not have been accurately foreseen at the service level due to the tactical and local detail involved.

The First Two Years

The Enhanced Land Force plan involved 7 RAR being re-raised with minimal new establishment that would incrementally grow over an extended period. The complete 5/7 RAR structure was allocated to 5 RAR to preserve that unit for an impending battle group level operational task in Iraq. Chief of Army further directed that 7 RAR was to be raised in Adelaide from the outset as part of a supporting effort to rebalance Army geographical locations. There were significant implications for the pace of growth that could be achieved with these aspects of the plan. The primary constraint of this incremental approach was the lack of junior leaders in sufficient numbers to enable the increasing number of available private soldiers to be assimilated into new sections and platoons at a pace that matched their posting into the battalion. The aim to raise 7 RAR in Adelaide would further impact growth by the lack of any support normally expected from the formation level, particularly combat service support functions due to the limited capacity of the local Reserve formation. An uncritical adherence to the original Enhanced Land Force plan and dislocating 7 RAR from the remainder of 1st Brigade at the most critical period of re-raising were identified as the two most significant risks to achieving Chief of Army intent.

Commander 1st Brigade (then Brigadier Craig Orme) took decisive action to address this situation, overriding opposition at various staff levels committed to the Enhanced Land Force program. Despite the plan directing the retention of all previous 5/7 RAR establishment and capabilities by 5 RAR, the commander directed that B Company, then deployed with the Reconstruction Task Force—One, in Afghanistan, would be reallocated to 7 RAR. He further directed that working and living accommodation be found within the 5 RAR precinct and across the 1st Brigade to facilitate 7 RAR growth in Darwin. These were the

most impactful decisions in the re-raising effort and enabled an initial objective of a battalion headquarters, two rifle companies and a nucleus administration company to be achieved within 2007. The impetus generated towards the full potential of the Enhanced Land Force initiative was clearly demonstrated to the Chief of Army. His personal support for the revised re-raising method further built confidence in achieving accelerated growth.

With the return of B Company from Afghanistan in April 2007, lance corporals were promoted to corporal and sufficient private soldiers were promoted to lance corporal to provide the leadership for both A Company and B Company. Concurrently, junior officers and sergeants were posted in incrementally to match this growth, although some newly promoted corporals were required to conduct platoon sergeant roles. Throughout this time, private soldier reinforcements were routinely arriving following initial employment training at the School of Infantry. By mid 2007, as restrictive climatic conditions reduced with the return of the dry season, 7 RAR absorbed the task of training riflemen within the unit as recruiting achievement had outstripped the School of Infantry capacity. This training was conducted by the specifically formed Downward, MM Platoon,¹ staffed by instructors from within the battalion, employing the mandated training design.

An additional training objective completed concurrently within the battalion was crew conversion and sustainment training for the M113AS4 family of vehicles. This commenced with 7 RAR receiving the first delivery of these vehicles outside of training establishments, starting the introduction into service program for tactical units.

The higher than anticipated tempo of growth also entailed unforeseen challenges in the establishment and availability of mission-essential equipment, which did not keep pace with the increases in personnel establishment. This was largely due to the personnel growth focus of the Enhanced Land Force plan, which did adequately reflect a 'whole of FIC'² approach to Army's expansion at this time. The lack of a more comprehensive plan was a sound pragmatic approach due to the need to exploit the opportunity of Army growth by rapid action. The plan necessarily took a more incremental approach for major systems and support and supplies, with facilities to be found at an existing Defence location in Adelaide.

This situation also reflected the prioritisation of capabilities to in-theatre and mission-specific training pools for the concurrent operational deployments, further constraining equipment availability across Army. A range of short-term solutions were found, primarily through brigading critical capabilities and reallocation from Reserve formations. Notwithstanding these actions, deficiencies remained, particularly with night-fighting equipment and communication systems. This was most keenly felt with the development of the mechanised capability, where new M113AS4 vehicles were delivered without communication systems that had been reallocated to different platforms for operational deployment. An alternative solution implemented to continue training was the allocation of obsolete AN/PRC-77 radios, which were mounted on the turret exterior to enable vehicle employment, with the additional training for personnel already qualified on in-service systems. Both night-fighting equipment and explosive ammunition types³ were in limited quantities across Army due to operational priorities. This had some impact on unit-conducted individual training, requiring detailed management of brigaded assets and acknowledged training deficiencies for subsequent remediation when resources became available.

While pragmatic and sufficient to maintain training tempo, these solutions were not sustainable in the longer term without transferring training and readiness risks elsewhere within Army. Given the known commitments and ability to forecast subsequent deployments, these risks were manageable, albeit with impacts on lower priority organisations that could not be mitigated. In an environment where a greater size of the force was required for operational employment concurrent to significant increases in force structure, this prioritised reallocation of capabilities would have failed to enable both outcomes.

The advantages of raising within 1st Brigade were clearly validated by suitably managing solutions to the lack of resources required for training and readiness, particularly ammunition, fuel and rations. The dislocation between the original Enhanced Land Force schedule and the reality of re-raising at the unit level resulted in a lack of forecasted resources compared to the training need. Some mandatory unit resource types had not been established by Army Headquarters, due to the incremental nature of the plan, with local arrangements developed until these issues were resolved by formal action. In isolation these deficiencies would have been a significant constraint; however, the

flexibility to reallocate across 1st Brigade units, employing both formal and informal methods, was crucial to maintaining momentum.

Despite these challenges, the Chief of Army objective of substantive growth to trigger the government approval to re-raise the second additional infantry battalion (8/9 RAR) was achieved by the end of 2007. In the same timeframe, 7 RAR elements were deployed and preparing for operations with a mechanised platoon grouped to a 2 RAR led battle group deployment in Timor Leste and A Company forming the basis for a Security Detachment Iraq rotation in Baghdad. The remainder of the battalion was warned to form an overwatch battle group rotation in southern Iraq with other 1st Brigade elements. The change of government in 2007 resulted in the withdrawal of this commitment, and priority shifted to Afghanistan. Subsequently 7 RAR was tasked with forming a battle group to undertake the initial Mentor and Reconstruction Task Force mission later in 2008. Concurrent with this effort, C Company was raised, bringing the battalion establishment to a level not planned until 2010 by the original Enhanced Land Force schedule.

The strong recruiting achievement for Army, and infantry soldiers in particular, at the time should be noted as central to these outcomes. Without the willingness of young Australians to voluntarily serve, particularly in the knowledge they would likely be deployed on operational service, any growth would have been far more modest and elongated. Their motivation is worthy of separate consideration as without voluntary enlistment at the scale of this experience, rapid growth would not have been achievable.

Within two years of re-raising, 7 RAR had exceeded the planned level of growth by two years, converted to a new platform, deployed platoon and sub-unit elements on operations and was the bulk of a battle group deployed in Afghanistan conducting the most challenging offensive operations for conventional forces since the Vietnam War. None of these outcomes were envisaged at the commencement of re-raising at the unit level. They were, however, the result of a consistent approach to the task, with guiding principles and planning considerations derived from historical example and contemporary factors.

Re-raising Considerations

There is no single reference point that mandated how the re-raising of 7 RAR was to progress. Neither the Army-level plans nor unit directives provide a complete understanding of the approach taken in this effort. There are, however, identified themes that reflect the culture of Army at that time, the operational focus of the period and the approach to the task by battalion leaders. To describe how re-raising was conducted in the 7 RAR experience, five core considerations that were consistently applied will be discussed. They are the centrality of unit identity; the galvanising effect of clear purpose; the criticality of growth from existing organisations; trusting in the quality of people and individual training; and seizing every opportunity to develop the unit.

Identity. The re-raising of 7 RAR was strongly influenced and guided by the raising and subsequent operational service of the original 7 RAR. There was a ready source of information and inspiration from the enthusiastic contribution of the 7 RAR Association, composed of Vietnam veterans, and the published battalion history⁴ recording the period from raising in 1965 to linking in 1973. The galvanising effect of identity was therefore provided at the outset of re-raising and would prove to be central to subsequent efforts. Regular opportunities were taken to educate on the battalion history, with signature examples forming the basis for unit competitions, teams, awards, social events and other team-building efforts. This was a key factor employed in assimilating the many new members joining the battalion during re-raising. There was a deliberate reflection of the common themes of achievement over austerity and rapid growth for operational tasks between the original 7 RAR and the re-raised version that served as example and inspiration. A later example was the forming of the sub-unit conducting the Operational Mentor and Liaison Team role within the 7 RAR battle group deployment to Afghanistan. The officers and soldiers of this unique organisation drew heavily upon the history, achievements and expectations of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam, directly influencing their strong identity and exemplary conduct during subsequent operations.

Purpose. The 10 years from 2005 to 2014 involved a high tempo of operational deployments with highly positive effects for both recruiting and retention. For those serving within infantry battalions in particular, a regular routine of deployment followed by reconstitution and mission-specific training for the next deployment became the norm. Consequently, the purpose of service and training in particular had tangible meaning for all ranks. Unlike in periods of low operational tempo, there was a direct expectation that the training being conducted would be employed and tested in an operational environment in the near term.

This sense of immediacy of operational employment, when combined with identity, had a strong galvanising effect in the 7 RAR experience during re-raising. From the outset it was made clear that the purpose of re-raising 7 RAR was for operational employment in the same way 7 RAR was first formed in 1965 for service in Vietnam and, by extension, the genesis of the 7th Battalions of the 1st and 2nd Australian Imperial Force during both world wars respectively. This sense of *raison d'être* for being a member of 7 RAR was actively promoted to develop collective attitudes and qualities focused on operational employment. By late 2008, the 7 RAR battle group then deployed to Afghanistan would draw heavily on the attitudes and resilience developed by this collective sense of purpose in the conduct of offensive operations.

Growth from existing organisations. The decision by Commander 1st Brigade to allocate an existing sub-unit to 7 RAR was central to the success and tempo of the re-raising effort, providing an immediate source of leaders essential to the formation of sections and platoons. The raising of the original 7 RAR was rapidly achieved due to a similar model. On the return of 3 RAR from active service during Confrontation in 1965, single private soldiers and junior leaders were posted to form the nucleus of 7 RAR, subsequently reinforced by National Servicemen to build the battalion. The allocation of B Company 5/7 RAR on de-linking had the same effect for the new 7 RAR in providing experienced soldiers to accelerate unit growth objectives.

This principle of growth from existing organisations includes the advantages found from close support of the parent formation or command. The retention of 7 RAR in Darwin provided the opportunity to be supported by all elements of 1st Brigade, thereby mitigating the lack of organic support capabilities that would otherwise have constrained rapid growth. This was

particularly important for the development of the mechanised capability within 7 RAR, enabling the brigading of courses with 5 RAR and vehicle maintenance by second-line assets within 1st Brigade. The original plan of re-raising in Adelaide would have negated these opportunities and delayed the development of the mechanised infantry skill set and culture that were to prove critical to success in the subsequent deployments.

The challenges in growing from an existing organisation that is designed and resourced for a specified capability should also be acknowledged. The pressures on accommodation, life support, training facilities and many other implications of rapidly expanding dependencies should not be underestimated. Notwithstanding this risk, the 7 RAR experience demonstrates that the ability to brigade assets and maximise the shared use of high-demand and low-density capabilities is a critical enabler of raising new tactical units.

Trust. The early promotion of selected personnel to enable a readily available supply of junior leaders was central to the re-raising of 7 RAR. This decision was not purely mathematical but was a pragmatic, risk-aware approach based on an expectation of mutual trust. At the time there was some institutional resistance to this action due to the perceived risk of junior leaders not possessing sufficient time-based professional experience to adequately undertake these roles. The approach taken by 7 RAR was to trust in the quality of people and their individual training to do the job; promote trust in their leaders that they would be supported; and provide ongoing training and mentorship to develop junior leaders. The net effect was to create an environment where those stepping up to leadership roles felt valued and were supported and trusted, thereby mitigating any actual or perceived lack of experience and building individual confidence to lead.

To achieve this outcome, the development of junior leaders was actively and personally led by the Regimental Sergeant Major (then Warrant Officer Class 1), David Allen. His approach was to demonstrate that junior leaders had greater expectations placed on them than the private soldiers who until recently had been their peers. Dave Allen developed and conducted separate follow-on training designed to augment the formal promotion courses, building individual confidence and providing experiences in leading effectively. He also took a detailed interest in individual strengths, weaknesses and potential to advise on where junior leaders were best suited to serve within the battalion and how to mentor and monitor their ongoing development.

Again the historical antecedents of 7 RAR were an important reference point in the well-recorded knowledge that good people with sound training will achieve the demands of junior leadership. As demonstrated across all units that served during the Vietnam War, the success of National Servicemen and recently trained regular soldiers and officers alike did not rely on time in rank or extensive experience. Selecting suitable people and relying on quality individual training were the critical requirements for successful junior leaders at that time and during the re-raising of 7 RAR. This can be expected to remain constant into the future if the integrity of Army's individual training is sustained.

Seize opportunity. While the purpose of re-raising 7 RAR was directly linked to Army's capacity to sustain operational requirements at the time, the battalion needed to develop collective confidence and begin to build a contemporary history of their own achievements. This was viewed as essential preparation for subsequent operational tasks to build on the seminal factors of identity and purpose. Consequently every opportunity was taken to demonstrate that 7 RAR was an operational capability at the outset despite limitations and constraints in personnel and mission-essential capabilities. Early in the first year the battalion fielded a team in the annual Duke of Gloucester Cup competition. With a section composed mostly of recently joined soldiers, the expectation of a high placing was low, but the statement was critical. Despite the subsequent last place, the evident pride the team had in representing their battalion was widely acknowledged and contrasted well with the absence of one longstanding battalion not fielding a team for an unclear rationale. Other examples included sending selected individuals on external courses, where their strong achievements added to the collective reputation. The aggregate effect of these and other initiatives developed the identity and mindset of a battalion preparing for imminent operational tasks, not just a unit in a building mode.

Opportunity was also taken in achieving unit growth and capability. A key constraint in the early stage of re-raising was living-in accommodation at Robertson Barracks. Planned growth to the unit establishment was based on known capacity. The identification of a satellite facility, with access supported by senior leaders, provided an early solution to trigger establishment growth not planned for another two years.

Both examples serve to illustrate that raising tactical units requires a judicious balance between strategic-level considerations and local conditions that can best be achieved by devolving authorities and maintaining a consistent focus at all levels on the urgency of purpose for

the outcome. Neither the Army nor those serving in new units should be unduly constrained by the lack of ideal conditions to progress substantive growth to meet operational requirements within the earliest timeframe.

Conclusion

The re-raising of 7 RAR provides just one example of how Army has responded to the need to rapidly expand to meet the demands of operational requirements. The factors and conditions of the time, particularly a clear operational focus and high availability of personnel, are important context for these outcomes. The re-raising effort was based on an evolving framework of directions and opportunities to form a cohesive and capable battalion in the mould of the original 7 RAR. The strength of shared purpose, pride in identity, accelerated growth from existing organisations, establishment of trust and a bias for seizing opportunity were central to this outcome.

The 7 RAR re-raising experience demonstrates that despite numerous shortfalls, pragmatic and risk-aware approaches taken by empowered unit leaders, supported by their senior leadership, will deliver success. Ultimately the only capability element that cannot be mitigated will be personnel: in the quantity required, in their commitment and motivation to serve and in the quality of their individual training.

About the Author

Brigadier Shane Gabriel graduated from the Royal Military College in 1987 as an RAAF officer. He subsequently served a short service commission with the RAF Regiment in the UK before transferring to the Australian Army as an Infantry Officer. He served for 25 years in regimental, instructional and staff roles before transition to the Reserve in 2020. He was the Commanding Officer, Seventh Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment from re-raising in December 2006 to December 2009, including the Mentor and Reconstruction Task Force One deployment in Afghanistan. He currently serves as the Deputy Commander 1st (Australian) Division, as Senior Mentor of the Combat Officers Advanced Course, and as a Senior Coach with the Combat Training Centre.

Endnotes

- 1 Named for Private Keith Downward, MM, of A Coy 7 RAR first tour in Vietnam as an example of courage, determination and selflessness for trainee infantry soldiers to emulate. He enlisted one year before deploying with 7 RAR to Vietnam, a similar expectation for these soldiers given the operational commitments at that time.
- 2 Whole of FIC refers to capability development and force structure planning that incorporates all aspects of the fundamental inputs to capability—personnel, organisation, support and supplies, facilities, collective training, major systems, and command and management.
- 3 Grenades, Claymore anti-personnel mines and anti-armour weapons.
- 4 Michael O'Brien, *Conscripts and Regulars* (Allen and Unwin, 1995).

On Mobilisation

Speech as part of the CoveTalk series, Victoria Barracks Sergeants Mess, 27 October 2022.

<https://vimeo.com/766425819>

Zach Lambert and David Caligari

[ZACH LAMBERT]: My name is Major Zach Lambert. I am here today to talk on mobilisation. I've done a fair amount of academic studies on this topic, most recently a Fulbright Fellowship in the United States where I looked into mobilisation in detail. I have a fairly significant operational background and previously I was in the divisional staff as a joint logistics planner. With me today, I have Major David Caligari.

[DAVID CALIGARI]: Good afternoon. I'm currently the operations officer of the 3rd Battalion of The Royal Australian Regiment and I've been in the Ready Battle Group for the last two years, and also as a junior officer. I've also served within the Australian Amphibious Force headquarters and mobilised and deployed at short notice to a regional contingency operation in Vanuatu. We are here today to discuss mobilisation. This is an important topic, which has been in the news a bit lately.

Mobilisation is the process of readying military capabilities and marshalling national resources for military operations to defend the nation and its interests. More particularly, mobilisation is the preparation of forces following specific government direction for operations, activities, and

actions (now called investments). Mobilisation occurs across four phases. The first is preparation, the second is mobilisation activities, the third is the conduct of operations, and the fourth is demobilisation.

Australia is not new to this game. We have been mobilising since 1885, when Australia deployed 750 soldiers and 200 horses from the port of Sydney to the port of Sudan to fight with the British in the Mahdist War. If we move forward in history, we can see instances of mobilisation in our near region, specifically within the histories of those soldiers still serving. You can see mobilisation occurring across Operation Morris Dance, in East Timor under Operation Spitfire and in Operations Bel Isi and Lagoon, which are both deployments to Bougainville. Further, mobilisation occurred domestically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Further, in the last 18 months, the 1st Battalion mobilised and deployed soldiers at short notice to Afghanistan for a non-combatant evacuation operation. Separately, my own 3rd Battalion contributed soldiers at the request of the Government of the Solomon Islands to support security there in December last year (2021).

So why are we discussing mobilisation if Australia has been doing it for a while? Mobilisation has become important, and it is all about crisis warning time. The Defence White Paper in 2016 stated that we would have 10 years notice to mobilise to the highest degree to respond to crisis—which is a lot of time to prepare. However, our geostrategic context has changed, the world is less certain than it was back in 2016, and we no longer have the 10 years of notice. This shift in strategic circumstance is what the 2020 Defence Strategic Update told us. Consequently, mobilisation has become even more relevant today than it has been in the past. So what are we going to cover?

[ZACH LAMBERT]: Today we are looking to cover four main topics. The first is to provide an overview of what the stages of mobilisation look like at the strategic level. Following that, we are going to look at some of the tactical components of how we might execute those stages of mobilisation. The second point is to look at the strategic model across all four stages and how it might be applied. Thirdly, we will move into the specific tactical details of how mobilisation affects you within the unit and what you might expect to see at the lowest level. In our fourth and final point, we will discuss some of the challenges that these mobilisation activities pose to all of us.

First of all, I'd like to bring your attention to your screen. As **Figure 1: Four stages of mobilisation** shows, there are four stages of mobilisation—running from selective through to partial, then to full and then finally national mobilisation. At the selective level, you can take these actions to mean scheduled and planned operations or activities that we know are coming and that we have specific units allocated to and prepared for. This might include some reservists, but broadly it will mainly operate with the forces that we have at our disposal on short notice. When we move on to partial mobilisation things get a little bit more serious and this might include the activation of the Reserves to a certain degree—such as what occurred during the Operation Bushfire Assist activities in 2019–2020. When we move further on into the full mobilisation stage, this looks a lot like utilising the entire ADF as well as all of the Reserves, and this is not something that can be done within current Defence resources. This level of mobilisation will require significant support from around the country. Finally, we move into the national level of mobilisation, or the national stage. These activities would look similar to what you would have expected during the First World War or the Second World War, where the entire country is focused and retooled specifically to support military activity, primarily because this stage tends to require a threat to the nation and a situation where the survival of the nation is in question.

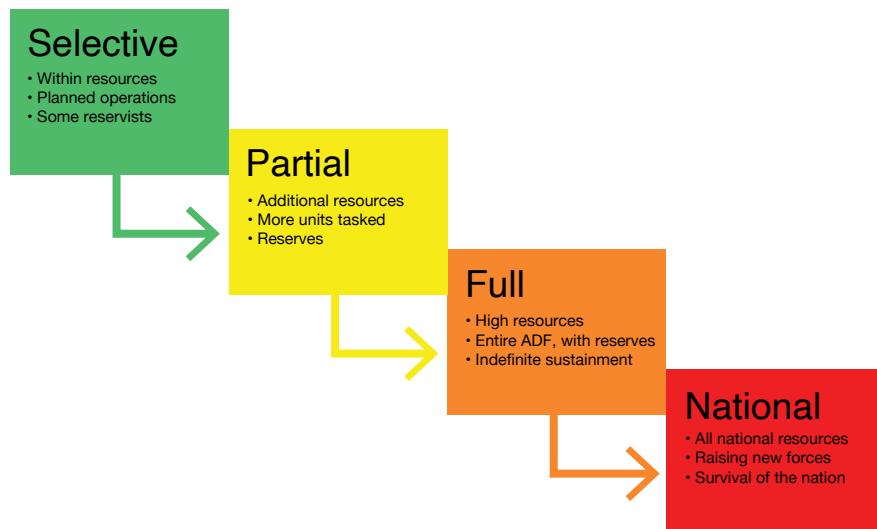


Figure 1: Four stages of mobilisation

Now this is one way to look at this system. However, it is not the only way to conceptualise the process of mobilisation. In another example [as at Figure 2: Two tranches of mobilisation], you might break it down into two separate tranches, one containing the selective and partial stages, and one containing full and national stages. Instead of the four phases outlined in Figure 1, this might look like an area of defence mobilisation within defence resources, and another area of national mobilisation.

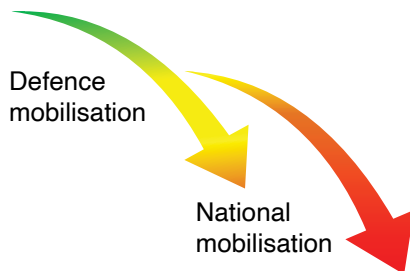


Figure 2: Two tranches of mobilisation

It is important to note as well that none of these activities can occur without clear direction from the government, and authority to conduct national level activities doesn't derive solely from the Department of Defence. Almost all other government departments are also involved. With this in mind, we want to break the concept in Figure 2 down into more detail. How exactly does it work? If you have a look at Figure 3: Stages of mobilisation and associated stress on the force, you will see the stages of mobilisation increasing up from selective to full. On the bottom of the diagram, you will see the stress—being the number and complexity of tasks and the amount of resources to be incorporated into the plan—that is generated on the force. The line between those axes looks at the increasing level of stress to the force applied from left to right as you move up through those mobilisation stages, which could go from current operations that are planned and scheduled all the way up to a major conflict that involves the entire ADF. These activities have occurred before, and so to get a real understanding of this, let us look at some examples.

[DAVID CALIGARI]: I mentioned that the 3rd Battalion is currently the Ready Battle Group, but the reality is that you do not need to be in a prepared 'contingency' force element, (like the Ready Battle Group) to be part of, or involved in, mobilisation activities. Right now, large parts of the ADF are contributing through various missions to support

security cooperation with regional partners or ongoing operations. An example would be the military training teams that are going to places like Papua New Guinea and the Philippines, as well as the ADF's enduring contribution to Operation Resolute, which is the military contribution to whole-of-government efforts to protect Australia's borders and offshore maritime interests. In these instances, forces elements are designed (including a number of personnel who come together for a specific mission), practised, and then deployed. This action is undertaken at the lowest level of selective mobilisation. The next step occurs when extra preparation for forces is needed. When we move to place more stress on the force, we see the benefit of contingency force operations. We will use the examples as shown at Figure 3: Stages of mobilisation and associated stress on the force to make this process clearer.

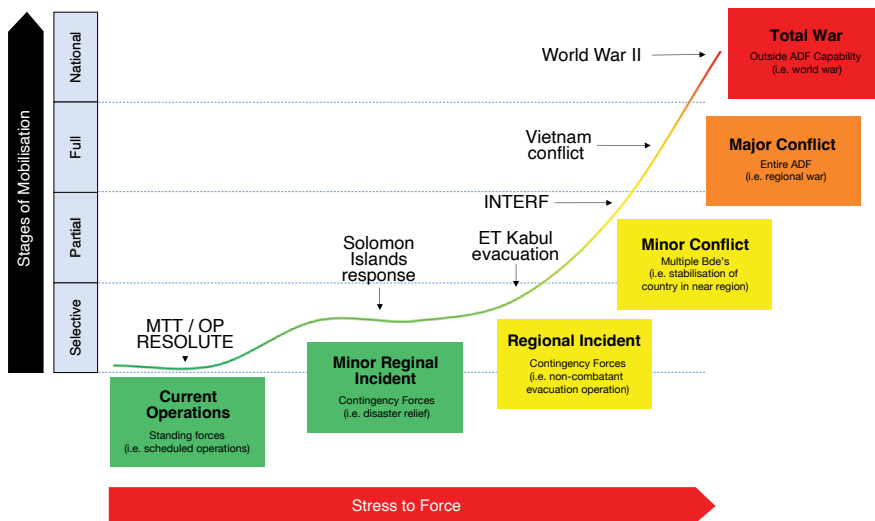


Figure 3: Stages of mobilisation and associated stress on the force

First, let's start with mobilising the Ready Battle Group to respond to a minor regional incident. The 3rd Battalion, in December 2021, sent a small team overseas at the request of the Government of the Solomon Islands to support them in dealing with a deteriorating security situation.

Next, you can move to a regional incident at the high end of selective mobilisation, and an example of that is the August 2021 non-combatant evacuation in Afghanistan. One of the key differences that showed that it was a more significant event was the presence of the 1st Battalion

headquarters, which provided the basis for force expansion. Because of the size of the contribution, the 1st Battalion transitioned ownership of the high-readiness force element to the 3rd Battalion after the operation commenced. This transition was easily achieved within the level of readiness as the forces changed roles, as both battalions were practised in performing the role of Ready Battle Group.

We then move forward to a minor conflict, moving up into the second stage of partial mobilisation. Here we can look to the example of East Timor and the deployment of Operation INTERFET, which consumed the ready force elements and required a much larger contribution of forces to form a task force for operations. We then continue to move up through the stages, where we can see the Vietnam conflict as an example of full mobilisation. This mobilisation was notable, as a key element of this type of mobilisation is the requirement for national service. In this instance, it was essential that the ADF expanded its force to sustain operations, which required that extra capability.

The final step would be something many of you would have guessed, a world war. As Zach mentioned, this requires the entirety of the country to be geared towards supporting the military and other instruments of government to achieve what is needed in conflict on behalf of our national interests. Having described the stages in theory, we are now going to look more specifically at how a system of national mobilisation would play out.

[ZACH LAMBERT]: In order for us to go further into this topic, we need to have an understanding of how national mobilisation affects what would occur. We have prepared a stylised and simplistic view of this mobilisation just to discuss what it might look like (see Figure 4: National mobilisation system). You can see we have the phases of mobilisation along the top of the screen. You will note that there is a big distinction [indicated by the red dotted line] between the full level of mobilisation and the national level, and there are many complex activities that occur at the national level. However, mobilisation starts at the lowest level, being the groups of teams that we create in each of the services. This might be as simple as a combat team. This might be as simple as an individual platoon for a specific task.

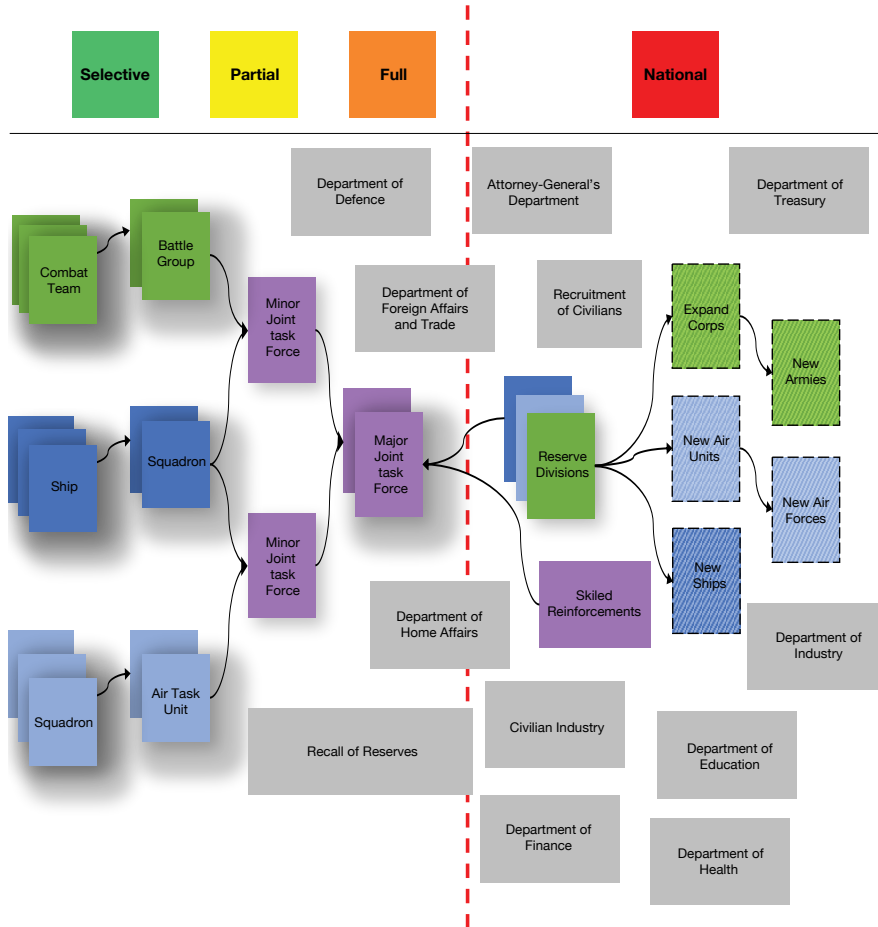


Figure 4: National mobilisation system

Yet whatever level of mobilisation occurs, it is done specifically to generate a particular outcome aligned with government requirements. As the mobilised elements build, we group them together into the next level up. In this case, we are using the example of battle groups, although it is certainly not the only formation that we could use to illustrate the process of moving from selective mobilisation into the start of partial mobilisation. The next level is our minor joint task forces. As we combine elements from across the services, we put them in a position where they might have to operate together, and the key thing here is the headquarters in charge of the task forces tend to be joint headquarters to generate the best effects. This amalgamation moves us more towards the partial level of mobilisation.

The next level occurs when we are approaching a full level of mobilisation. This step commences when we develop minor joint task forces into major joint task forces, and we start to include specific tasks and teams from other government departments. So, for example, when the entire Department of Defence becomes involved, we might get specific guidance from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade if your operation is occurring overseas. Or we might get some input from the Department of Home Affairs if it happens to be in Australia. The combination of these factors makes it quite a complex and all-encompassing task, and at this stage you start to tap into what assets are in the national support base that you might need to support these activities. While we might have previously conducted the recall of some Reserve force elements, as this phase of mobilisation progresses we may at some need to start recalling the entirety of the Reserve, which is a significant activity. Those Reserves then plug into our major joint task forces, and either fill gaps or provide discrete capabilities and combat organisations that we specifically need to send overseas.

As we move on from there, we might look at the requirement to start moving skilled reinforcements into the forces that are on operations. That might look like, for example, additional doctors or armourers that we have pulled from their civilian jobs to come and provide support. It might also include the requirement to start recruiting civilians, particularly for those key specialist jobs. Until this point, there are concrete historical examples of every element of mobilisation we have discussed, but once we move past this stage, into national mobilisation, what might occur becomes highly theoretical. We may look to start involving other elements of Australian society that have important roles to play—for example, the involvement of civilian industry to start retooling to provide support to the force, or potentially the Department of Finance to prepare future funding.

National mobilisation is an exceptionally expensive and complex undertaking, particularly when we consider options to expand our forces. This may involve expanding our existing Army corps, or moving towards new air units and potentially new or replacement ships to expand the Navy. The final stage of what a national mobilisation might look like, again in a very simplistic fashion, would be full and total mobilisation across both the force

and other elements of Australian society. This would involve, for example, the Department of Education and the department of health, which would provide new recruitment streams and capabilities that we need to reinforce long term over the course of years, rather than months. We also need to start looking at how this may affect the economy and how we may retool certain civilian industries to provide war support. The reason we bring this model up is not to try to explain in detail what all of this looks like, but simply to say that this is a large and complex undertaking even when simplified. What we are going to focus on today are the tactical-level effects on Army.

[DAVID CALIGARI]: We will focus particularly on the selective and partial end of the mobilisation spectrum. To achieve that, we will show you another model that we have prepared (see Figure 5: Army personnel distribution). This model looks specifically at the use of personnel within the force. In a world where mobilisation stresses the force, as we move up that continuum, personnel will be a critical component. So let us reflect. Australia has a number of major bases that are invaluable now for training and employing forces. Those facilities, the ranges, the armouries et cetera are used to prepare our forces. Fortunately we not only have the large major bases that often have a brigade posted to them but we also have a large number of smaller bases routinely occupied by 2nd Division staff, indicated on this map in a simplified way. You can observe just some of the over 100 locations on the map, but we certainly could not plot them all in a way you would still be able to see. In these smaller bases, there perhaps is not the degree of infrastructure as at the larger ones, but there are still armouries, ranges, lecture rooms and other training facilities, and then as well often there is a cadre staff of full-time personnel. These are places where Reserves frequently go to train. So they are invaluable. If we look now at a generic example about how some of these bases could be used to expand the force, we can start to visualise how that might happen. As you can see, we've looked at a platoon headquarters on the left of Figure 5: Army personnel distribution as a generic entity. It could be an infantry platoon, it could be something else, but for the purpose of this explanation we have outlined a simple platoon headquarters with the leadership of its sections.

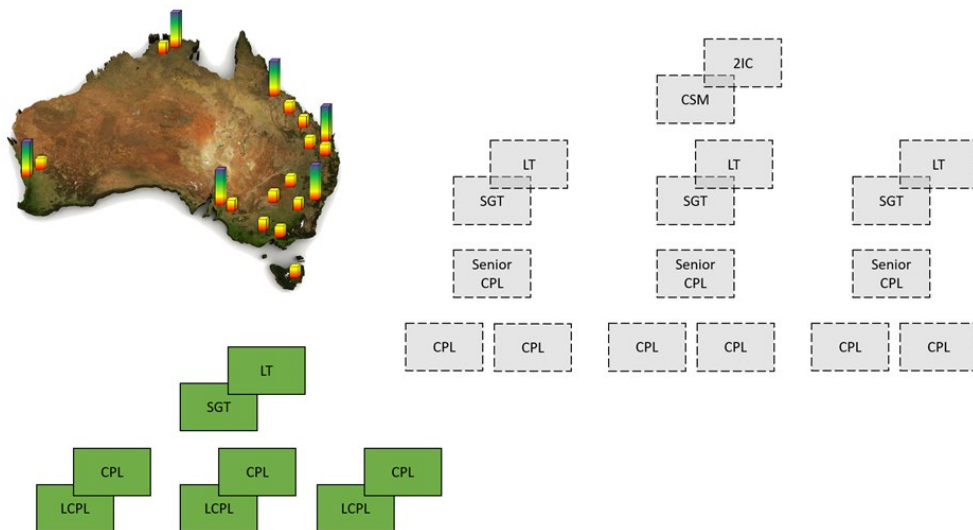


Figure 5: Army personnel distribution

Using this group, we can then expand into a larger organisation, as we might do in the case of a full mobilisation. On the right of Figure 5: Army personnel distribution is a skeleton for what could be a company headquarters. In an environment where we need to expand the force, the small existing leadership team on the left could be used within that company headquarters but occupy more senior positions, perhaps be promoted or assume roles and responsibilities a little above what they would routinely do (see for example Figure 6: Expanded unit based on nucleus existing headquarters personnel). For example, the lieutenant and sergeant could be the company second-in-command and the company sergeant major—thereby forming the nucleus of a company headquarters. The next step is to introduce additional lieutenants from an external pool, or other leaders such as senior non-commissioned officers to fill those officer positions. This demand signal requires increasing the number of lieutenants available to the Army.

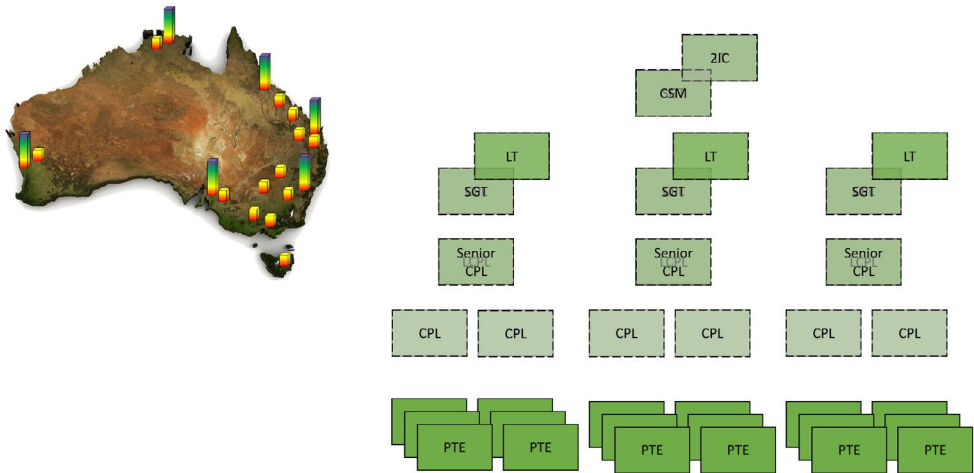


Figure 6: Expanded unit based on nucleus existing headquarters personnel

We could look to history as to how this has been done in the past. During the Second World War, the Royal Military College, Duntroon, compressed its course and determined that some elements of training could be done without, and for that reason they were able to draw more quickly on the output of officers. In a contemporary setting, this result could be achieved through any method of creating officers to fill leadership positions. And in fact there are examples of this throughout our history. One of the heroes of my own battalion, Lieutenant Colonel Charlie Green, was removed from Australian staff college early, promoted, and given command of the 3rd Battalion on operations in the Korean War. So there is precedent.

The next step is to grow the mass of our company, comprising the more junior leaders and then the soldiers of that team. To do that, one option is to train new personnel. We could perhaps leverage personnel who have recently separated from the service and who would return while the organisation mobilises, or we could look to other agencies. Perhaps there is a Reserve unit that could contribute those soldiers, or they could be found in related industries such as the police. Regardless, what we see here is a trickle-down of experience and a transfer of skills from those professional leaders that we had placed from the smaller nucleus into this new organisation, who can deliver individual training and then move forward with collective training with whatever time and resources

are available to enable the mobilising force to expand—all occurring across the many Reserve bases across Australia. As you can see using this simple example, by using a handful of trained staff, from any part of the professional force (including cadre staff or even existing leaders in Reserve units), we can rapidly expand and train a new much larger fighting organisation. Using this system, we can build a much larger force quickly. Let us now explore the timeline of how this might actually work.

[ZACH LAMBERT]: For most of the people streaming in today, the most interesting part of discussing mobilisation is to talk about how it affects you, or how it affects a specific unit in your situation. We have created a timeline and a model to explain this. If you look at the diagram (Figure 7: Readiness levels by time), you will see on the left an increasing level of readiness. Along the bottom, you'll see a period of time. On the right hand side, you will see an arbitrary measure of capability.



Figure 7: Readiness levels by time

What that capability looks like is a combination of how much of your force (being personnel and equipment) is available, and a measure of how well trained that force is. It gives an indication of how well we could expect it to perform in combat. For this model, we have allocated that level of baseline readiness at around 40 per cent, which is what you might expect day to day. We have allocated the 'minimum level of capability' required to conduct your operational tasking (with significant risks) at around 60 per cent of your entitlement to personnel and equipment. We have then

allocated the 'operational level of capability' (being what you require to be fully capable of all tasks you can be assigned) at 100 per cent of your personnel and equipment. Anything above this is a consequence of training, good leadership and morale, likely resulting from combat experience.

Now we are going to look at this model over the four phases that we introduced right at the very beginning, the first being the preparation phase. A unit in the preparation phase might start out with 'low' as their baseline capability, and then continue over time conducting preparedness activities to improve themselves until they are at a higher level of readiness (see Figure 8: Example unit preparation by over time).

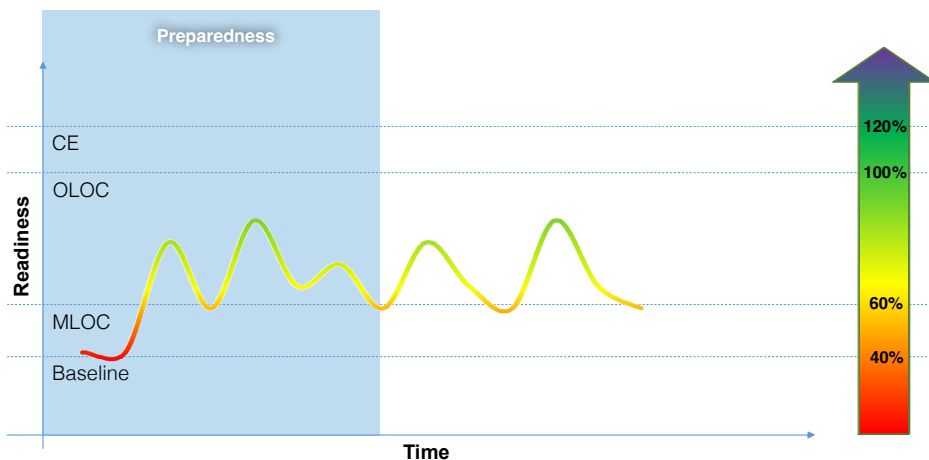


Figure 8: Example unit preparation by over time

This process might go on for an extended period of time, and potentially forever for some units, maintaining that readiness to be tasked for future operations. But we are not here to talk about preparedness. We are here to talk about mobilisation. Therefore, we will look at what happens once a unit has been activated and needs to be put into a position to conduct an activity (see Figure 9: Example unit operational activity by readiness over time). As you can see, as a unit moves into the mobilisation phase its readiness increases as close as possible to its operational level of capability. From there, several activities will be conducted which will improve the unit's readiness even further. These activities will get you ready to step off to conduct your operational task. As you progress, you are deemed

ready and are then moved into operations. During the operation phase, activities will be conducted—potentially including combat operations—and your readiness will degrade as you take casualties or as new tactics and techniques are used against you by your adversary. After a period of time, you’ll develop your own tactics and techniques to counter that, and continue to reconstitute with reinforcements, until you’re performing better.

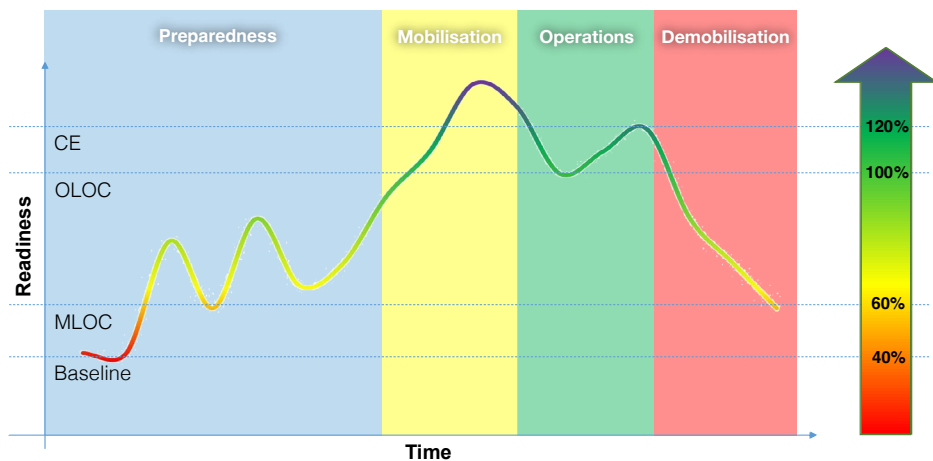


Figure 9: Example unit operational activity by readiness over time

The final stage (or phase) in this model is demobilisation. In this phase, you can expect that your readiness will decrease quite significantly as you are stood down from the activity that you have been conducting. That might even mean a transfer of your materiel or expertise to another element. At the end of that phase, you then move back into the preparedness phase as you get ready for the next activity. But it is important to note that you retain the knowledge and skills from your mobilisation in the organisation, so preparedness levels overall are higher, which makes future mobilisation activities easier with a more capable force. Now I want to go into more detail with some specific real-world examples, so I will hand over to Dave to cover those.

[DAVID CALIGARI]: Let us look again at a simple example (Figure 10: Applied example of unit operational activity by readiness over time) of a unit and consider an infantry battalion for this example. We start the year, as you can see, at about the minimum level of capability. We have just had a posting cycle; perhaps there is a lot of leadership changeover. The battalion needs relationships to form and teams to spend time

together—learning to work together effectively. That begins the process of building preparedness. From there, this battalion determines that it has a progression of training goals to accomplish (as every unit would do at the beginning of the year) to build through the Army training levels and standards, including conducting a battle group ‘warfighter’ exercise with the Combat Training Centre. In this case, our example sees them complete their highest level of training during Exercise Talisman Sabre.

Following this exercise, this battalion is at the highest level of readiness. They have now practised everything that they have been rehearsing for the year. If no operational activity is required (as occurs in many battalions), there will then be a requirement to reinvest in individual training to round out the year, and for an infantry unit that may look like an infantry specialist course period. We would also see teams change over during the posting cycle, and at the start of the following year, the unit would likely find itself at a lower level of readiness, but not as low as it started the year before. For example, there could be benefits such as that some of the soldiers participating in infantry specialist courses were previously instructed by junior non-commissioned officers who have now become their section commanders, or perhaps the leadership in some of the company headquarters has not changed significantly. Therefore, you are at a higher standard. From there, the unit goes through the same process it did in the previous year, with the escalation of training moving through Army training levels and standards.

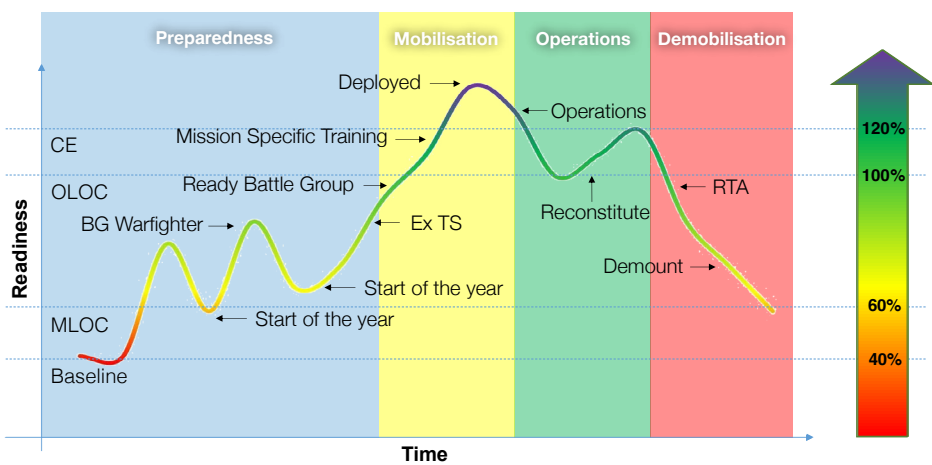


Figure 10: Applied example of unit operational activity by readiness over time

If an operational task was to feature in this timeline, things would be very different. This example unit is quite fortunate, having completed a Combat Training Centre led exercise and a major international exercise, Exercise Talisman Sabre. Once that training has concluded and the higher level of readiness has been achieved through the significant collective training event, the unit is then ready to assume Ready Battle Group responsibilities. Of course, in this simplified example we have removed some of the other factors—not to lessen their importance—like confirming that the standard of training is uniform and that everyone has all of the essential components so that the whole team is ready for Ready Battle Group. Once the battalion assumes the Ready Battle Group function, this begins the mobilisation phase where the team starts to prepare in response to a readiness notice. They know the sorts of tasks they might be employed to undertake as the Ready Battle Group, and this allows them to do mission-specific training. This involves extra training tailored for the sorts of missions they might receive and, importantly, comes with extra resources. There is therefore an increased opportunity for them to prepare to the operational level of capability. Once they have completed mission-specific training they deploy. They are conducting those operations and, as Zach mentioned, natural attrition and a slight degradation in readiness will occur as casualties and other factors affect the force. Nevertheless, they will learn from the experience.

As a deployed element, the unit will receive reinforcements and have the opportunity to improve their tactics, techniques and procedures as they further increase their understanding of the adversary and environment. They will also go through a reconstitution phase where they increase their readiness. That process continues until the unit completes its operations and finalises its activities. Perhaps another unit will replace it. In this example, the unit will return to Australia and demount. I will reinforce one particular point: while this dismount is occurring, equipment is being handed back rather than being returned to the unit. It is actually more often than not going to a replacement unit (not represented in our chart today), which would be in the mobilisation phase and would be benefiting from that battle-tested equipment. The experience that this original team gained from its operation would likely improve the transfer of skills and knowledge. This represents an extra factor that helps replacement units get above the operational level of capability and improves their combat experience. So there are mobilisation benefits even during the demounting phase.

But we're here to talk about mobilisation, so let us focus on the mobilisation phase in some more detail (see Figure 11: Mobilisation phase activities). I mentioned mobilisation starts with the readiness notice, which naturally starts with a recall. During the recall the organisation will physically see and account for every person who will participate in the operations to follow. The recall is the first time where everyone is there. It is an opportune moment for a commander to provide some intent and it sets the scene for this busy and eventful phase of mobilisation. After a recall has occurred, the unit may also be provided access to extra specialist equipment caches that are above the resources provided to reach the operational level of capability. For example, live body armour could be cached equipment, and a number of other things such as less-than-lethal ammunition natures (tear gas grenades and baton rounds, for example) above what would normally be allocated each training year. This equipment allocation is useful because it accelerates the unit's readiness. The next step, and I briefly mentioned it before, is mission-specific training. For our fictional battalion here, this could involve an increased amount of crowd control training, or it could be using those new less-than-lethal ammunition natures that perhaps people were competent on but could improve on their proficiency. It is aspects like these that will increase the performance of the team.

As part of this mission-specific training, they would conduct scenarios informed by analysis from their intelligence cell to improve their training progression and increase performance ready for operations. Once that training has occurred, it is often important to do a mission rehearsal activity. Here, the gold standard is usually the allocation of an external assessor who brings in additional resources to assess a 'full mission profile' or mission-specific training activity (as realistic as possible) to truly test the unit, in conditions that are as close as is achievable to the environment in which they will be operating. This is important. Once the activity has been completed, and any remediation has occurred, the team is at its highest level of readiness to deploy. This is an opportune moment for a commander to 'force assure' that everything has been done to best prepare the forces. A functional-level commander, such as an officer in charge of a division-size element, then certifies the force, which means he or she is comfortable that the team can deploy. So that explains more detail on the mobilisation phase for a unit. I will now hand over to Zach to discuss a little more about the resourcing required to enable that process.

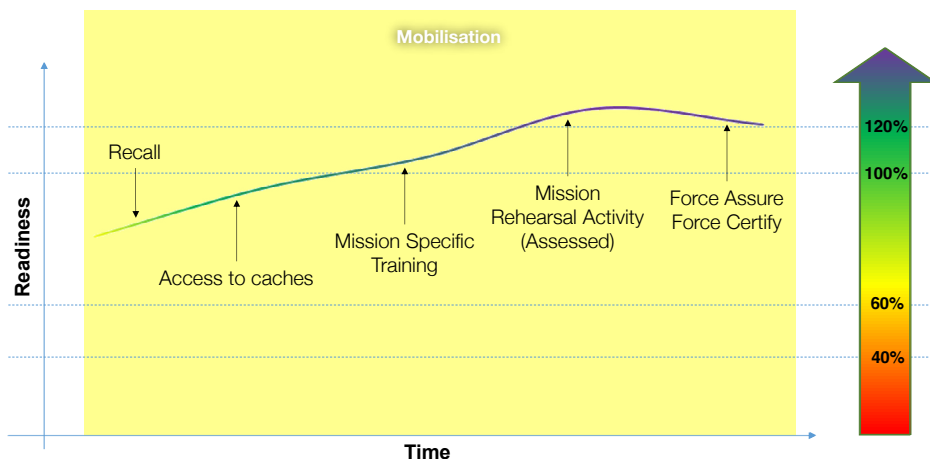


Figure 11: Mobilisation phase activities

[ZACH LAMBERT]: Mobilisation is inherently a resource-intensive activity. There are a bunch of ways for us to consider the resource requirements for mobilising, but one of the easier and more upfront ways is to use the fundamental inputs to capability (FIC). Most of you will be at least somewhat familiar with these capabilities from Army’s ‘raise, train, sustain’ function, and these are the resource inputs that we tend to see across the organisation. In mobilisation discussions, they are also called the ‘mobilisation factors’. If you have a look at the diagram (Figure 12: Fundamental inputs to capability), you will see (along the bottom) the nine FIC, ranging from personnel through to industry. You’ll also see stacked behind them the three levels of mobilisation that we will be discussing. These are selective, partial, and then full mobilisation.

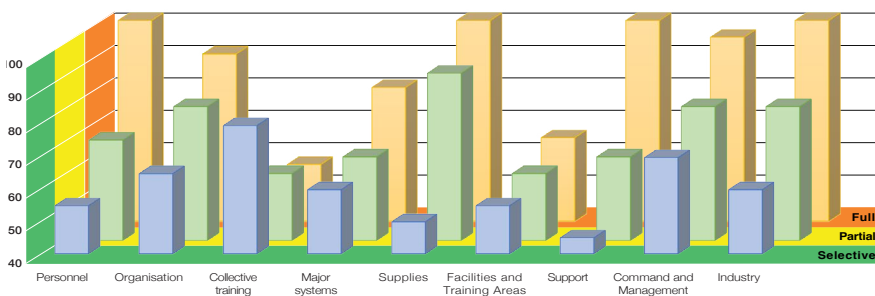


Figure 12: Fundamental inputs to capability

National mobilisation becomes a complex and externally controlled activity that is reliant on many government-specific interactions, so we are going to leave that one out for this particular discussion. Firstly, having a look at the selective mobilisation, you are not going to have everything, and in fact some FIC are going to be at quite low levels. But you will have certain things. For example, you might be sitting at 60 to 70 per cent of your personnel and have a similar amount of your platforms available to you. But what you will be able to guarantee is a high level of collective training because we can really focus on those selected units that are going on operations. Areas that you might have more challenges in include supply and support, particularly maintenance and specialty support, to enable your selective mobilisation. That's because these are always tasked over an extremely broad base of activities that are occurring simultaneously. Now, when we advance towards a partial mobilisation, you can see that some things have changed here. For example, you can see a fairly significant increase in personnel as we weight our effort towards operations and achieve increases in support from industry as they start to recognise that they can step in and assist us by providing solutions. You will also note that some areas will drop or remain fairly stagnant. For example, collective training is likely to be less available as more and more units require it, and facilities and training areas are likely to remain constant, as these are not things that we can significantly improve at short notice. Overall, you can expect that areas like command and management (using our currently in-place systems) will improve in efficiency and level of support provided.

Our organisational ability to manage these things will start increasing as we continue to mobilise. That might look like, for example, the provision of joint force headquarters to coordinate these activities. Finally, when we move towards full mobilisation, you can see many things will increase as we can start to tap into the Australian support base. This includes, for example, a real focus from industry on supporting our operations because it is in their best interests for us to defend Australia's interests. You can also see a dramatic increase in support as we start to bring new capabilities online and bring people back into the ADF to provide support that would otherwise be quite difficult to retain, such as doctors. You will also see quite a significant increase in personnel as we commit almost all, if not all, of the forces that Australia has towards this endeavour. This model just gives you a simplified concept of how we would likely gain the resources that we need as part of mobilisation activities. From here,

we would like to finish up by going through some of the challenges that we face. There are three key challenges we would like to speak about (shown in brief at Figure 13: Challenges experienced during mobilisation).

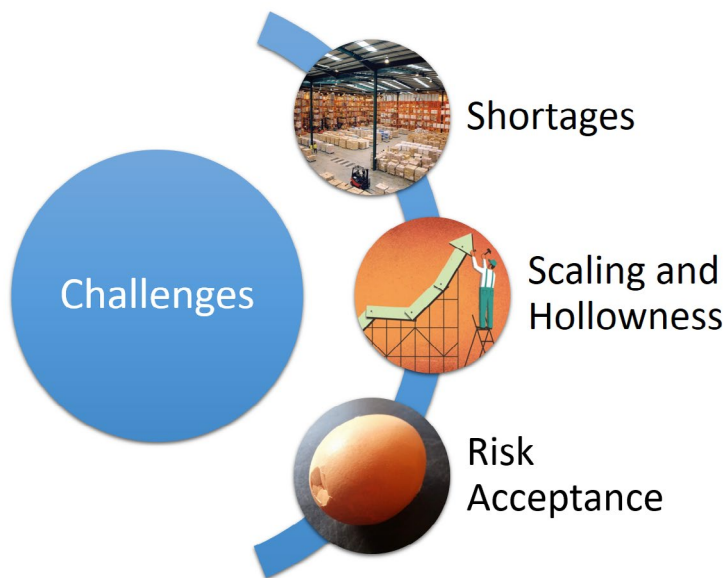


Figure 13: Challenges experienced during mobilisation

The first is shortages. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we all saw the impact of supply shortages on our families. The ADF is not immune to these supply shortages, particularly with fuel and ammunition. Mobilisation will require expansion to the volume of supplies we might need. There are smart people in industry and government who are working on these problems right now.

[DAVID CALIGARI]: Another aspect of potential shortages is the availability of platforms. As we know, there are a finite number of platforms in the ADF and some of them do not currently feature on any production line, should we need them quickly. For example, some of the future vehicles being brought into service offer fantastic capability but are not yet being produced or are being produced in limited numbers, and that could create shortages.

The second challenge is scaling, should we need to expand the force. We need the command and control systems, or our headquarters units, to be in place to lead and manage our new team, or our expanding

team. Fortunately Army is addressing this with the reinforcement of the 2nd Division. This provides a baseline framework for scaling and is a great start. However, the other side of the coin is hollowness.

[ZACH LAMBERT]: We have all seen the impacts of hollowness, particularly over the last few years. Hollowness means incomplete teams, and incomplete teams make it harder for us to mobilise. Measures to address hollowness require people to be removed from other teams to make a whole—to fill gaps. This results in individuals having to re-form teams and spend less time with their teams and, as a result, generates a lower level of overall readiness.

The third challenge is risk acceptance. Aversion to governance risk is a major challenge in expanding the force rapidly. As we expand our use of supplies, we will experience a degree of wastage. We must develop a tolerance for the governance risk this represents, within reason. This includes reducing red tape wherever possible.

[DAVID CALIGARI]: The last aspect of mobilisation worth discussing is that, as we stress the force within the stages of mobilisation, there may come a time at which we need to compromise on some things. Commanders will need to select options that are not perfect. This compromise may increase governance risk, but we need to be comfortable making these choices. Australia has a tradition of successfully mobilising forces when they are needed. We have explained that and shown it. Army is well placed to continue supporting operations and building contingency forces. Your chance to be part of this journey may not be too far around the corner.

That concludes our discussion on mobilisation. We hope you have taken something away. We'd now like to take questions.

[QUESTION]: During the mobilisation phase, you have outlined the requirement for mission-specific training, and mission rehearsal exercises. What base period would this be completed over, and could elements of this be achieved during the prep phase, or do you see elements of being able to achieve some of these during the prep phase?

[DAVID CALIGARI]: That's a great question. I have found it to be the case that every unit in Army is keen to do everything that they can to be prepared for whatever may arise. Because of that interest and focus, more often than not they will be doing things as early as they are able to.

The benefit is that whatever you can do now will save you time later. I am certain that there will always be opportunities for units to do things that are likely to be important in the future so that they can save space for the unexpected. For example, an important skill set that we've seen in recent history is crowd control. It takes some time to develop sufficient skills to be effective at crowd control, because it is about mass and needs a large number of soldiers and officers. The journey could be started earlier than the mobilisation phase and it needs to start earlier; so that is an example of something that could be done—and is often done—very well.

[ZACH LAMBERT]: There is an aspect of culture to this too. If you can generate a good readiness culture in your unit, you can shortcut many of these issues. However, you just have to be careful that you do not overstep the readiness notices that are provided to us by our higher headquarters. The reason for that is there are only so many resources across the organisation and there's only so much time and there are only so many soldiers and we can't afford to burn our guys out by over-preparing. So this has to be really clear conversation between the units and headquarters.

[QUESTION]: You spoke about how a unit might go from the preparation phase to the mobilisation phase but it was not clear what the triggers might be for that to occur. So how does a unit go from preparation to mobilisation for an activity?

[DAVID CALIGARI]: In the framework we described, the triggers would be apparent before entering mobilisation, and would likely come as orders from headquarters. To continue the Ready Battle Group concept, when a battalion or a unit assumes a responsibility to perform this role, there would be a mounting directive or an order coming from 'higher'. In our instance, that might come from the highest levels—being the Chief of Joint Operations, on behalf of the CDF. There is often sufficient time to understand that mobilisation is coming and there is usually a date, and a notice to move, introduced as part of the orders. It would go from Joint Operations Command Headquarters down through Headquarters 1st Division, through the formations and to the battalion. The benefit of this system is that, because the Ready Battle Group is an organisation that includes number of different personnel from different formations and battalions, there is an opportunity as the orders trickle down to bring together the team and to set the date when they will force concentrate to commence their preparation.

[ZACH LAMBERT]: It is also important to note that this direction does not just come from nowhere. Government needs to provide direction for any of these activities, and to provide that direction to the ADF to act. Once that direction has been provided, we then go through this process; and we do have specific forces on specific notices to move as per the direction from the CDF—based on the guidance he receives from government—to act at relatively short notice.

[QUESTION]: For a unit that is not the Ready Battle Group but may want to be ready to take on short-notice tasks that might be available, what sorts of things can a non-Ready Battle Group unit do to improve their readiness outside of being assigned as a specific contingency force element?

[ZACH LAMBERT]: This links back to my previous comments about culture. You can create a culture of activity before you actually need to start mobilising. At the lowest levels, this is as simple as making sure that your 'Deployment Preparation One' (known by our soldiers as DP1) checks are correct, that your vehicles are correctly managed and maintained, that your skill sets are in place, and that your family situation supports you being away for long periods of time at short notice. I think all these things combine to put you in a position where your chain of command can then focus on the training that will really help you, and increase your ability (within resource constraints) before you are even selected for an activity. It is also important to stay up to date, particularly with situational awareness of strategic hotspots and intelligence. I know that this is a particular issue now that the brigades are allocated to specific geographic areas, and we are trying to address this situation by letting our intelligence cells focus and create better linkages to our higher headquarters to pass that information down as well.

[DAVID CALIGARI]: The hardest part of this journey is the final 1 to 2 per cent. This is because we seek the most complete teams and we want to have all of the training that is needed for all of the members as well. This is in addition to all of the other gateways to deploying we must pass through to be an optimally ready team. It is important to focus on ensuring that those requirements are met as early as you are able. For example, Army is implementing training, much of which is fantastic, in areas such as the 'Army Combatives Program', enhanced combat shooting and other programs. There is a need to continuously confirm that everyone has the qualifications they need to fill the roles that may

require those skills. Unfortunately, we continue to find that, sometimes unexpectedly, some members do not yet have those qualifications. So if you are able to get that last couple of per cent of the large group ready, and every person has achieved precision in the skill sets required, that will pay the biggest dividend later. We must not forget, though, when the mission starts, you take the team you've got with whatever skills and qualifications the deploying commander assesses are necessary. We must never let the 100 per cent stop us from doing our job, and the deploying commander is the best judge of that risk.

[QUESTION]: You mentioned that collective training would not be as high during partial mobilisation as it is during selective mobilisation. Why do collective training levels drop just because forces are being more mobilised?

[ZACH LAMBERT]: This one comes down to resources in the end. We only have so many resources allocated to our collective training agencies. There's only so much a brigade headquarters can do when it's starting to try to raise forces before they go off, while also conducting its primary role of raise, train and sustain. When it comes down to it, the standard across the board will not be allowed to drop, but the volume of collective training might have to. For example, instead of a mission-ready exercise or mission-ready activity that goes for a month, we might only be able to afford a laser-focused week with a particular group. I feel as though that will put us in a position where we're doing the best we can with the limited resources we have, and it will improve over time. But there will certainly be a degradation as we move up in mobilisation intensity across those stages in the overall volume of collective training that is able to be conducted.

About the Speakers

Major Zach Lambert is a logistics officer who has served in the 3rd Combat Engineering Regiment, 7th Combat Service Support Battalion and 2/14th Light Horse Regiment (Queensland Mounted Infantry). He has commanded at every rank: platoon, technical support troop and company level, including as commander Mobile Training Team Vanuatu in 2021. He has served on Operations Okra, Hannah, APEC 18 Assist, Atlas and Paladin. He has held research fellowships in the Fulbright and Global Voices programs on mobilisation and organisational management. He holds several degrees from the University of New South Wales, and recently completed a Masters of Defence Studies from Deakin University. He is currently the Military Assistant to the Chief of Guided Weapons and Explosive Ordnance.

Major David Caligari is an infantry officer who has served in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Battalions, The Royal Australian Regiment. He has commanded at platoon and company level, including as commander Ready Combat Team and commander Ground Combat Element for the Australian Amphibious Force. He served as the 2019 aide-de-camp to the 1st Division Commander, planned the 2020 NATO response to COVID-19 in Afghanistan as the acting Director of Current Operations, and was the operations officer of the Ready Battle Group in 2022. He has served on Operations Slipper, Pacific Assist, and Highroad. He holds several degrees from the University of New South Wales and Deakin University. He is currently the Military Assistant to the Deputy Chief of the Army.

Forging the Anvil: Combat Units in the US, British, and German Infantries of World War II

(Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2022,
ISBN 978-1626379589, 463 pp.) AU\$161.53 (hardcover)

Author: G Stephen Lauer

Reviewed by: Anthony Duus

In keeping with the theme of this edition of the AAJ, it is prudent to examine how the Australian Army selects, trains and sustains forces for employment. This book investigates how nations raised infantry forces up to and through the Second World War, and explores the popular¹ (or unpopular depending upon your beliefs²) narrative that German infantry forces were tactically superior to their opponents at the individual and small-group levels. Lauer, a former US Marine Corps Infantry officer and Associate Professor at the US Army's School of Advanced Military Studies, analyses the infantry forces of Germany, Britain and the US by examining their recruitment, training, employment, treatment of wounded, leadership and discipline. Using a wide variety of reference material, including original German sources, Lauer writes a very informative book that should become a standard for those seeking to better select and prepare forces for future war.

Differing from the First World War, the Second World War:

*drove a narrative focused on technology and machines—more machines on land, in the air, and at sea. Industry needed greater numbers of citizens to build, feed, and fix the technological products of the great industrial nations.*³

Infantry have been, and remain:

*the one indispensable fighting element, the least machine-oriented, required by all armies to hold the ground seized by the machines of land, air, and sea, the force to occupy the enemy country and capital.*⁴

Lauer contends that this desire to feed the machine (literally) led to differing approaches to selecting a nation's citizens for the different services and arms being mobilised.

The British and US systems prioritised educated and technically proficient recruits for the services and trades that they thought needed education and technical skills—highly favouring naval and air forces. More educated recruits tended to also be more physically fit and robust.⁵ This prioritisation had the effect of drawing the cream of recruits away from infantry, previously a strength of the British and US armies in the First World War. For example, Lieutenant-General Lesley McNair, the commanding general of the US Army Ground Forces from 1942 until his death in France in 1944, provided statistical evidence to the army's leadership on the quality shortcomings of the infantry. He noted that 'the infantrymen, by November 1943, were shorter in height, lighter in weight, and possessed the lowest average education and intelligence test scores of any combat specialty'.⁶ Neither the British nor the US recruited and maintained forces from specific regional locations. Instead, a soldier could expect to be assigned to any unit in need—whether the soldier was a new recruit or returning to the war from convalescence. Infantrymen did not establish small-team cohesion until each arrived in his unit. These armies also selected those needed for special roles, such as for special forces, airborne or leadership positions, from among the ranks of the infantry—which depleted talent from the infantry body for use elsewhere. As a result, when these infantry forces finally arrived on the battlefield, their poor performance showed—demonstrating the cumulative effect of these decisions.

German infantry, by comparison, were selected from the highest physical and educational categories available for recruitment:

The key to German standards for combat infantry were physicality and intelligence, as for the other combat arms, was the infantry's tie to the nearness of the fighting. The infantry had the largest requirement for combat-capable soldiers. During the mustering process, 50 percent of those qualified for combat duty, regardless of other qualifications, received assignment to an infantry unit.⁷

The 253rd Infantry Division, used by Lauer as a case study in the book, reported that up to 97 per cent of the men in the division were from the same area. They were regionally recruited, selected, trained and remained with this regional unit for the duration of their service—even if wounded they returned to their regional centres for recovery, then joined their regional reinforcement units, retrained, and returned to their units. Small-group cohesion was built from the start, using a soldier's local bonds and connections.

Lauer uses a great deal of evidence to show Allied commanders' high regard for German infantry at the individual and tactical levels.

The enemy is quicker than we are: quicker at regrouping his forces, quicker at thinning out on a defensive front to provide troops to close gaps at decisive points, quicker in effecting reliefs, quicker at mounting attacks and counter-attacks, and above all quicker at reaching decisions on the battlefield. By comparison our methods are often slow and cumbersome, and this applies to all our troops, both British and American.⁸

Most importantly, he responds by explaining how the Allies dealt with lack of quality in their own forces. Lauer argues that, by drawing more intelligent and technically capable soldiers into Royal Air Force, United States Air Force and other technical services, 'Anglo-American general officers acted correctly to employ the key advantage they possessed, massive ground and air fires, rather than any expectation of infantry or armored [sic] maneuver [sic] to destroy their opponents.'⁹

The Australian Army should draw an important lesson from this book when examining and assessing how it might rapidly expand in a time of national mobilisation. At present, the Australian Army maintains a

centralised recruiting and training model, based on the requirement to train two divisions and associated enablers. The Australian Army's system is one founded on efficiency and minimising cost. An alternative approach, however, is a regional model where locals from that region are mobilised, selected, trained and employed. The Australian Army ought to look at how it selects and assigns recruits—the system of recruits self-selecting their speciality may not be suitable in national crisis. Given the continued reliance on well-trained and properly employed modern infantry in contemporary conflicts, the Australian Army would benefit from examining whether its methods ought to be driven by efficiency or effectiveness.

G Stephen Lauer passed away before this book could be published, and it is indicative of how well he was respected that that his colleagues finalised and published his work after his death. I strongly commend this book to anyone wishing to better understand how forces are raised and the effects of using specific criteria to choose their services and roles, however well-intentioned, once in contact.

About the Reviewer

Colonel Anthony Duus is the Director of the Australian Army Research Centre. An Armoured Corps graduate, he has served in a wide array of staff and command positions.

Endnotes

- 1 Max Hastings, 'Their Wehrmacht Was Better Than Our Army', *The Washington Post*, 5 May 1985, at: <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1985/05/05/their-wehrmacht-was-better-than-our-army/0b2cfe73-68f4-4bc3-a62d-7626f6382dbd/> (accessed 17 July 2024).
- 2 Thomas Brodey, 'The Great Myth of the Wehrmacht', *Tragedy and Farce*, 30 July 2021, at: <https://tragedyandfarce.blog/2021/07/30/the-great-myth-of-the-wehrmacht/> (accessed 18 July 2024).
- 3 G Stephen Lauer, *Forging the Anvil: Combat Units in the US, British, and German Infantries of World War II* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2022), p. 2.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid., p. 4.
- 6 Ibid., p. 13.
- 7 Ibid., p. 173.
- 8 Ibid., p. 2.
- 9 Ibid., p. 366.

Battle of the Cities: Urban Warfare on the Eastern Front

(Pen and Sword, Barnsley, 2023,
ISBN 978 1 39907 200 7) AU\$54 (hardcover)

Author: Anthony Tucker-Jones

Reviewed by: Charles Knight

Anthony Tucker-Jones's *Battle of the Cities: Urban Warfare on the Eastern Front* provides a thorough overview of operational-level urban warfare on the Eastern Front, structured around 20 significant urban engagements. It presents as being dense and well researched, and for each battle it provides not only context and conduct, but great detail about participating formations, their origins, their commanders, and their movements and locations. In this account, the main actors are army divisions, with occasional accounts of regiments or battalions fighting in the streets at key moments. The chapters are also peppered with cameo appearances by figures such as Shostakovich, Khrushchev and Beria, and with snapshots such as Stalin holding a military parade at the height of the battle for Moscow. Rather than applying an evocative and sometimes first-person storytelling technique like that of colleagues such as Antony Beevor, Tucker-Jones takes a traditional historian's approach. The reader will not learn about shifting tactics or the evolution of Soviet Storm groups, but they will find the crucial political and operational contexts for these developments.

The introduction provides an excellent overview of warfare on the Eastern Front but does not foreshadow the structure of the book itself. The body of the volume is divided into short chapters dealing with each of the major urban battles. This approach will be particularly useful for researchers; however, they may be disappointed by the absence of footnotes and citations. Students will similarly appreciate the richness and density of the information presented, yet this characteristic can make it difficult to absorb and follow the action on a first reading. This challenge is compounded because the spatial and temporal relationship between the sometimes-concurrent battles is not intuitive. To address this and to better contextualise the battles, the reader may find it useful to initially sketch a timeline chart in conjunction with the map on page xii. There is also merit in starting with the short final chapter, which sketches the art of urban warfare.

The chapters are anchored and enlivened by excursions deep into the history of the cities and peoples. There are vignettes that recall defensive battles during earlier invasions by the Mongols, the French or the alliance that confronted Russia during the Crimean War. The economic role played by the cities of the Western USSR during the spectacular modernisation from the 1920s onwards is linked to descriptions of their military-industrial (and therefore strategic) significance as war developed. For example, there is an interesting account of the shifting production arrangements for the crucial T-34 tank. Less expected are sketches on topics such as the cultural connections between France, prominent French leaders and the city of Odes(s)a.

In addition to offering the above economic, industrial and historical reference points, this book serves to introduce other key actors who are often missing from popular understandings of the war on the Eastern Front. The operations and effects of the air forces on both sides are examined in relation to ground manoeuvre, while the often-overlooked role of naval forces and transport shipping is also accounted for. This reviewer was certainly not previously aware of the role of the Romanian Navy at Sevastopol. In a similar vein, the reader learns about the central role of the Romanians in capturing Odes(s)a in 1941 or that of the Spanish Blue Division at Leningrad. The involvement of these currently obscure actors is reinforced at other points in the text by meaningful details such as the Blue Division soldiers changing back into Spanish uniforms in Vienna on the way home.

The inevitable necessity of 'interference' by political leaders in military matters has been well argued in Eliot Cohen's and Lawrence Freedman's

writings on command. Tucker-Jones stays detached when describing the processes and effects of Hitler's decisions, and offers balancing descriptions of Stalin's sometimes terrifying interactions with his commissars and generals. Indeed, balance is retained throughout. For instance, the treatment of the 1944–45 Battle of Warsaw gives a good account of the various factors being considered by both the Red Army and the Wehrmacht, and refrains from political value judgement about the former's failure to act in support of the Polish Home Army. Similarly, the author's brief treatment of the role of Ukrainians fighting alongside the Germans in the Ukrainian Liberation Army and other organisations does not avoid the topic. Although Tucker-Jones benignly frames such Ukrainian participation as 'duped', this assessment is balanced with consistent acknowledgement of the Ukrainians' massive suffering and the country's contribution of manpower to the Soviet Union's struggle against fascism.

Overall, this book provides excellent and distinct accounts of the 20 key 'Battles of the Cities' during the Great Patriotic War. The reader can follow how the cities of the Western Soviet Union initially delayed the rapid Wehrmacht 'advancing tide' and then became focal points for envelopment after failures of manoeuvre and resultant dogma (fuelled by its failure to withdraw) saw entire defending armies lost. As the Soviets learned, cities which could not be bypassed (because of their location and communication nodes) became 'breakwaters' where the inexorable blitzkrieg expended time and blood, or remained besieged thorns in the German rear. The book shows how a strategy of 'no retreat', backed by the commitment of sufficient combat power, became decisive—fixing the German 6th Army at Stalingrad for the counterattack that changed the course of the war. Tucker-Jones resists allocating disproportionate text to that well-researched, well-understood decisive battle. Instead, he draws our attention to how that Soviet victory reflected operational 'lessons learned' in earlier urban battles. For example, he highlights the significance of the 1941 Battle of Rostov-on-Don as the first successful Soviet urban counteroffensive. As fortunes reversed and the Red Army advanced west, the various accounts of battle show how the dogma of 'no retreat' handicapped the Wehrmacht in turn.

This is a book about how the leaders, generals, admirals and air marshals executed operational urban war at scale. It might be better entitled *Battle for the Cities: The Context for Urban Warfare on the Eastern Front*, yet it remains important background reading for those wanting to understand urban war, and extremely valuable for comparative assessment of recent battles in Ukraine.

About the Author

Dr Charles Knight is a senior operations analyst conducting wargaming for land capability. He has an enduring interest in urban warfare, sparked by being tasked to prepare his UK Parachute Regiment unit to defend the German city of Hildesheim against the Soviets in the 1980s. His PhD examined coercion during counterinsurgency, and as a university lecturer he taught subjects including strategic security, unconventional/asymmetric warfare, and terrorism. He remains affiliated with Charles Sturt University and the Theresian Military Academy in Austria. His research is informed by fieldwork during the Lebanese civil war and in Cambodia, as well as by operational service with several overseas militaries. In Australia he commanded 2/17RNSWR, served for over a decade with the Special Forces, and as a reservist is the SO1 Urban in the AARC.

Strategy in Crisis. The Pacific War, 1937-1945

(Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, 2023,
ISBN 9781682477656, 220 pp.) US\$29.95

Author: John T Kuehn

Reviewed by: Dayton McCarthy

The 19th century German polymath Rudolf Virchow wrote that 'brevity in writing is the best insurance for its perusal'. If this aphorism is correct—and I suspect that most military officers would support such a belief—then John T Kuehn's *Strategy in Crisis* has done its best to ensure it has wide appeal among its prospective readership. Although not explicitly stated, it is clear that this relatively thin tome (it is 220 pages in length, of which 51 pages are endnotes, bibliography and index) has been written as a professional military education resource. Hailing from the US Naval Institute Press, *Strategy in Crisis* is the first in a planned series examining the 'essentials of strategy' wherein the aim is to 'develop a broad strategic literacy'. As such, we may assume that it targets mid-level officers, either pre or post staff college, who wish to gain a greater understanding of the linkages between the strategic and operational levels of war. It is a short, punchy book that can be read in two to three sessions; such brevity surely makes it just the thing for a time-poor staff officer or staff college student!

The scope of Kuehn's book is wide. He situates the reader with a prelude, the 1921–22 Washington naval conference, which determined the postwar naval strengths of the major powers at the time. In short, it decreed that the Japanese navy should be smaller than the British and United States navies. Kuehn indicates that the Japanese saw this as deleterious for their longer-term national security and thus the seeds for future discord between Japan and the US were sown. He also makes it clear in his introduction that the 'Pacific War' was in fact the 'Asia-Pacific War', which commenced in 1937 with the Second Sino-Japanese War in mainland China. By doing so, Kuehn lays the foundations for the rest of the book. Firstly, it makes Western readers understand that Japan was fighting (and thus allocating manpower, materiel and resources) in China well before (and of course, after) its post-December 1941 Pacific campaigns, and that the Asian-Pacific theatre was immense in terms of geography and number of belligerents involved:

*Japan's meddling in China constituted the cause of the war in the Pacific between Japan and the United States, the Netherlands, Great Britain, their colonies, and commonwealth partners, Australia and New Zealand. It was a war that stretched from the Sri Lanka and eastern India to Japanese submarine operations off the West Coast of the United States. From north to south it spanned from the frozen Aleutians to steamy Darwin and Port Moresby south of the equator. The sheer geographic scope of the conflict boggles the mind, especially if one is a logistics planner. **But it was always about Japan's undeclared war, and its quagmire, in China.**¹ (Emphasis added)*

Kuehn examines the pre-war plans of these belligerents to examine whether linkages existed between such plans and the subsequent wartime conduct and execution. Here he is to be commended for covering not only the US and Japanese plans (which have been discussed extensively in other works) but also those of Britain and the Commonwealth, the Dutch and the French. While this wider context is useful, the reader is nevertheless guided to understand that the 'strategy in crisis' of the book's title refers to the Japanese strategy, or perhaps more correctly, the lack thereof. There was little coordination—and no real joint strategic decision-making apparatus—between the highest echelons of the Japanese army and navy. Accordingly, the competing priorities (the army remained focused on the war in China, while the navy naturally wished to pursue a maritime-

centric strategy in the Pacific) almost doomed the Japanese from the start. This situation was exacerbated by the Japanese military's fervent belief in the efficacy of the 'decisive battle'. This *idée fixe* saw the Japanese continually seeking such a contest, but almost always being in a worse position afterwards. Even the stunning success of the Pearl Harbor attack proved to be only a temporary fillip; now the Japanese were bogged down in China while simultaneously attempting to prosecute a far-flung Pacific war with an awakened United States and all the industrial might it brought with it. As Kuehn notes in his conclusion, this exposed the inherent Japanese weaknesses and highlighted the United States' strengths:

All levels of war in [the maritime] environment favour the nation that can best manage, as well as supply, its forces ... however it was at the operational and strategic levels where the allies proved most formidable ... the old truism that professionals talk logistics was never truer than in the Pacific. Here the allies' care, attention and planning exceeded the Japanese approach.²

Kuehn pinpoints that the unity of effort and clarity of command provided by the Allied Combined Chiefs of Staff and the Joint Chiefs of Staff was never replicated in any way, shape or form by the Japanese. With these threads woven throughout, Kuehn covers the conduct of the war from the initial reversals to the gradual wresting of the initiative from the Japanese and the endgame played out in the Philippines and Okinawa. Australian readers will enjoy the coverage of the bifurcated US operations, with the tensions between the different 'ways' and 'means' employed by General Douglas MacArthur in the South-West Pacific Area and Admiral Chester Nimitz in the Pacific Ocean Area that were accommodated because they nested within the overall strategic 'ends.' While tensions existed, the overall efficacy of the Allied effort starkly contrasted with the utterly dysfunctional Japanese strategic/operational/tactical nexus.

I had a few quibbles with the book. Kuehn did not take a standardised approach to the use of ranks, so some are written in full whereas others are abbreviated. Likewise, some military acronyms are spelt out, whereas others are not. Perhaps this is simply a reflection that the book was written for a professional military audience with an assumed knowledge of such terminology. Australian readers may also raise eyebrows when reading about the wartime prime minister 'John Curtain'. On the whole, however, these are minor oversights and do little to detract from Kuehn's work.

When writing this review, I pondered whether a reader who had absolutely no knowledge or background in the Pacific war could read this book and attain the 'strategic literacy' it sought to provide. To this question, I believe the answer is generally 'yes'. Certainly by pursuing brevity, Kuehn necessarily had to forsake detail. Nonetheless, *Strategy in Crisis* achieves its stated aim and would be an excellent starting point for any Australian military professional wishing to explore the linkages between strategy and operations, or those wishing to enhance their understanding of how warfare in our near region was planned and executed in the Second World War. If, after consuming Kuehn's impressive little book, a reader's appetite for such topics is whetted, I can thoroughly recommend John C McManus's magisterial three-volume series on the US Army in the Pacific for a broader and deeper treatment of the same subject.³

About the Reviewer

Lieutenant Colonel Dayton McCarthy CSC is currently the Staff Officer Grade 1 Special Projects in the G5 Cell, Headquarters 2nd (Australian) Division. He served in the Australian Regular Army from 2005 to 2013 in a number of regimental, training and staff appointments. Transferring to the Army Reserves in 2014, he was the Commanding Officer of the 9th Battalion, Royal Queensland Regiment from 2021 to 2022. A defence analyst in his civilian career, LTCOL McCarthy is the author of several books and numerous conference papers, articles and book reviews. He has a Doctor of Philosophy and a Graduate Diploma in Science (Operations Research and Systems) from the University of New South Wales.

Endnotes

- 1 John T Kuehn, *Strategy in Crisis: The Pacific War, 1937–1945* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2023), p. 9.
- 2 *Ibid.*, pp. 166–167.
- 3 See John C McManus, *Fire and Fortitude: The US Army in the Pacific War, 1941–1943* (New York: Dutton Caliber, 2019); *Island Infernos: The US Army's Pacific War Odyssey, 1944* (New York: Dutton Caliber, 2021); and *To the End of the Earth: The US Army and the Downfall of Japan, 1945* (New York: Dutton Caliber, 2023).

Delivering Destruction: American Firepower and Amphibious Assault from Tarawa to Iwo Jima

(Naval Institute Press, 2023,
ISBN 9781682471340, 229 pp.), USD\$34.95

AUTHOR: Chris K Hemler

REVIEWED BY: John Nash

Many books on World War II in the Pacific focus on either land, air or naval forces, especially when examining the battles of the US Marine Corps (USMC). Chris K Hemler's book *Delivering Destruction* explores four key campaigns of the Pacific War through the lens of 'triphibious' warfare: the land, air and sea components of these campaigns. The campaigns examined are Tarawa, the Marshall Islands, the Marianas (Saipan), and Iwo Jima.

Hemler takes aim at two predominant ways of thinking about warfare in these campaigns. The first is the narrative—popularised, as he says, by visions of the flag raising on Mount Suribachi on Iwo Jima—that these battles were won by the sheer grit and determination of infantry supported by armour. The second is that Allied victory was attributable to industrial and technological superiority above all else, an almost inevitable march of industrial might.¹ Hemler does a fine job of threading this needle by illustrating that it was combined arms, 'triphibious' warfare in his parlance, of ground forces supported by naval gunfire support

(NGS) and close air support (CAS) that ensured victory during these amphibious operations. This approach acknowledges both the human and the material contributions to victory, and ensures that naval and air forces are given their due credit for the vital support they provided the land forces. He also highlights the great work that was done by US Navy and USMC officers and marines ashore to coordinate these fires effectively.

The book's first chapter deals with the critical interwar period, which saw the development of USMC amphibious doctrine—most notably, the publication in 1934 of the *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*. Hemler successfully highlights the intellectual journey of the USMC at this time, contrasted with the associated difficulties in setting up realistic training (in part due to the US Navy's focus on combat at sea rather than NGS or supporting forces ashore). These challenges came to a head during the first major opposed USMC assault of the war, the Tarawa landing of November 1943, 'after an intellectually creative but untested interwar phase'.² The test was a hard one, and as Hemler assesses it: 'Against a dogged enemy and unaccommodating environment, the Marine landing force struggled to execute the ideas that appeared so unassailably correct in the Corps' *Tentative Manual for Landing Operations*.³ Chapter 3 provides a crucial bridge between the Tarawa and the Marshall Islands landings, illustrating in fuller detail how the gaps in theory that existed pre-war were exposed on the beaches of Tarawa.

While there was near universal acknowledgement of the need for close naval gunfire and air support in amphibious operations, there had never been adequate time, attention and resources devoted in peacetime to practising their coordination. Culture started to shift, as did the organisation of fire control parties, leading to the establishment in late 1943 of a new unit, the Joint Assault Signal Company. The idea for this type of unit had originated with Major-General Alexander Vandergrift and the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal, but it took the costly Tarawa experience to see it come to fruition.⁴ Top level support for the importance of NGS was provided by none other than the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, Admiral Chester Nimitz, who in September 1943 directed that a dedicated NGS firing range in the Pacific be established. The range on Kahoolawe Island in Hawaii was opened six weeks later.⁵ This rapid adaptation and shift in attitudes was crucial to ensuring future landings would be properly supported by naval and air fires.

The payoff came during the 4th Marine Division's assault on Roi-Namur in the Marshall Islands on 31 January 1944. Naval and air support for the landing and subsequent operations was much more responsive than in previous operations and thus proved highly effective. Post-action USMC estimates later determined that naval and air strikes killed anywhere from 50 to 75 per cent of all Japanese troops.⁶ This close support was improved further during the next major operation, against Saipan in the Marianas, which occurred just a week after the Allied landings in Normandy on 6 June 1944. Just as the ships supporting the Normandy landings had learned in the Sicily and Salerno landings, so too did the warships providing NGS in the Pacific realise that the key to responsive and effective fires was close positioning of the ship to the shore.⁷ Lessons had been learned, technology developed, culture shifted, and in the end this saw the firepower support to land forces on Saipan reach new levels of effectiveness. If there was any doubt about the air and naval support's efficacy, Japanese prisoners of war and captured documents made it clear that this support not only made the difference but—in the words of a Japanese document—essentially made it a one-way fight in the Americans' favour.⁸ Chapters 6 and 7 explore how this support was continually improved, first leading up to Iwo Jima and then during the battle for the island.

Hemler's analysis is thorough and he is able to draw together the different threads of how NGS and air support were integrated to support USMC and US Army forces ashore. His final chapter ties it all together under the apt title 'Examining Success'. Channelling British Major Gerald Gilbert in 1907, Hemler notes: 'The challenge of the combined arms approach— particularly in an age of rapid technological change—defined the battlefields of both world wars and often determined an army's success.'⁹ He provides a salutary reminder that technological change must come with human adaptation, and that 'war requires fundamentally human solutions'.¹⁰ Allied technological prowess and industrial might was for nought without the systems and culture in place to make best use of them. The same remains true today, though perhaps the rapid pace of technological change in the modern era has created even greater hopes of technological triumph over human systems. Many a new capability has been declared 'revolutionary', while countless 'legacy' platforms have been deemed 'obsolete'. *Delivering Destruction* is an excellent examination of how the US armed forces successfully adapted new technology into more effective combat power. It is both a solid work on the historical topic

of 'trihibious' warfare in the Pacific war, and a timely reminder of how militaries need to adapt in war. This book will provide excellent reading for anyone interested in amphibious/littoral operations and the history and practice of what we now would call 'joint fires'. These are important topics as the Australian Defence Force integrates into a more littoral-focused force operating in the maritime and land spaces of the Indo-Pacific.

About the Reviewer

Dr John Nash is an Academic Research Officer at the Australian Army Research Centre and a Reserve Naval Officer. Prior to this he was a Researcher for the Australian War Memorial's Official History of Australian Operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. His research focuses on littoral warfare, sea power, maritime and naval history, and strategic studies.

Endnotes

- 1 Chris K Hemler, *Delivering Destruction: American Firepower and Amphibious Assault from Tarawa to Iwo Jima* (Naval Institute Press, 2024), pp. 1–3.
- 2 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 3 *Ibid.*, p. 29.
- 4 *Ibid.*, pp. 58–59.
- 5 *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.
- 6 *Ibid.*, p. 71.
- 7 *Ibid.*, p. 85; Craig L Symonds, *World War II at Sea: A Global History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 531.
- 8 Hemler, *Delivering Destruction*, p. 96.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 146.
- 10 *Ibid.*, p. 157.

The Insurgent's Dilemma: A Struggle to Prevail

(Hurst & Co, 2022,
ISBN 978 1 78738 565 8, 464 pp.) AU\$59.99

Author: David H Ucko

Reviewed by: Travis Peet

The overwhelming narrative to emerge from the 20-year 'War on Terror' is the impotence of the counterinsurgent. The vision of desperate Afghans fleeing Kabul in 2021 seemed to confirm the inability of governments to translate great military power into victory, and the perception of the success of insurgents was further reinforced by never-ending cycles of violence in the Middle East. According to David Ucko, however, the image of the invincible and triumphant insurgent is in fact a fallacy. While governments often struggle to deal with the root cause of an insurgency, equally insurgents struggle to seize control in the face of the power of the state. In order to challenge the status quo of a state, they lose the qualities that make them hard to target and they instead become easily suppressed by overwhelming military power. This is the insurgent's dilemma, one that Ucko contends that some insurgent groups are coming to terms with and, critically, starting to solve.

In this book, Ucko proposes that the key characteristics that allowed insurgencies to seize power in the past have now dissipated. The successful insurgencies of the Cold War were able to grow power

within a rural population, gain support from external nations and develop a pathway to victory. Since the turn of the century, however, populations are far more urbanised, insurgencies are not related to overthrowing colonial masters, and the spectre of terrorism makes it harder for insurgents to gain support. Additionally, third-party nations are far less likely to overtly support violent overthrow of governments. These factors all make it far more difficult for insurgencies to succeed. Insurgents were successful in Afghanistan as the situation did not match wider trends of insurgencies failing; in Afghanistan the population was largely rural and not used to being controlled by a central government, and Pakistan provided a sanctuary that allowed the Taliban to avoid defeat. For the majority of other insurgencies, the insurgent's dilemma is forcing insurgents to move away from a traditional armed struggle and instead embrace indirect approaches. Ucko has defined these emerging approaches as localised, infiltration and ideational strategies.

In his chapter on localised insurgency, Ucko uses broad examples to illustrate how groups are able to gain unofficial power status by controlling a small area rather than the whole nation. While some may not categorise the gangs of Rio de Janeiro as insurgents, Ucko's analysis of how they have achieved power in the slums of Rio shows how their approach could be exported. His other example, Boko Haram in northern Nigeria, is a more traditional insurgent group, and he shows how the localised insurgency strategy can also apply in a rural context despite the trend of urbanisation. Ucko offers a response that potentially may not survive political realities. He suggests that, instead of combating informal power arrangements directly, a government could seek to formalise them—effectively ceding power in return for assurances that there will be alignment to the core principles of the nation-state. Such an approach may be easier to describe than to institute.

Infiltration insurgency is a strategy that de-emphasises violent action and works within the democratic system. In this way, practicality issues and legal protections prevent suppression of the insurgency. Violence is not removed, however; it is retained as a key enabler of the insurgent movement. Once power is secured, the democratic system is reduced by the insurgents from inside the system. Using examples ranging from Bolivia to Greece, Ucko describes how legitimate political parties have seized power while being supported by their armed wings. The tension

within Ucko's proposed response is that democratic nations may have to limit democracy in order to save it. As Ucko identifies, countering the infiltration strategy is an ethical and strategic minefield. The key is being able to link the violent acts of paramilitaries to the 'legitimate' component of the insurgency, thus exposing their true intentions.

While generating an ideological narrative is central to any insurgency movement, technology (primarily the internet) that enables rapid exchanges of information has increased the narrative's efficacy. Ucko describes how insurgencies are exploiting this technology in his chapter on the ideation strategy. Starting his analysis with widely recognised insurgent groups such as ISIS, Ucko then extends the ideation strategy to the far-right movement in America. It is in America that he spends the majority of the chapter as he unpacks what led to the events of 6 January 2021, when rioters stormed the Capitol building. Ucko identifies that the first key step in countering the ideation strategy is to understand the connections within a network and how they are influencing each other, and that any government response needs to ensure that it does not inadvertently fuel the movement further. As with both the localised and infiltration strategies, it is clear from Ucko's work that countering an ideational insurgency is not a simple task.

The strategies that Ucko describes, along with many of the counter-strategies, are indirect approaches to seizing power. Although Ucko has titled his book *The Insurgent's Dilemma*, it could as easily have been titled *Insurgents and the Grey Zone*. As many military professionals will be aware, the grey zone has been described as the area between peace and war. It is within the grey zone that states, particularly revisionist nations, seek to achieve their strategic goals without crossing the threshold into conflict. The three insurgent strategies described by Ucko have many parallels to activities that states are sponsoring or conducting within the grey zone. The localised approach has close similarities to the 'salami slicing' strategies of the Chinese in the South China Sea, slowly taking territory and shifting the status quo. The infiltration approach easily compares to Russian efforts in the Donbass region of Ukraine to install pro-Russian leaders. Meanwhile, many of the examples of ideational insurgency, such as far-right online groups, have allegedly been sponsored by state actors to influence elections or to similarly disrupt democratic nations. Although Ucko has focused on insurgency, the lessons and examples contained within his work have broader utility as both state and non-state actors are utilising similar means to achieve their goals.

In *The Insurgent's Dilemma*, Ucko has taken a very broad perspective as to what constitutes an insurgency. This is particularly the case when he describes ideational insurgency. In this chapter, he largely describes the potential of this strategy, rather than providing actual examples of its success. While this approach may be considered a weakness by some readers, it is important to remember the purpose of Ucko's work: to identify ways that insurgent groups may adapt to solve the insurgent's dilemma and the relevant counter-strategies that governments may apply. Ucko's examples may not always be traditional insurgents, but their methods could easily be adapted.

With the focus of recent strategic guidance on great power competition, and the risk of great power conflict, it is easy to dismiss *The Insurgent's Dilemma* as a work focused on the past. However, as Ucko outlines, increased great power competition is likely to breed further insurgencies as nations seek to avoid direct conflict. Along with the similarities in strategies being employed by both insurgents and revisionist governments, Ucko's work helps build understanding about the form that Indo-Pacific insurgencies may take in the future. As Ucko demonstrates, victory for insurgents is not inevitable, but neither is victory for the counterinsurgent. It is critical to understand the potential adaptations in strategy so that suitable counter-strategies can be enacted.

About the Author

Major Travis Peet is an Australian Army Infantry Officer who is currently posted to Force Integration Division of Australian Defence Force Headquarters. He has been fortunate to deploy multiple times on overseas operations and command at the platoon, troop and squadron levels. Major Peet holds a Bachelor of Arts in History and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, and a Master of Military and Defence Studies.

Dark Waters, Starry Skies: The Guadalcanal-Solomons Campaign, March– October 1943

(Osprey Publishing, 2023,
ISBN 14728498, 528 pp.) AU\$45.76 (hardback)

Author: Jeffrey R Cox

Reviewed by: Felicity Petrie

Dark Waters, Starry Skies is the fourth in a series of books by lawyer and historian Jeffrey R Cox that follows the Second World War Pacific campaign. This volume specifically covers the Guadalcanal campaign over the period March to October 1943, when the Allies began to turn the tide against the Japanese armed forces and started to compel their retreat back up the island chain.

Primarily structured chronologically over the subject period, this volume outlines ship movements and capabilities, air raid plane types, numbers and compositions, troop movements, bomb quantities and explosive weight counts, and many other topics in extensive detail. This content is complemented by commentary about the frequently quirky (if not outright deleterious) personalities and their actions on both sides—including their curious and often counterproductive decisions. The book also sheds light on the surprising twists and turns experienced by both sides from what might be called the ‘fog and friction of war’: weather, equipment breakdowns, illness, miscalculations or sheer bad luck.

Cox does not hold back with his droll, pointed character assessments, and tends towards sarcasm in his post analysis of events and key decisions. In some places, this approach offers a welcome break from the pages of statistics, facts and quotas. In other areas, however, it is overdone, jarring against the highly analytical tone of the majority of the text. Jarring too are some of the mixed metaphors and attempts at humorous colloquialisms that can come across as unnecessary at best, and culturally insensitive at worst (the repetition of the phrase 'the Katana of Damocles' comes to mind as one example).

Highly detailed and deeply researched, in many places this book reads like an official history. Indeed, the book generates hundreds of potential case studies for military and strategic studies researchers and historians to explore more deeply (supported by a generous bibliography). Despite the level of detail, there remains plenty of scope for the reader to draw their own conclusions from the actions and decisions recounted in the text. While this approach may be especially appealing for a military audience, this is not a textbook on military strategy. Cox recounts events as they happened, but is light on the deeper analysis of their implications and lessons. Had he looked more deeply into some topics (such as the impacts of Japanese tactics to disrupt sleep and induce fear in Allied forces newly arrived to the battleground), it would have added richness to the text and opened the book up to a wider audience. Perhaps these conclusions are assumed knowledge for the reader, or it may be a case of limited space in an already substantial book (470 pages plus notes and bibliography). Repetition is often used for emphasis, but the success of this approach varies within the text.

One point raised quite starkly is the very real limitations of replacing capabilities lost in battle, particularly at this point of the Pacific War and this far from the Japanese and Allied home bases. Ships and aircraft were spread thinly across a large area of land and sea. Air raids conducted with a few (sometimes only one or two) aircraft, and sea battles between three or four ships per side, were the norm for most of the events recounted in the book. These 'skirmishes' occurred almost continually between the more widely known battles that the book also discusses, and which are more usually the focus of military histories covering this campaign. Attrition meant there were no vast armadas of ships or seemingly endless flights of aircraft to send into battle, and the loss of one or two platforms in action resulted in a significant tipping of the scales. The innovation

that sprang from this lack of resources is treated in a matter-of-fact way by the author, again without a detailed analysis of the implications then or now. Cox covers some case studies in depth (such as destroyers running troops to shore when transports were in short supply or too easily defeated, changes in flying and bombing techniques, and land warfare conduct that deviated from the accepted doctrinal norms). He nevertheless leaves plenty of room for analysis by the reader.

Within the pages of tactical detail, the book covers some particularly significant events. These include the shooting down of Admiral Yamamoto's plane and how the combination of the US codebreaking 'magic' and the Admiral's affinity for timeliness combined to deliver his downfall. There is also some discussion around whether this was a strategic victory or defeat—Yamamoto was recognised as a 'cool head' among the Japanese hierarchy, and may have been a stabilising influence that benefited the Allies.

The text is bookended by events on the ship *Akikaze*. It opens with a war crime involving the slaughter and dumping at sea of Bishop Joseph Lörks and a substantial number of civilians by Japanese armed forces. It ends with a reprise of this event, and how it came to pass almost unnoticed in the history of the Second World War. Between the opening and closing chapters, the structure follows the timeline of the Guadalcanal campaign, with each chapter broadly following a group of related events leading to a climactic point.

A clear lesson from this book is the significant contribution of integrated capabilities and their interdependencies in the littoral domain. Troops need to be moved by sea to achieve significant numbers and appropriate equipment and logistics support. Ships are vulnerable to air attack from land and sea, and to attack from other seagoing warships and submarines. So, troop transports need air support and defensive ships. Land-based air power requires bases to operate from, and bases need troops and supplies to be defended. Communications and decision-making (or problems therein) are a common theme throughout the book, within and across all forces on both sides. Like the other books written by Cox, *Dark Waters, Starry Skies* distinguishes itself in the level of detail explored. And while many of the historical events have been covered in other military histories, Cox takes a uniquely broad but time-bound narrative approach instead of focusing on a single campaign or domain.

If you like your dense, highly detailed military history with a sizeable side dish of snark, this may be just the book for you. *Dark Waters, Starry Skies* offers much to the military professional, especially those interested in how lessons of the past might be used to shape decisions for the future in terms of littoral combat and integration of forces. This is a lengthy but comprehensive book relevant to military audiences and those interested in the history of the Second World War Pacific campaign and littoral combat. When read along with the other books by Cox, it offers a highly detailed account spanning the tactical to the strategic, and across all domains.

About the Author

CMDR Felicity Petrie is an Engineer Officer in the Royal Australian Navy, and is currently posted to the Sea Power Centre—Australia as the Australian War Memorial Navy Fellow. A Chartered Fellow of Engineers Australia, and a Chartered Marine Engineer with the Institute of Marine Engineers, Felicity has served over 26 years in the Royal Australian Navy. Holding postgraduate degrees in both engineering and strategic studies, Felicity is currently undertaking research into battle damage repair of forces in the maritime domain, reviewing historical case studies to inform policy. She was the lead author of the (pending publication) *ADF Maritime Power* integration-level doctrine, and her historical piece on the contribution of the Tribal-class destroyer HMAS *Arunta (I)* in the Second World War Pacific campaign can be found in the AWM *Wartime* magazine, issue 106.

China's Use of Armed Coercion: To Win Without Fighting

(New York: Routledge, Asian Security Series, 2024,
ISBN 9781032481838 286 pp.) AU\$284 (hardcover),
AU\$73.99 (ebook)

Author: James A Siebens (ed.)

Reviewed by: Gregory Raymond

Security in the Indo-Pacific region is rarely discussed without mention of China. Its military spending, expanding naval capabilities, investment in new technologies and assertiveness in the maritime domain guarantee its continued attention from journalists, policymakers and security studies scholars. So what might this book add? Among an abundance of blogs, articles and short reports, there is a need for scholarly publications that narrow their gaze to particular aspects of Chinese military matters, in order to discern enduring patterns and characteristics.

China's Use of Armed Coercion: To Win Without Fighting represents a key contribution to the literature on China's use of its military in the 21st century. In 11 chapters, with contributions from various China experts (many employed at the Defense Strategy and Planning program at the Stimson Center in the United States), this collected volume examines China's (mainly) non-lethal use of armed force along its borders. In particular, it explains how China has bluffed, intimidated, deterred, and demonstrated resolve in the domains of the South China and East China seas, at its land border with India and in its reunification efforts with Taiwan over the last two decades.

Conceptually the book uses Thomas Schelling's definition of coercion as 'compelling another political actor to either do something (compellence), or not do something (deterrence)', and assesses how China employs military force in situations short of war. As well as employing strategic concepts such as compellence, the book undertakes longitudinal analysis of how China has acted over extended periods of time, using Chinese doctrinal sources and case study examinations of particular episodes such as the well-known Hai Yang Shi You 981 oil rig incident between China and Vietnam in 2014.

Although mostly employing qualitative analysis, one chapter is quantitative in nature. 'Assessing China's Use of Armed Coercion' analyses patterns in a dataset of over 200 Chinese military and paramilitary coercive actions between 2000 and 2020, to assess how often China failed or succeeded to achieve its compellence and deterrence objectives. Particular tactical and strategic actions such as patrols, interceptions and exercises are also examined. Among the interesting findings here is that China has a very poor record in using coercion to advance its territorial aims (such as getting other states to accept its claims in the South China Sea). It further shows that 'interposition' strategies (in which Chinese maritime and air forces manoeuvre near target forces) are also highly unsuccessful. An example is China's 2013 declaration of an air defence identification zone (ADIZ) for the East China Sea, which demanded that all aircraft flying into the ADIZ declare their flight plan, identity and other data. Until today, the United States, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan have never complied. China's record in deterring other states from changing the status quo is more successful, however; for example, China has deterred Taiwan's leaders from declaring independence or interfering with its fishing fleets. The chapter also contains recommendations for US policymakers. Reminding readers that China generally avoids escalation to violence, it suggests that the US develop diverse and calibrated responses, and that it limit the employment of US military capabilities in order to avoid escalation. Instead, it ought to support allies and partners in more nuanced ways, such as through provision of maritime intelligence capabilities.

While this statistical chapter may be a challenging read for those not accustomed or inclined to follow quantitative political science or statistical analysis, there are nevertheless many other useful qualitative chapters that drill down into the dynamics of China's armed coercion

in particular theatres. Each of these offers valuable insights into China's statecraft and how it has combined its diplomacy and its use of military coercion. They also provide very useful historical background to the territorial disputes, making the book a valuable resource for military planners, policymakers and scholars wanting to quickly reacquaint themselves with the basics of a particular long-running dispute.

The chapter on India's northern land border confrontation with China's forces, 'On the Precipice: Crisis and Confrontation on the China-India Border', was one this reviewer found particularly intriguing. In accounts of border incidents beginning with a 2013 standoff at Daulat Beg Oldie, proceeding through the 2017 Doklam incident and concluding with the tragic 2020 Galwan Valley encounter in which scores of people brutally died in subzero conditions, the authors set out the objectives of each side as well as what ultimately transpired. This chapter demonstrates that, beyond the unresolved boundaries, the immediate causes of crises were frequently based on the perception of either side that the other's development of strategic infrastructure (such as roads or troop garrisons) could confer military advantage in a 'hot' conflict. It also portrays how India's desire to compartmentalise the dispute means that the leaders of these two Asian giants can agree to economic cooperation contemporaneously with tactical-level stoushes at the border. Indeed, it is now an established pattern that Chinese leaders 'coincidentally' visit New Delhi at the same time as crises manifest in India's northern reaches.

Another chapter that traces recent crises through time concerns the Indo-Pacific region's most dangerous flashpoint—the status of Taiwan. 'One China, Or Else: Military Escalation and Signaling in the Taiwan Strait' begins with an account of the 1995–1996 crisis, known as the Third Taiwan Strait Crisis, triggered when former Taiwanese president Lee Teng-hui visited Cornell University for an alumni reunion in 1995. The chapter details how the 13-month crisis unfolded through diplomatic statements, PLA missile tests and finally the 1995 election, in which Taiwanese voters ignored China's pressure and re-elected Lee. While there is yet to be a formally designated 'Fourth Taiwan Strait Crisis', the piece depicts two other candidate episodes, the 1999 'two state' crisis and the 2022 'Pelosi' crisis.

Other chapters in the book assess what has come to be known as China's 'hybrid or 'grey-zone' warfare, especially the use of paramilitary forces, the multi-domain deterrence of the US (often labelled anti-access/area

denial or A2/AD) and China's increasing involvement in military operations other than war, such as peacekeeping operations. Some of the book's overarching findings are that China shows considerable integration in its foreign policy goals, diplomatic outreach and military actions, and that China prefers to use coercive actions short of war to extract recognition of its territorial claims, while seeking positive diplomatic and trade relations in its dealings with neighbours. A final observation is sobering in the context of the continued potential for a war over Taiwan: China, like the US, has historically made a point of backing up its words with actions.

Overall, this book is compelling and necessary reading for those who wish to grapple with the subject of China's military coercion from a stance that is objective, measured and historically grounded.

About the Author

Gregory Raymond is a Senior Lecturer at the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University, researching South-East Asian defence, politics and foreign relations, with a focus on Thailand and the Mekong states. He convenes the ASEAN Australia Defence Postgraduate Scholarship Program for the Australian Department of Defence and is international relations editor for the journal *Asian Studies Review*. He is the author of *Thai Military Power: A Culture of Strategic Accommodation* (NIAS Press 2018) and the lead author of *The US–Thai Alliance: History, Memory and Current Developments* (Routledge, 2021). Before joining the ANU, Greg worked for the Australian Government in the strategic and international policy areas of the Department of Defence.

Operation Postern: The Battle to Recapture Lae from the Japanese, 1943

(Big Sky Publishing, 2023, ISBN 9781922896148, 480 pp.)
RRP AU\$32.99

Author: Ian Howie-Willis

Reviewed by: Tom Richardson

In September 1943, Allied forces seized the town of Lae on the northern New Guinea coast in an operation codenamed POSTERN. On 4 September, the 9th Australian Division went ashore east of Lae to little immediate Japanese resistance and began advancing towards their objective. The next day, the US 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment seized the airfield at Nadzab, to the north of Lae. The 7th Australian Division was then flown into the airhead, allowing it to block Japanese reinforcements from moving down the Markham Valley while also enveloping Lae itself. While initially providing stubborn resistance, the Japanese soon realised the hopelessness of their position and abandoned Lae, marching overland into the Huon Peninsula. The town fell on 15 September.

Lae's significance lay in the fact that it was the centre of the Japanese defensive scheme in New Guinea. Seizing it would not only unhinge that defence but would also allow the seizure of the Huon Peninsula and the town of Madang on New Guinea's northern coastline. This in turn would ensure Allied control of the Vitiaz Strait, isolating Rabaul, and would provide

a jumping-off point for subsequent offensives aimed at the Philippines. Operation Postern was thus a fulcrum for much of what transpired in the South-West Pacific and beyond over the following six months. Moreover, it was a classic example of a maritime strategy at work. The seizure of Lae, made possible by air, sea and land power combining in an amphibious operation, allowed the construction of airfields that gave the Allies local air superiority. This in turn created conditions in which Allied naval power could operate and project power forward in subsequent amphibious operations, aimed at areas where new airfields could be built—continuing a cycle that would take the Allies all the way to the Philippines and beyond.

For the Australian Army, Operation Postern—along with the subsequent operations in the Markham and Ramu valleys, Finisterre Ranges and Huon Peninsula—has always held a particular fascination. In the Army's current circumstances, it is easy to see why: Operation Postern was a complex integrated amphibious operation undertaken in the area where the ADF expects to operate in the future. But even before this particular moment, Operation Postern was intensively studied. Corps-sized operations planned and commanded by Australian headquarters with Australian soldiers are rare; those with the complexity of the seizure of Lae are even rarer. For all these reasons, it is a campaign worth paying attention to.

Ian Howie-Willis's *Operation Postern: The Battle to Recapture Lae from the Japanese, 1943* is a straightforward introduction to the campaign. In his narrative concerning the operation itself, Howie-Willis does not break any new ground; his principal source is the relevant volume of the Official Histories, David Dexter's *The New Guinea Offensives*, first published in 1961. Those who have read Dexter's volume (or more recent accounts of the campaign, such as Peter Dean's *MacArthur's Coalition* or Philip Bradley's *D-Day New Guinea*) will thus find few surprises here. For those new to the story of Operation Postern, however, Howie-Willis's work is a decent entry point. He writes clearly and does a fine job explaining the sequencing of the complex operation. He also does not shy away from discussing controversies such as who should have taken responsibility for the escape of a substantial part of the Japanese garrison, outlining the relevant positions in such arguments. Further, he does not forget the struggles of the ordinary soldiers involved, and he makes clear just how difficult it was to fight and live in the environment of the South-West Pacific.

Where Howie-Willis does add something new to the existing literature is in his treatment of the Papua New Guineans. For much of the period from 1965 to 1973, Howie-Willis worked as a teacher and lecturer in Papua New Guinea, first near Wewak and then in Lae. His time in the country made him aware not only of the impact of the war but also of the role of the civilian population, who—apart from shallow narratives about ‘fuzzy wuzzy angels’—had been largely ignored in accounts of the war to that point. *Operation Postern* is thus ‘in part, an attempt to include them in the story because they were always a third party to the campaigns mounted in their territory’.

As well as mentioning them throughout the book, Howie-Willis devotes an entire chapter to analysing the impact of the Japanese occupation, and subsequent fighting, on the communities around Lae and on the Huon Peninsula. Many villages were squeezed between the two sides, being under Allied air attack during the day and then having the Japanese arrive to steal food at night. Communities fled into the jungle, becoming functional refugees. Even after the fighting ended, many could not reclaim their land, as it had instead been claimed by the Allies for use as an airfield or supply dump. Howie-Willis also makes clear how crucial local civilians were for Allied logistics, and not just to work as carriers. Men from around Lae were expected to build facilities, to serve as labourers and stevedores, and to do the construction work necessary to drain the stagnant pools of water in which malaria-carrying mosquitos bred. Rebuilding their own houses or gardens often fell by the wayside.

Howie-Willis also discusses the thorny issue of collaboration. The departure of the Australians in 1942 and the arrival of the Japanese upset the old colonial order, and some Papua New Guineans looked to profit from this—or were coerced into it. When the Japanese retreated and the Australian military returned, so too did the old order, and scores were inevitably settled. Howie-Willis’s description of how factions within villages looked to exploit these changes, and enlisted the help of the Australians or Japanese to achieve their own ends, will probably sound familiar to those who served in recent operations in the Middle East. The narrative is also a powerful reminder both that civilian populations will not simply disappear in a conventional war, and that the boundary between conventional and unconventional warfare is not as firm as the names suggest.

Operation Postern is thus a valuable starting point for anyone interested in learning about its namesake, and about the war in New Guinea in all its complexity.

About the Reviewer

Dr Tom Richardson is a historian at UNSW Canberra. After completing his doctorate in 2014 he worked as a researcher on the *Official History of Australian Peacekeeping* (2015), and as a researcher on the *Official History of Australian Operations in East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan* (2016–2018). His first book, *Destroy and Build: Pacification in Phuoc Tuy, 1966–1972*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 2017; his second, *Soldiers and Bushmen: The Australian Army in South Africa 1899–1902*, will be published (also by CUP) in 2025.

The Chief of Army Essay Competition – The Chauvel Essay Prize, 2025

Since 2001, the Australian Army has periodically run an essay competition, the Chauvel Prize, named in honour of General Sir Henry George (Harry) Chauvel, GCMG, KCB, a former Chief of the General Staff and the first Australian to reach the rank of General. The prize aims to encourage writing on all aspects of land warfare and joint military operations. The prize is administered by the Australian Army Research Centre (AARC) and will be published in the Australian Army Journal (AAJ).

The theme of the 2025 Chauvel Prize is 'State of the Australian Army Profession—The Past, Present, and Future'. The release of the Defence Strategic Review (2023) and the National Defence Strategy (2024) has given a new focus and a new set of challenges for the Australian Defence Force (ADF), and the Army in particular, to prepare for. After 25 years of peacekeeping and low-intensity conflict, the Army needs to prepare for high-intensity conflict, most likely in a littoral environment. The core question is: how does the Army, as a professional body, prepare for this future? With this in mind, the three questions for this year's Chauvel Prize are:

Q1: How can the Army, as a profession, be optimised for littoral warfare operations?

Q2: How can the Army, as a profession, enable rapid mobilisation and expansion for conflict, if required?

Q3: How can the Army, as a profession, fully and effectively contribute to the ADF's Integrated Force?

The AARC is looking for original essays that answer one of these questions. A winning essay will not be focused on solutions to tactical problems, or focused only on training. It will need to consider how the Army as an organisation, and members of the Army as professionals, need to adapt to meet the challenges above.

Entry Details:

The Chauvel Prize is open to serving ADF personnel (SERCAT 3–7) and Australian public servants employed by the Department of Defence.

Essay Requirements. To be considered for the Chauvel Prize, submissions must be 5,000 words in length (+/- 10%, excluding footnotes), academically styled, original, and containing citations to relevant sources. Essays will be required to address one of the three questions listed above. The essay must be an original work that has already been published.

Due Date. Entries for the Chauvel Prize will close at midnight on Monday 24 March 2025.

Submission. Entries are to be submitted through the 'Contribute' page of the Australian Army Research Centre website: <https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/about-us/contribute/contribute-article-paper-or-publication>. Under submission type select 'Competition' and include the prefix 'Chauvel Prize' in the 'Suggested Article Title'. Any queries can be directed to the AARC through the 'Contact us' page: <https://researchcentre.army.gov.au/contact-us>.

Prizes. The winning entry will be awarded the Chauvel Prize and will receive a \$3,000.00 cash prize and an invitation to attend, at cost to the AARC, the Chief of Army History Conference or an alternative Army-run event. The runner-up will receive a \$500.00 cash prize. Entries will be judged by the AARC.

Publication. The Chauvel Prize winning and runner-up entries will be published in the AAJ. In undertaking assessment of the entries, judges will also identify submissions that are 'Commended' and these may also be published in the AAJ or on the AARC's Land Power Forum.



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