



Australian Army Journal

FOR THE PROFESSION OF ARMS



VOLUME III, NUMBER 3

SUMMER

2006

The *Australian Army Journal* is published by authority of the Chief of Army

LTGEN Peter Leahy, AO

The *Australian Army Journal* is sponsored by:

Director, Land Warfare Studies Centre

© Commonwealth of Australia 2006

This journal is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of study, research, criticism or review (as permitted under the *Copyright Act 1968*), and with standard source credit included, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission. Inquiries should be directed to the Director, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Geddes Building, Ian Campbell Road, Duntroon ACT 2600.

Contributors are urged to ensure the accuracy of the information contained in their articles; the Editorial Advisory Board accepts no responsibility for errors of fact. Permission to reprint AAJ articles will generally be given by the Editor after consultation with the author(s). Any reproduced articles must bear an acknowledgment of source.

The views expressed in the *Australian Army Journal* are the contributors' and not necessarily those of the Australian Army or the Department of Defence. The Commonwealth of Australian will not be legally responsible in contract, tort or otherwise for any statement made in this journal.

ISSN 1448-2843

The *Australian Army Journal* Staff:

Publisher: Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm McGregor

Editors: Mr Scott Hopkins, Mrs Catherine McCullagh

Editorial Advisory Board:

Dr Robert Ayson	Australian National University
Dr Stephen Badsey	Royal Military Academy Sandhurst (UK)
LTGEN John Coates, AC, MBE (Retd)	Australian Defence Force Academy
BRIG John Essex-Clark, DSM (Retd)	Royal Australian Regiment Foundation
MAJGEN John Hartley, AO (Retd)	National President, Royal United Services Institute
Mr Roger Lee	Army History Unit
Dr Peter Londey	Australian War Memorial
MAJGEN Michael O'Brien, CSC (Retd)	Royal United Services Institute (VIC)
LTGEN Laurie O'Donnell, AC (Retd)	Representative Honorary Colonel, Royal Australian Armoured Corps
A/Prof. Hugh Smith	Australian Defence Force Academy
Prof. Carl Thayer	Australian Defence College
Prof. Tom Young	Naval Postgraduate School (USA)

Design and typesetting by Mr Sam Highley

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL	5
------------------------	---

AWARDS

The 2006 Chauvel Essay Prize	9
------------------------------------	---

POINT BLANK

The Philosophy of Special Operations	11
<i>Major General Mike Hindmarsh</i>	
Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism	25
<i>Robert Pape</i>	
The Complexities of Counterterrorist Operations	39
<i>Major General Ranjit Nadkarni (Retd)</i>	

IDEAS AND ISSUES

Lessons from the Past: Getting the Army's Doctrine 'Right Enough' Today	47
<i>Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege (Retd)</i>	
Burning Bright: Defence Policy, Strategy and the Imagination	67
<i>Brendan Sargeant</i>	
Bombers and Tanks: Understanding the Myths	87
<i>David Kilcullen</i>	

CURRENT OPERATIONS

The Essential Thing: Mission Command and its Practical Application.....	109
<i>Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble</i>	
Embracing Complexity: An Adaptive Effects Approach to the Conflict in Iraq	129
<i>Lieutenant Colonel Gav Reynolds</i>	

CONTENTS

- Contemporary Employment of Infantry in a Combined-Arms
Stability and Support Operations: SECDET VIII in Baghdad 141
Lieutenant T. J. M. Robinson
- Urban Combat Service Support Operations: Observations and
Insights from Iraq 153
Colonel Andrew Condon
- New Zealand Civil-Military Affairs Experience in Afghanistan..... 163
Bryan Dorn

REVIEW ESSAY

- Generational Differences and other Marketing Myths..... 179
David Schmidtchen

RETROSPECT

- Introduction 197
- The Tank is Dead 201
Major W. W. Lennon
- A Modern Armoured Force is Vital to Australia's Defence..... 209
Major B. G. Ranking

BOOK REVIEWS

- Losing Iraq* by David L. Phillips 223
Reviewed by Major Lynda Liddy
- Failed States* by Noam Chomsky 227
Reviewed by Hugh Smith
- The Partnership* by Greg Sheridan 229
Reviewed by Bree Larkham
- My Story* by General Peter Cosgrove..... 233
Reviewed by Dr Albert Palazzo
- Strategy and History* by Colin S. Gray..... 237
Reviewed By Lieutenant Colonel Gav Reynolds
- The Cambridge History of Warfare* edited by Geoffrey Parker..... 241
Reviewed by Anthony Robinson

LETTERS AND COMMENTARY 245

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS 247

EDITORIAL

On 24 August this year, the Prime Minister announced another expansion of the size of the Australian Army. This increase, in addition to that announced earlier in the context of the Hardened and Networked Army initiative, will ultimately raise the strength of the Australian Regular Army to around 30 000 members.

Speaking on 26 September, the Prime Minister explained his Government's rationale for this decision:

The expansion of the Army will enable our troops to better sustain operations and to rotate forces so as to be better prepared for future requirements. It will ensure our soldiers are better supported and, when they get home, better rested and prepared to meet future challenges. This increase in the size of the Army is in addition to the enhanced land force capability announced last year as part of the Hardened and Networked Army initiative. It reflects this Government's fundamental reassertion of the strategic importance of the Army—and indeed of the individual soldier—in Australia's strategic culture.

As welcome as the expansion of the Army is, its implementation will present significant challenges. In his Order of the Day, in response to the Prime Minister's announcement, the Chief of the Army declared: 'The most significant challenge will be recruitment and retention.' This not a novel problem.

Examination of the records of the Military Board deliberations from the 1960s, particularly on the eve of the Vietnam War, reveals that throughout its history, the modern Australian Regular Army has constantly struggled to attract and retain quality soldiers. This has been especially so during periods of low unemployment and prosperity. Nonetheless, the recent increased Government investment in the land force is unambiguously good news for the Army. It represents a significant expression of trust in the Army, based on the exemplary efforts of our soldiers on operations in recent years.

EDITORIAL

Moreover, it vindicates painstaking intellectual efforts by Army strategic thinkers over the past two decades to convince policy makers of the enduring relevance of the Army to Australian strategic policy. It is now beyond dispute that the Government endorses Army's portrayal of the complex security environment in which tailored, multi-agency task forces may be required to operate in pursuit of Australia's national interests.

That environment is lethal, and characterised by unprecedented human and physical complexity. Only land forces proficient in the mastery of close combat through the employment of balanced combined-arms teams will be able to survive in this environment, let alone persuade, protect and reassure populations. To this end, Army is hardening and networking in order to deploy modular, combined-arms battle groups.

While the Government has grasped this reality, many commentators have not. Their wilful ignorance of the modern battle-space—shaped by the proliferation of non-state actors, radically enhanced individual lethality, and densely populated cities—has been most glaringly manifested in their hysterical campaign against the purchase of the M1A1 Abrams tank. This facile, disingenuous campaign shows no sign of abating.

For this reason, we have re-published two articles from the March 1970 edition of the *Australian Army Journal*, which debated the proposition that the tank had become extinct. They are timely in that they demonstrate that the polarities of the current debate over the tank are not new. In addition, we are also publishing an article by a former Regular Army officer, David Kilcullen, which debunks many of the myths and misconceptions about the role and ongoing relevance of tanks. It is a comprehensive rejoinder to critics of the Abrams acquisition.

We are also delighted to publish a paper by Brigadier General (Retd) Huba Wass de Czege, one of the intellectual architects of the modern United States Army and the founder and first Director of the US Army's School for Advanced Military Studies. In this article of panoramic breadth, he examines the importance of intellectual honesty and rigour in the process of aligning doctrine to the evolving nature of war and the battle-space. Although he traces the development of the seminal doctrinal publication FM 100-5 from the period immediately following the end of the Vietnam War, his reflections are of contemporary relevance.

In particular, readers will note the profound influence of a small coterie of officers with advanced education in military art and history on this vital process of intellectual renewal. Readers may be struck by the parallels between the intellectual and doctrinal ferment within the United States Army as it simultaneously sought to absorb lessons from a recent war while undertaking radical organisational and doctrinal transformation, and the current challenges facing the Australian Army.

Notwithstanding differences in degree, our Army is confronting challenges of a similar nature. It is essential that we bring the same spirit of intellectual honesty to bear upon them.

In that regard, we continue to be delighted at the number of high quality articles being submitted by serving members for publication in the *Journal*. The current edition traverses the gamut of issues from grand strategy to tactics. In particular, the thoughtful reflections of a number of officers, who have recently returned from operations in the Middle East, is evidence of a vibrant culture within the Army.

In commending the current edition to you, we wish all members, especially those deployed on operations, and their families, a happy, safe Christmas and New Year.

APOLOGY TO PROFESSOR PAUL DIBB

On page 244 of the Winter 2006 Edition of the *Australian Army Journal*, Colonel John Blaxland, in an article titled 'Defence of Australia and Forward Defence: Reconciling the Dialectic of Australian Defence Strategies' attributed certain views to Emeritus Professor Paul Dibb of the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre at the Australian National University. The author went on to assert 'This view surely borders on disloyalty.'

The *Australian Army Journal* accepts that this imputation of disloyalty to Professor Dibb caused him serious distress and had the capacity to harm his reputation. The *Australian Army Journal* unreservedly retracts this statement and apologises to Professor Dibb for the hurt this caused. He has served the nation in numerous senior positions within the Defence and Intelligence communities. His long and distinguished service is evidence of considerable loyalty to the nation. The *Australian Army Journal* unconditionally withdraws any inference to the contrary.

Malcolm McGregor
Lieutenant Colonel
Publisher, *AAJ*



Australian Army Journal

CHAUVEL ESSAY PRIZE

for contribution to the understanding of land warfare

Competition Winner 2006

Colonel Michael Krause

‘The Case for Minimum-Mass Tactics in the Australian Army’

Judged by:

LTGEN H. J. (John) Coates, AC, MBE (Retd)

LTGEN L. G. (Laurie) O'Donnell, AC (Retd)

MAJGEN J. C. (John) Hartley, AO (Retd)

MAJGEN M. P. J. (Mike) O'Brien, CSC (Retd)

BRIG J. (John) Essex-Clark, DSM (Retd)

‘The quill as a force multiplier in urban environments’

THE CHAUVEL ESSAY PRIZE



The Chief of Army has introduced the Chauvel Essay Prize to encourage writing on all aspects of land and joint military operations. The prize is named in memory of General Sir Harry Chauvel, commander of the Desert Mounted Corps during World War I and subsequently Chief of the General Staff from 1923 to 1930.

The Chauvel Essay Prize will be administered by the Director of the Land Warfare Studies Centre, with the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Australian Army Journal* forming a panel of judges. Any candidate who wishes to discuss the eligibility of a particular topic for the competition should contact the Director, Land Warfare Studies Centre. The Chauvel Prize consists of the Chauvel Light Horse Medallion and a \$1000 cash award to be presented annually by the Chief of Army. The prize will be awarded for the best essay entered in the competition and will be published in the *Australian Army Journal*.

THE CHAUVEL ESSAY PRIZE

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

1. Entry to the Chauvel Essay Prize competition is open to all serving members of the Australian Army, to defence civilians working for the Army and to currently registered university postgraduate students in the fields of strategic studies and military history.
2. Essays should be approximately 3000 words in length, with footnotes and academic citations kept to a minimum.
3. Entries will be accepted from 1 March until 1 September of each year.
4. Entries will be judged by the Editorial Advisory Board of the *Australian Army Journal*.
5. The winning author will be awarded the Chauvel Light Horse Medallion, presented by the Chief of Army, along with a \$1000 cash prize.
6. The winning essay will be published in the *Australian Army Journal*.
7. Entries should be accompanied by a covering letter providing the author's name, address and personal details. Candidates should not list on their names on essays.
8. Entries using service essay format are not acceptable for the Chauvel Prize.
9. Essays are to be the original work of the author. Collaborative or jointly written work will not be accepted.
10. Entries should be one and half spacing on A4 paper in hard copy and be accompanied by an electronic disk copy. Only IBM-compatible disks can be accepted.
11. The decision of the judges' panel shall be final.
12. Entries should be sent to:

Lieutenant Colonel Malcolm McGregor
Director, Land Warfare Studies Centre
Ian Campbell Road
Duntroon ACT 2600

POINT BLANK



THE PHILOSOPHY OF SPECIAL OPERATIONS*

MAJOR GENERAL MIKE HINDMARSH

ABSTRACT

This article, based on a speech given to the United Services Institute of the ACT, explores the evolution of special forces and challenges many of the public misconceptions about what makes special forces and special operations 'special'. The author then examines the operational record of special forces and details his philosophy behind the employment of these unique warriors.

* This article is based on a presentation delivered by Major General Mike Hindmarsh, Commander Special Operations Command, Australia, to the United Service Institute of the ACT at the Australian Defence College, Weston Creek, on 9 August 2006.

INTRODUCTION

The world of special operations exerts a growing fascination over many within and outside the realm of defence. Certainly, the increased literary focus on special operations illustrates this. There has probably been more written about special forces in the recent past than just about any other military topic. Perhaps that is understandable, given the current international preoccupation with the war on terror and the broad perception that special forces are tailor-made for the terrorist environment.

Undoubtedly, the special forces of modern literature are glamorised and their role overly sensationalised. Their portrayal is often inaccurate and, not to put too fine a point on it, a lot of what has been written is rubbish. In some ways this is unsurprising. Much of the inaccuracy within popular literature inevitably results from the fact that those who wish to write on this topic simply don't have access to the sort of material that would guarantee the accuracy of their books and, given the need to preserve the operational security and secrecy of Australian Special Operations Command, such access is unlikely to be granted in the future. So, to a certain extent, the special operations community itself must bear a portion of the blame for this mediocrity on the bookshelves. Less understandable is the fact that some of the current literary sensationalism has been penned by ex-special forces soldiers who have chosen to jump on the book-writing bandwagon. While this is not as frequent in Australia, it occurs fairly regularly in the United Kingdom and is becoming increasingly common in the United States. These literary 'tell-alls' certainly create some angst within the special forces community.

Compounding this current abundance of misinformation is the recent tendency for the portrayal of elite units to be more about poetry and less about dispassionate research and objective analysis into what special operations is really about. This tendency echoes the bent of the movie industry where fantasy will always outsell reality. The resultant effect is that many of the books published on special operations in the last few years bear a closer resemblance to glamorised fiction than fact and this certainly occurs at the expense of reality.

Given that I have a vested interest in the portrayal of special forces, I tend to become rather frustrated with this glamorised approach as it inspires a popular wisdom that special operations is about something it's not. There are many widespread misconceptions that are, at best, unhelpful and, at worst,

... many of the books
published on special
operations in the last
few years bear a closer
resemblance to glamorised
fiction than fact ...

potentially damaging, particularly if they influence the way special forces are employed. Unhappily, some of those misconceptions reside within Defence as well as in the public mindset, and it is these I would like to address. I intend also to provide some insights into the role of special forces, my philosophy on their application, and comment on some of the weaknesses and pitfalls in the employment of special forces.

WHAT MAKES THEM SPECIAL

What we mean by ‘special’ in the military context? Let me dispel the first misconception: ‘special’ does not mean necessarily any individual or unit superiority in the warrior sense. What special forces soldiers do at the sharp end is very similar to what conventional soldiers do. The difference is much less in the comparative qualities of the soldiers than in the way they are deployed. The way that special forces are utilised makes them different, makes them special, makes them élite; special forces are different in that they possess some additional skills which enable them to enter the battlespace in a different way, in an unconventional fashion. When special forces deploy, they do so with the intent of surprising the enemy and remaining invisible to him. To a certain extent this is the purpose of special forces—to be different. Whoever commands them, whether it is the government or an operational commander, will expect them to provide an alternative option which will not be available with the use of conventional forces alone. Notwithstanding the importance of having excellent soldiers—and Australian soldiers are among the best in the world—it is not so much the soldiers themselves but the context in which they are used that determines whether an organisation is special or élite.

I believe that special forces can be divided broadly into two types: what I would call the ‘light infantry élite’, and the unconventional or irregular special forces. The first category, the light infantry élite, could include such contemporary units as the British and French parachute battalions, the US Rangers, the Israeli Golani Commando Brigade and our own commando regiments. These units are the modern-day successors to Alexander the Great’s Companions, King Harold’s Huscarls, Napoleon’s Old Guard,

What special forces soldiers do at the sharp end is very similar to what conventional soldiers do.

... it is not so much the soldiers themselves but the context in which they are used that determines whether an organisation is special or élite.

and Nathan Bedford Forrest's famous—or infamous—Confederate cavalry of the American Civil War. They resemble conventional units in terms of size, organisation and often also in general *modus operandi* in that they are usually used overtly and within their regimental frameworks. They are regarded as élite or special because they perform some of the roles and possess some associated skills and the leadership mindset that encourages their introduction into battle in an unconventional fashion, unexpected by the enemy and not generally within the prescribed roles or capability of their conventional counterparts. Their strength therefore lies more in their ability to achieve surprise through an indirect or unorthodox approach than in any individual warfighting superiority. It was not the soldiers themselves who made Nathan Bedford Forrest's cavalry so especially effective; rather it was the manner in which he employed them in outflanking manoeuvres, and indirect and unexpected forays to the flanks and rear of the Union army. Forrest's troopers possessed outstanding horsemanship skills, but so did many other cavalry units; what they also possessed which set them apart was an unconventional mindset imbued by an eccentric commander who instinctively sought to attack the enemy where he least expected. The strong influence of unorthodox and inspiring leadership on the successful execution of special operations should not be underestimated. Without the eccentricities of the David Stirlings, the Orde Wingates, the Otto Skorzenys or T. E. Lawrences, the units they created would not have achieved the legendary and élite status they did. Many of the units we see today would not have been established nor gained the reputations they bear had it not been for the eccentricities of their founders.

The second category of special forces, the unconventional or irregular types, may also be deemed 'special' due to the manner in which they are employed, rather than as a result of individual superiority. Indeed, the ability of these units to survive on the battlefield depends on their being employed unconventionally—they are too small to be employed otherwise. Unlike their more conventional light infantry élite brethren, these forces are characterised by versatile clandestine techniques and an ability to operate in very small teams independently and undetected for long periods in hostile zones relying heavily on cunning, adaptability and sleight of hand. They have no option but to operate unconventionally. The American Revolution provides an early example of the contemporary irregular. The American colonists, many of them veterans of campaigns against the Indians, formed loosely knit bands of riflemen that practised what was at the time highly

The strong influence of
unorthodox and inspiring
leadership on the successful
execution of special
operations should not be
underestimated.

unorthodox shoot-and-scoot (hit-and-run) tactics against the conventionally trained British Redcoats. Their historical descendants included the Spanish Portuguese guerrillas of Wellington's Iberian campaign, the Boer commandos of the Boer War and T.E. Lawrence's Arab irregulars of World War I.

It was during World War II, however, that the concept of the dedicated unconventional special forces unit reached maturity with the appearance of the more formally organised and trained units deliberately created and tasked to take the fight to the enemy in an unconventional sense. These included the British Long Range Desert Group, the Special Air Service, the Special Boat Section, Popski's Private Army, the US/Canadian Special Service Force, Nazi Germany's Brandenburgers, the Allied Jedburghs and the Australian Services Reconnaissance Department—more commonly known as 'Special Operations Australia' or 'Z Special'. These units were the forerunners of the plethora of forces we see today such as the Special Air Service (SAS) regiments, the US Special Forces, the Russian Spetsnaz, Germany's GSG 9, Indonesia's Kopassus, Canada's JTF 2, France's GIGN, and Israel's Sayeret Matkal. In fact, these days there are few nations that boast a decent army which does not list a special forces organisation on its order of battle.

... there are few nations
that boast a decent army
which does not list a
special forces organisation
on its order of battle.

EMPLOYING SPECIAL FORCES

This post-World War II special forces phenomenon is worthy of a closer look. That there are many more examples of special forces involvement in low-intensity, counterinsurgency-inspired conflict than in high-intensity conventional operations reflects how prolific insurgency-inspired conflict has become since 1945. The growth of this type of conflict has culminated in what we refer to today as the 'Global War on Terror'.

In the early postwar years, while many of the Western world's conventional forces were gridlocked in the Cold War embrace, the special forces, which were not bound by such constraints, were free to engage in the numerous 'hot' regional insurgent conflicts which leached from the decolonisation process. These regional insurgencies were the catalyst for the re-creation of World War II special forces and their organisations in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, most contemporary unconventional units owe their existence and current reputation and status to the postwar glut of insurgency-inspired warfare and stand testament to the fact that countering insurgencies demands forces which are unconventional in nature. Since their strategy rarely sees

guerrilla fighters closing with an enemy in conventional fashion, militarily, guerrillas and insurgents are only vulnerable when met by forces that employ similar tactics. Moreover, since winning such conflicts relies as much on winning popular support as on winning battles, insurgents are also susceptible to the coherent, multi-pronged strategy which gives equal weighting to 'hearts and minds' as it does to offensive operations. The strength of unconventional forces is that they are well structured and trained to win both the tactical fight and the strategic hearts and minds battle, albeit only when the overall strategy permits them to do so.

Post-World War II special forces played leading roles in counterinsurgency operations in Indochina, Algeria, Malaya, Borneo, Oman and Rhodesia and, of course, more recently in the Global War on Terror. Clearly, the modern phenomenon of international terrorism existed long before the attacks of 11 September 2001. Highly publicised hostage recovery successes at Entebbe, Mogadishu and Prince's Gate in the 1970s and 1980s gave special forces a new place in the public imagination. The British SAS in particular earned a high public profile as a result of the successful operation at the Prince's Gate.

But what of the utility of special forces? It is ironic that when special forces units have suffered failure on operations in the past, rather than undermining their status, this has often served to strengthen their reputation and deepen their mystique. Comparable failure by conventional units is normally greeted rather less objectively. Heroic defeat, it seems, is a useful addition to the CV of an élite force. Leonidas and his three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae, the French Foreign Legion in Cameroon, the British airborne troops at Arnhem, the British and Canadian commandos at Dieppe, the French Paras at Dien Bien Phu, the Australian Z Special operatives on Operation *Rimau*, and the US Rangers at Mogadishu all consolidated and in some cases established their élite reputation by being involved in costly defeats or failures. The image of the heroic underdog going down fighting against overwhelming odds evokes respect and admiration. I suspect, however, that this sympathetic approach may conceal a rather less flattering historical performance by these forces. Certainly the application of special forces does not represent a panacea (that this is often assumed represents another misconception); moreover, there are significant costs attached to maintaining these forces.

The strength of
unconventional forces is
that they are well structured
and trained to win both the
tactical fight and the strategic
hearts and minds battle ...

The performance of special forces since 1945 has certainly been patchy. There have been failures in Indochina, Vietnam, Iran, Malta and Somalia and counterbalancing successes in Malaya, Borneo, Oman, the Falklands, Entebbe, Prince's Gate and the Gulf Wars. This operational inconsistency reflects both the inherent difficulty of such operations and the reality that some nations are actually better at special operations than others. National character and culture are contributing factors which are frequently manifested in military outcomes. The French, for example, with their natural passion, spontaneity and impatience have been very good at short-notice intervention or response operations as exemplified by numerous rapid and successful forays into their African territories including operations in Kinshasa and Zaire. However, the French are not as suited to protracted counterinsurgency tasks, a fact borne out by their experiences in Indochina and Algeria. The methodical and patient British, on the other hand, have had more success in the world of the drawn-out counterinsurgency as exemplified in Malaya and Oman and, to a lesser extent, Northern Ireland. Australians, reflecting their practical, pragmatic and both 'fair go' and 'have a go' culture have proven relatively proficient across the operational spectrum. America, with a culture shaped by wealth, size, power and, to a certain extent insularism has, in the past, tended to depend heavily on technical prowess and the application of irresistible and multidimensional force and less on subtlety, simplicity, cultural awareness and sensitivity—or 'hearts and minds'. This approach will evolve, however, as the US's extensive experiences in the Global War on Terror effectively refine and develop its forces' capabilities along traditional counterinsurgency lines while maintaining their potent direct action capability.

Aside from these distinctive cultural influences, there are a number of pitfalls set to trap those who would employ special forces in support of conventional operations. First, experience over the years has shown that the most successful use of unconventional forces, particularly light infantry élites, tends to occur early in the campaign when their techniques are not widely known and surprise is therefore easier to achieve. The most successful employment of airborne forces in World War II, for example, occurred at the start of the war in 1939 when the Germans seized the key Belgian fortress at Eben Emael using glider-borne

The performance of special forces since 1945 has certainly been patchy.

... the most successful use of unconventional forces, particularly light infantry élites, tends to occur early in the campaign ...

troops. A novelty at that time, this tactic achieved total surprise. Subsequent attempts by both sides throughout the war to replicate this success ended largely in failure as costly airborne operations in Crete (Axis), Sicily and Holland (Allied) attest. As Hitler himself said, 'Crete proved that the days of the parachute troops are over. The parachute arm is one which relies entirely on surprise. In the meantime the surprise factor has exhausted itself.'¹ The lesson then is to ensure that the 'ace' is thrown only when it will prove decisive—it may not be as effective on a subsequent occasion.

Another factor worth noting is the tendency for unconventional forces to increase in size as defence policymakers seek to exploit their apparent utility by growing more of them. Paradoxically, there will be a point where excessive expansion will lead to a reduction in unconventional capability, as well as providing an increased potential for misuse.

In a warfighting setting, the larger the unconventional force—particularly the light infantry type—the more inclined commanders will be to use its members as conventional troops, a task for which they are ill-equipped and trained. There are a number of historical examples of this, particularly with airborne and commando formations in World War II at Dieppe and Arnhem. In addition, overly large unconventional forces run the risk of losing those characteristics of agility and speed of action which provide them the edge and make them 'special'.

In reality, any nation's defence force will only be able to grow and resource a finite number of special forces units and this factor makes the contemporary attraction of an organisational convergence between conventional and unconventional capabilities problematic and, indeed, unwise. To aspire to a completely 'special' defence force that seeks to incorporate attributes of elite forces across the board would be prohibitively expensive in training, equipment and quality manpower and would be impossible to fully achieve. Other countries that have followed this aspiration have quickly learned a hard lesson.

In addition to these potential drawbacks, there are other subtle costs associated with the maintenance of special forces. Military penalties can include the drain of quality manpower from conventional forces; envy, resentment and demoralisation within conventional forces if they feel that the special forces are being favoured; and the potential corruption of the traditional command and control apparatus by the tendency for unconventional forces to have direct links to the highest levels of command.

... there will be a point where excessive expansion will lead to a reduction in unconventional capability ...

Some of that perception and associated resentment certainly exists today. There are many in the conventional army, particularly in the cavalry units, who would argue that they should have been deployed to the Iraqi western desert during the Gulf War. They argue, with some justification, that what the special forces did in the western desert in 2003 could and should have been done by them. In hindsight, they could certainly have done the job. Yet my response and argument to them is what it has always been: they are not agile and responsive enough to have achieved the objective given the time-frame involved. There is no denying that special forces possess a keen advantage in terms of organisational agility and their ability to respond very quickly to political requirements.

... special forces possess
a keen advantage in
terms of organisational
agility and their ability to
respond very quickly to
political requirements.

Field Marshal Bill Slim, reflecting on his World War II experiences with special forces in Burma, observed somewhat caustically, 'The trouble was that each was controlled from some distant headquarters of its own, and such was the secrecy and mutual suspicion of their operations that they sometimes acted in close proximity to our troops without the knowledge of any commander in the field, with a complete lack of coordination among themselves, and in dangerous ignorance of local tactical developments.'² He added, 'They [the special forces] lowered the quality of the rest of the Army, especially of the infantry, not only by skimming the crème off it, but by encouraging the idea that certain of the normal operations of war were so difficult that only specially equipped corps d'élite could be expected to undertake them.'³

More insidious is the damage special forces can cause to sound civil-military relationships by becoming overly powerful and politically influential. By subverting the chain of command, courting favour with politicians and distorting perceptions of what can be achieved, they can undermine the authority of the civil power, as the French Paras did so successfully in Algeria in 1957. Indeed, the Algerian experience prompted one commentator to note, 'The paratroopers were no longer considered as just élite soldiers... Their organisation, their motley garb, the fact that the 10th Para Division put an entire city under its power, the whole literature that was created around these men made them symbols of force and violence.'⁴ This is an extreme example, of course, but there are a number of other instances of national leaders nurturing and favouring élite units to a point where it was perhaps unhealthy for the whole defence force. Churchill, early in World War II, created the British Commandos to take the fight to Hitler, and insisted on their receiving a level of priority. He gave them so much priority that it hampered the development of

conventional forces. John F. Kennedy's pet organisation was the US Special Forces, which he patronised to the point where he intervened personally to secure them the right to wear the green beret—headgear until then not officially sanctioned in Army regulations. Despite advice to the contrary, he also directed that they be deployed to Vietnam in 1961 at a time when the introduction of combat troops was considered provocative. Margaret Thatcher had a direct and close relationship with the British SAS and, to this day, there exists a tendency for political leaders in Britain to turn to special forces for solutions, often running counter to the advice of their defence chiefs. The popular catchcry 'any doubt, any bombs; we'll send in the SAS', originated with Mrs Thatcher.

Thus there are pitfalls in the employment of special forces of which commanders need to be aware. The fact is they are just another tool—albeit multifunctional—which, like any tool, has its application in some areas but not in others, and certainly not in all. Moreover, the notion that such forces are populated by manifestly superior soldiers who will always prevail is complete nonsense and does them and the wider conventional community a disservice. After all, most special forces soldiers were conventional soldiers once, and learnt their trade as conventional soldiers. There are, in fact, far more similarities between the two than differences.

... 'any doubt, any
bombs; we'll send
in the SAS' ...

PHILOSOPHY OF SPECIAL FORCES

Let me now touch briefly on my philosophy for the employment of special forces, which I will disaggregate into a number of key tenets. Simply put, to be effective, special forces must be able to provide economy of force; they must offer expanded or alternative options; they must be able to function in the asymmetric environment; they must be organisationally agile; and they must be comfortable in a cooperative joint, combined and interagency framework. I intend to look at each of these in turn.

Economy of force is what I would refer to as the 'hydraulics' of unconventional operations. That is, for relatively minor tactical effort or expenditure, the operational, strategic or indeed political effect or dividends can be substantial. This hydraulic effect can be harnessed in a number of ways. Governments can choose to use special forces to send strategic messages of intent without becoming decisively or heavily committed in a conventional sense. The Israelis have frequently and effectively used this technique with their neighbours. The United Kingdom's very visible and openly publicised deployment of the SAS into Northern Ireland in the 1970s was undertaken to send a stark message of intent which proved highly effective. The message can also

be meant for partners as well as opponents. For example, Australia's commitment of an SAS combat search and rescue force to Kuwait in 1998 showed support for America's increasingly tough stance against Saddam Hussein. At the time this was a relatively small but strategically important contribution (bringing downed pilots home was a strategic imperative) which enabled the government to quickly demonstrate commitment to the coalition without overextending itself; thus, for little cost there can be a significant domestic and international political dividend. Again, the deployment of special forces to Mogadishu demanded little effort from a political perspective; what Australia provided was only a small contingent, but this deployment had quite a strategic impact. The hydraulic effect of this deployment lay in sending the message to America: 'we're with you', and reminding them that we are strategically quite significant. This is the essence of the term 'economy of force'. Deploying special forces without achieving this economy of force—achieving merely an outcome that matches the effort they invest without a commensurate hydraulic effect—points to the fact that they are being misemployed. Perhaps, in these circumstances, they should not be used at all.

Of course, the hydraulic effect is most obvious in the disproportionate impact special operations can have on the battlefield itself. Small, agile forces used unconventionally can tie up large numbers of conventional forces; we see this every day in Iraq with the insurgents. The same was true in Timor during World War II when a couple of hundred Independent Company soldiers operating unconventionally tied up over 20 000 Japanese soldiers for over a year. This is true economy of force and, philosophically, it should always be an objective when applying special forces.

Alternative options refer to those expanded options the government expects its special forces to be able to provide. Indeed, this expectation is not restricted to the government, but is shared by the operational commander. When Peter Cosgrove commanded the joint task force in East Timor, for example, he expected his special forces organisation there to enhance or expand his options. Had it lacked the ability to do so, the presence of a special forces element in Timor at the time would have been open to question. Essentially, this 'all or nothing' commitment of special forces is not always an option, particularly where the 'all' refers to a major conventional contribution. Such an option may not be politically tenable. Yet doing nothing may also not be politically tenable. The beauty of special forces is that their employment provides additional options which fall neatly outside the 'all' or 'nothing' scenario.

Governments can choose to use special forces to send strategic messages of intent without becoming decisively or heavily committed in a conventional sense.

Because of their discretion and precision, special forces can provide viable options which may be attractive to government under a broad variety of circumstances. This is what makes them particularly attractive in this current Global War on Terror.

In essence, special forces allow decision-makers the flexibility to apply and tailor a response to encompass a wider range of options across the entire spectrum of operations. This spectrum includes peacetime and, in a conflict that falls short of war, phases of operations for which conventional forces may be unsuited. The lower signature and greater discretion, precision and responsiveness that special forces can provide allows their application in more politically and strategically sensitive and urgent circumstances or environments and reduces the risk of escalation associated with larger, more visible force deployments. This makes special forces particularly relevant to the counter-terrorist environment, both domestically and globally.

Asymmetry. Special forces are an asymmetric tool. They thrive in the asymmetric environment, in the 'David and Goliath' arena, where the smaller 'Davids' confront the 'Goliaths' using their advantages of agility and sleight of hand to outwit and unbalance their larger and more cumbersome conventional adversaries. The value of special forces is that they can comfortably confront both the 'Goliaths' and the 'Davids'. Indeed, the contemporary trend is for the 'Davids' to be the main adversary for special forces; these are the fleeting insurgents who threaten legitimate governments. Special forces possess the attributes and capacity to mix it in this ambiguous operational environment. Unlike conventional forces, special forces can apply insurgent techniques against insurgents, those characteristics that T.E. Lawrence referred to as 'intangibility', as being able to 'drift like a vapour', to venture inside the minds of their adversaries. Philosophically, it takes an insurgent to know an insurgent and special forces, as exponents of irregular warfare, understand counterinsurgency better than most. As Lawrence once commented, 'irregular warfare is far more intellectual than a bayonet charge'.⁵

Organisational agility. One of the greatest attractions of special forces for their military and political masters is their ability to very quickly 'tailor to task'—rapidly deploy to and operate effectively—in virtually any situation or environment. In terms of crisis response, this is

... special forces can provide viable options which may be attractive to government under a broad variety of circumstances.

Special forces possess the attributes and capacity to mix it in this ambiguous operational environment.

a particularly valuable attribute. This organisational agility has been demonstrated regularly over the past few years with special forces being able to provide rapid and tailored responses of differing types and compositions to a range of domestic, regional and global commitments and to do so in a manner that suits the context, whether it be warfighting, peace support operations or domestic interagency support.

Joint, combined, interagency. There is a common misconception that special forces soldiers, due to their niche focus, are divorced from and ignorant of the wider realities of higher defence strategic workings and understanding. This unfortunately is often manifested negatively in their career management as they are frequently labelled professionally narrow. In reality, there is probably no other warfighting organisation that has, at all rank levels, such a high degree of interaction at the joint, combined and interagency level. Special forces have a strong legacy of planning and executing joint and combined missions across a wide spectrum of conflict types. In more recent years this has expanded into the inter-agency arena. They now operate routinely in close conjunction with other civil government agencies and international organisations. The special forces ability to function comfortably in and across the multidimensional military and civilian environment is a unique characteristic that underpins their utility.

... there is probably no other warfighting organisation that has, at all rank levels, such a high degree of interaction at the joint, combined and interagency level.

CONCLUSION

Special forces indisputably play an important role in modern warfare and will continue to do so. Their inherent agility, versatility, adaptability and responsiveness will ensure that, in an era when the enemy is a guerrilla one day, a tank column the next, and a terrorist the day after, they will remain a relevant and critical capability. In Australia's circumstances, special operations now often form the centrepiece of strategic planning and operational design in response to security threats and in support of operations undertaken to further national interests.

My final word is that, contrary to the ideals of popular literature, special operations are not about super soldiers always 'winning the war'. Rather, to employ a well-worn cliché, special forces soldiers are ordinary people doing extraordinary jobs. It is their role that makes them 'special'.

ENDNOTES

- 1 E. Blandford, *Green Devils- Red Devils: Untold Tales of the Airborne in World War II*, Leo Cooper, London, 1993, p. 105.
- 2 W. Slim, *Defeat Into Victory*, Landsborough Publishing Ltd, London, 1956, p. 446.
- 3 Ibid, p. 445
- 4 P. Turnbull, 'The French Foreign Legion: 1945–1981', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute for Defence Studies*, June 1982, p. 51.
- 5 T. E. Lawrence, 'The Evolution of a Revolt', *The Army Quarterly Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, October 1920, accessible from <<http://www-cgsc.army.mil/carl/resources/-csi/Lawrence/lawrence.asp>>

THE AUTHOR

Major General Mike Hindmarsh graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon into the Royal Australian Infantry Corps in 1978. Major General Hindmarsh saw regimental service as a Platoon Commander with 2/4 Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment and as a Troop Commander, Squadron Commander and Commanding Officer with SASR. As CO SASR, Major General Hindmarsh commanded the ANZAC Special Operations Force detachment to OPERATION POLLARD in Kuwait in 1998. More recently, he commanded the Special Operations Component on OPERATION BASTILLE/FALCONER in the war against Iraq.

POINT BLANK



DYING TO WIN

THE STRATEGIC LOGIC OF SUICIDE TERRORISM

ROBERT PAPE*

ABSTRACT

This article is based on an address to the Australian Defence Force Academy by Robert Pape, Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago. In his address, Dr Pape presents the results of his comprehensive demographic research into the phenomenon of suicide terrorism. Many of his research findings challenge key assumptions and prevailing conventional wisdom on the origins of suicide bombers and their strategic goals. In particular, Pape concludes that Islamic fundamentalism does not provide the primary motivation for the majority of suicide bombers, many of whom have secular identities and aspirations. Accordingly, suicide terrorism constitutes a coherent campaign of calibrated violence rather than the manifestation of irrational religious fervour.

* The *Australian Army Journal* is grateful to Professor Pape and the Australian Defence Force Academy for permission to publish this edited version of his address, delivered on 5 September 2006 and sponsored by the School of Humanities and Social Sciences. All quotes and references are available in Dr Pape's book on this subject, *Dying to Win*, published by Scribe, Carlton North, Victoria, 2005.

SUICIDE TERRORISM

While there is no doubt that the incidence of suicide terrorism has increased worldwide over recent years, there is profound confusion as to why. Many of these attacks, including those in the United States (US) on 11 September 2001 (referred to simply as '9/11'), have been perpetrated by Muslim suicide terrorists. For many observers, this evinces the presumption that Islamic fundamentalism must be the central factor. This presumption often fuels the belief that future 9/11s or—closer to Australia—the more recent Bali bombings can be avoided only by the wholesale transformation of Muslim societies. The need for such a transformation was a core reason for the invasion of Iraq by US-led forces in 2003. However, this presumed connection between suicide terrorism and Islamic fundamentalism is largely misleading and, what is worse, it may be encouraging domestic and foreign policies likely to exacerbate this terrorist threat.

Over the last few years the Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism has collated the first complete database of every suicide terrorist attack around the world from 1980 to the end of 2005. In that period, there were 315 completed suicide terrorist attacks by 462 suicide bombers. That the figures amount to more dead terrorists than there were attacks is an indication of the presence of team attacks. This database is the first of its kind: no academic, think tank or government has collated such a dossier. Even the US Government did not begin to track suicide terrorism until the fall of 2000.¹ Interestingly, funding and support for the Chicago Project comes from the Defense Threat Reduction Agency within the Department of Defense—despite the fact that some of the project's findings significantly conflict with the Bush Administration's foreign policy.²

The Chicago Project on Suicide Terrorism collects information about suicide terrorist attacks in the key native languages associated with the phenomenon—Arabic, Hebrew, Tamil and Russian—as well as English. The project examines all available open source information from the suicide terrorist groups themselves, from target countries, from the media, and directed international research. Suicide terrorist groups proudly advertise their activities in their local communities. In Sri Lanka a glossy album is dedicated to the Black Tigers—the suicide arm of the Tamil Tigers—and it features pictures, names, birthplaces, ages and other socio-economic data. This is not a glorification of body parts; it is a dossier of key information on the suicide attackers themselves—and it is a published volume. The Chicago Project

...this presumed
connection between
suicide terrorism and
Islamic fundamentalism
is largely misleading ...

also has such information from Islamic groups including Hamas and Hezbollah; this is a project that breaks through the language barrier, providing a great deal of important new information on suicide terrorists.

The collated data shows that suicide terrorism and ordinary terrorism have been steadily moving in opposite directions. From the mid-1980s to 2001, terrorist incidents of all types declined by almost half. At the same time, the little bit of terrorism that manifested itself as suicide terrorism climbed at an alarming rate from an average of three attacks around the world per year in the 1980s to almost 50 in 2002 and 2003. In the war-ravaged nation of Iraq, 2005 set a new world record. These alarming facts shed some light on why there was such a failure of imagination prior to 11 September 2001. Since the total incidence of terrorism was plummeting exponentially—and no-one was tracking suicide terrorism anyway—the world was blind to the fact that the threat was actually growing. What the project's data also shows is that Islamic fundamentalism is not as closely associated with suicide terrorism as is widely believed. The leading agent of suicide terrorism is the Tamil Tigers, which is not an Islamic group—these are Marxists, a particularly secular group. In suicide terms, the Tamil Tigers lead the way—they have committed more suicide terrorist attacks than either Hamas or Islamic Jihad. Furthermore, at least a third of all Muslim suicide attacks are carried out by secular groups such as the PKK in Turkey, another Marxist group.³

Overall, at least 50 per cent of suicide attacks analysed by the project were not associated with Islamic fundamentalism.

The Tamil Tigers conduct suicide terrorist attacks in the classic sense. Most suicide terrorist groups make martyr videos—the Tigers go further. They like to videotape the attacks themselves and use the films for recruiting and training in the Tamil capital of Jaffna—a practice that has helped expose their *modus operandi*. A case in point is the suicide assassination of Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991, which was filmed by the Tamil Tigers. In this case, however, the Tamil cameraman got so close that he was killed in the blast and the Indian Government was able to retrieve two frames from the film. Those frames showed Dhanu, the suicide bomber, holding the garland she presented to Gandhi; in the very next second everyone in that picture is killed as Dhanu triggers an explosive vest under her garment. Dhanu was the first bomber to use the suicide vest. The method that we tend to associate with the Palestinians came, in fact, from the Tamil Tigers.

The leading agent of
suicide terrorism is the
Tamil Tigers, which is
not an Islamic group ...

The analysis of suicide terrorism is most effectively focused at three levels:

- why suicide terrorism makes sense for terrorist organisations—its strategic logic
- why it gains mass support—its social logic
- what motivates the suicide bomber—its individual logic

Each logical level is significant because suicide terrorism is conducted by non-state actors lacking the coercive apparatus of a state to compel individuals or the surrounding communities to support their operations. The Chicago Project devotes equal weight to each of these levels. This article focuses on the strategic logic primarily because this is the logic that unifies the others. The article also describes the demographic profile of suicide terrorists based on the project's analysis of 462 such bombers—the first accurate account of the bomber's demographic profile.

THE GOALS OF SUICIDE TERRORISTS

Rather than religion or any other ideology, what almost all suicide terrorist attacks since 1980 have in common is a specific strategic political objective that seeks to compel a democratic state to withdraw combat forces. Combat forces involve serious armaments such as tanks, fighter aircraft and armoured vehicles—not advisers with side arms. Terrorists almost always seek a withdrawal from territory that they consider to be their homeland or which is greatly prized. From Lebanon, the West Bank, Sri Lanka, Kashmir, and Chechnya, every suicide terrorist campaign since 1980 has been waged by terrorist groups whose principal goal has been to establish self-determination. Religion is rarely the root cause, although religion may be used as a recruiting tool in the service of the broader strategic objective.

Three general patterns in the data support these conclusions. The first pattern involves the timing of suicide terrorist attacks. Suicide terrorism rarely occurs as an isolated, random or scattered phenomenon, as it would if it were the product of irrational individuals or religious fanatics. Instead, the attacks tend to occur in clusters that bear the hallmarks of orchestrated campaigns. Specifically, 301 of the 315 attacks occurred in coherent, organised, strategic campaigns that terrorist groups designed for political, mainly secular, purposes. These patterns accounted for 95 per cent of suicide terrorist attacks; only 5 per cent were random or isolated attacks.

... every suicide terrorist campaign since 1980 has been waged by terrorist groups whose principal goal has been to establish self-determination.

Second, all the campaigns since 1980—and there have been 18, with 5 ongoing—were directed at gaining control of territory that the terrorists prized. This has been the central objective of every suicide terrorist campaign. In June 1982, Hezbollah did not exist. In June 1982, Israel invaded southern Lebanon with 78 000 combat soldiers and 3 000 tanks and armoured vehicles, and one month later Hezbollah was born.

The third pattern concerns target selection. If suicide terrorism is a calculated coercive strategy, one might expect that this strategy would be applied to target states viewed as especially vulnerable to coercive punishment. Democracies are widely viewed as soft, and the target society of every suicide terrorist campaign has been a democracy. The PKK in Turkey is a good example. In the 1980s and 1990s, the Turks were at least moderately brutal towards the Kurds. In the 1990s, the PKK used suicide attacks against the Turkish Government. However, during that exact period and just a few miles away in Iraq, Saddam Hussein was far more brutal toward Iraq's Kurds and neither the PKK nor any other terrorist group ever thought to use suicide terrorism against Saddam.

Now that we know more about the strategic logic of suicide terrorism, the reasons for this are abundantly clear. There are few who believe that killing hundreds or even thousands of Iraqi civilians would have caused Saddam to change his mind.

Thus, the timing, goals and societies targeted by suicide terrorism suggest that this is a coherent strategy designed to cause democratic states to abandon control of territory prized by terrorists. Since al-Qaeda suicide attacks began in 1995, the organisation's strategic logic has been to compel Western combat forces to leave the Arabian Peninsula. This is a logic that it has been pursuing with increasing vigour since 9/11, carrying out over 17 suicide and other terrorist attacks, killing over 700 people—more attacks and more victims than all the years before 9/11 combined. While a plethora of counter-terrorism efforts should logically have weakened the group—and thousands have been killed and captured—by the measure that counts, the ability of the groups to carry out attacks that can kill, al-Qaeda is stronger today than ever.

Since al-Qaeda suicide attacks began in 1995, the organisation's strategic logic has been to compel Western combat forces to leave the Arabian Peninsula.

AL-QAEDA AND SUICIDE TERROR

The Chicago Project is the first to compile a complete dossier on al-Qaeda suicide attackers from 1995 to early 2004. During that period there were 71 individuals who killed themselves in carrying out these attacks. Of those 71, we know the names, nationality and other socio-economic data for 67. The largest number—34—comes from Saudi Arabia, and the majority are from the Persian Gulf, where the United States first began to station combat forces in 1990. It is important to underscore the fact that 1990 was a watershed year in the US deployment to the Persian Gulf. Before 1990, the West had some advisers with side arms in the Persian Gulf, but combat forces had not been stationed in this part of the world since the Second World War.

Al-Qaeda suicide
attackers ... come
from a Sunni country
with an American
combat presence ...

Which countries, then, do not provide recruits for al-Qaeda suicide attacks? Suicide attackers do not tend to come from:

- Iran. Iran has an Islamic fundamentalist population with over 70 million people, three times the size of Saudi Arabia.
- Sudan. An Islamic fundamentalist population about the same size as Saudi Arabia and with a brand of Islamic fundamentalism so congenial to bin Laden he chose to live there for three years in the 1990s.
- Pakistan. The largest Islamic fundamentalist country on the planet with 149 million people.

If this was a threat driven by Islamic fundamentalism, we should be seeing suicide attackers pouring out of Iran, Sudan and Pakistan—but this is not the pattern. It is crucial to see that the presence of Western combat forces on the Arabian Peninsula is bin Laden's best recruiting tool. With only one exception, al-Qaeda suicide attackers from 1995 to 2004 came from a handful of Sunni-majority countries. Al-Qaeda suicide attackers are over ten times more likely to come from a Sunni country with an American combat presence than a Sunni country without such a presence.

In light of the above, the 7 July 2005 (known as '7/7') London bombings are worth closer scrutiny. Four points about these suicide attacks emerge:

- The al-Qaeda group that claimed responsibility—just two hours after the attacks occurred and with specific operational details not yet in the press—described the London bombings as punishment for British military operations in Iraq.
- Hussain Osman, one of the would-be 21 July bombers (who was captured in Rome) said in his interrogation: 'This was not about religion, this was about Iraq. We watched films of British military atrocities in Iraq.'

- Mohammed Khan was the ringleader of the 7/7 bombers. Some months ago, Al-Qaeda released Khan's martyr video in which he says that the London bombings were aimed at punishing Britain for military operations in Iraq and in other Muslim countries.
- In 2004 the British Government's Home Office conducted a four-volume survey of the attitudes of the 1.6 million Muslims in Britain. In that survey, the Home Office found that between 8 and 13 per cent of British Muslims believed that more suicide attacks against the West were justified—primarily because of Iraq.

The implication is, if al-Qaeda's transnational support were to dry up tomorrow, the group would still remain a robust threat to the US and its allies. However, if al-Qaeda no longer drew recruits based on the anger generated by Western military forces in Sunni Muslim countries, the remaining transnational network would pose a far smaller threat and may simply collapse.

Far from resting on its terrorist laurels, al-Qaeda's strategy has been evolving since 11 September 2001. Since 9/11, al-Qaeda's attacks have occurred across a broad geographic range and in many Muslim countries; yet there remains a consistency in the victims' identity. Al-Qaeda is consistently killing citizens of countries with combat forces stationed side-by-side with the United States in Afghanistan and Iraq. In other words, since 9/11 al-Qaeda has been focused—not chaotic. The group has been focused on stripping the United States of its core military allies in Europe and Australia, a strategy evidenced not only by the pattern of the attacks but actually stated in an important al-Qaeda strategy document. In September 2003, al-Qaeda used the Internet to publish a 42-page document which outlined its strategy for dealing with the US after Iraq. The document was found just a few months later, in December 2003, by Norwegian intelligence. The Norwegians gave it to the Pentagon and to the White House, where it was quietly ignored. That document is no longer being ignored.

... since 9/11
al-Qaeda has been
focused—not
chaotic.

The al-Qaeda strategy document states that, in order to lever the United States out of Iraq, al-Qaeda should not seek to attack the American homeland in the short term, but instead should focus on hitting America's military allies. The document proceeds with an assessment as to whether the next blow should be against Spain, Britain or Poland. Al-Qaeda concludes that the Spanish capital, Madrid, should be hit just before the March 2004 election. The strategy reasons that this attack would be most likely to coerce the Spanish to withdraw forces from Iraq and subsequently put pressure on the British:

Therefore we say that in order to force the Spanish government to withdraw from Iraq, the resistance should be dealt painful blows. It is necessary to make upmost views of the upcoming election in Spain in March of next year. We think that the Spanish government could not tolerate more than two, maximum of three blows, after which it will have to withdraw as a result of popular pressure. If its troops still remain in Iraq after these blows, then the victory of the Socialist party is almost secured and the withdrawal of Spanish forces will be on its electoral program. Lastly, we are emphasising that a withdrawal of Spanish forces from Iraq would put huge pressure on the British in Iraq.

The attack occurred, the Spanish withdrew and the London bombings were simply the next step in al-Qaeda's execution of its strategic logic.

The first point to note is that this places bin Laden's most recent statements in quite a different context. In January and April 2006, bin Laden, who had been quiet for over a year, gave two statements, both four pages long in language very similar to the Norwegian strategy document. In his January statement bin Laden asserts that for the last few years al-Qaeda has been focusing on killing the citizens of America's European military allies and Australia, and that now the group plans to put American targets back on the list.

The second point is that, in the last few months, al-Qaeda's recruitment, particularly of home-grown suicide attackers, has become increasingly vigorous. How does al-Qaeda recruit home-grown suicide attackers? One explanation lies in the group's most recent recruitment video, which came out in July. It features Adam Gadahn, an American citizen. He is 28 years old and was born in Riverside, California. His father was Jewish and converted the family to Christianity; Adam converted from Christianity to Islam when he was in his late teens. In 1998, just a few years after he converted, he chose to go and live with Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan, and he has been with bin Laden since. Adam has become the al-Qaeda 'poster boy' for recruiting home-grown terrorists. This latest video shows his face for the first time, although it is not his first video as he has appeared in a few other, much shorter videos. He is not speaking to you or to me: he is speaking directly to Muslims in Britain, the US and presumably also in Australia. This is what he says:

[Video soundtrack] ... keep in mind that the Americans, the British and the other members of the coalition of terror have intentionally targeted Muslim civilians and civilian targets both before and after September 11. In both the first and second Gulf Wars, as well as their parade into Somalia and Sudan and Afghanistan, just to give you a few examples ... was this portable backing of the populations and electorates... in targeting civilians for assassination and kidnapping. He kept [unintelligible speech] and shipped them off to Guantanamo or worse. Many were handed over to the American- and British-backed despotic regimes of the Islamic world to be brutally interrogated ...

We haven't talked about the American and British atrocities in the two Iraq wars... In Mahmoudiya five American soldiers gang raped an Iraqi woman and then to hide the evidence murdered her, a few members of her family and burnt her body.

There is no discussion of the 72 virgins or the supposed rewards waiting in heaven, and barely a mention of Islam. This is a direct emotional appeal to dual-loyalty citizens to feel sympathy and identification with the plight of kindred Muslims. He is not making up the core facts. This is the enemy—probably bin Laden's most precious tool for recruiting home-grown suicide attackers. This is a graphic portrayal of what al-Qaeda believes to be its best mobilisation appeal. Al-Qaeda would not waste the powerful image of Adam Gadahn if the group did not believe him to be critically effective.

... no discussion of the 72 virgins or the supposed rewards waiting in heaven, and barely a mention of Islam.

IRAQ AND SUICIDE TERROR

Iraq is a prime example of the strategic logic of suicide terrorism. Before the US-led invasion in March 2003, Iraq had never experienced a suicide terrorist attack in its history. Since then, suicide terrorism has been doubling every year that the 170 000-strong Western combat forces have been stationed there. There is a widespread belief that there is no logic and consistency to the suicide attacks—yet the facts make nonsense of this view. The Chicago Project has tracked the suicide attacks, taking great care to separate these from other attacks that are also occurring. What is striking is that the geography and targets of the attacks have been remarkably consistent, even as the attacks have been doubling from year to year. The insurgents are following a fairly standard model of insurgency. Year after year, 50 to 60 per cent of the attacks are consistently in the capital city, with the rest evenly distributed around the country. This is one of the most common insurgent patterns, as these elements seek to convince the population that the government cannot protect them. If the government cannot protect the capital cities, it is clearly incapable of protecting other cities and towns. Further, more than 75 per cent of the attacks were against military and political targets such as government buildings, police convoys, police stations, recruiting stations and Western combat troops. Only 15 to 25 per cent of the attacks

Before ... 2003, Iraq had never experienced a suicide terrorist attack ...

were against local Iraqi civilians not working for the Iraqi government. News stories that describe attacks in Iraq against civilians will very often identify those civilians as standing in line waiting to work for the government or security organs inside Iraq. It is also important to emphasise that there have been attacks against mosques. Of the over 190 attacks, a grand total of 13 were against mosques.

What this pattern suggests is a fairly clear goal to prevent the establishment of a government in Iraq under the control of the United States. To achieve this, Iraqi terrorists attack targets they hope will undermine the Iraqi population's confidence in the Iraqi Government and its ability to maintain order. Although there are multiple causes, it is the presence of American ground forces in Iraq that is mainly responsible for fuelling the support for suicide terrorism. Today, there are 13 different terrorist organisations in the Sunni Triangle, four of which use suicide terrorist attacks. Some are quite religious, some are quite patriotic. Some use foreign suicide attackers, some only Iraqi suicide attackers. Where these organisations agree is that they want Western combat forces out of Iraq. They view these forces as the power behind the throne. In January 2004, Zarqawi said he was going to use suicide attacks against the Iraqi security organs and Western agents in Iraq because they are 'the eyes, ears and hands of the American occupier.'

Who are the Iraqi suicide attackers? Right now their identity is murky, which is normal in the opening years of a suicide terrorist campaign. The identities typically come later. While we can only identify about 12 to 15 per cent of the Iraqi suicide attackers, this data shows they come from two main groups: Iraqi Sunnis and Saudis. The next largest grouping is from Syria, followed by Kuwait. The attackers come either from Iraq itself or the immediately adjacent border areas. There is not a single instance of an Iranian suicide attacker. There are none from Pakistan and none from Sudan. Given the evidence from the Chicago Project, this fits—it is perfectly consistent with the strategic logic of suicide terrorism.

There is not a single instance [in Iraq] of an Iranian suicide attacker.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF SUICIDE TERRORISTS

The Chicago Project has studied 462 suicide terrorists and provides reasonably good primary demographics data for the group as a whole. There is also relatively sound socio-economic data for the Arab attackers. This data provides some fresh insight into past cases. Prior to this effort, our understanding of that famous suicide terrorist group in Lebanon, Hezbollah, was quite thin. We knew that it was an umbrella organisation and that Islamic fundamentalism obviously mattered. Many speculated

that Hezbollah attackers must be poor, uneducated religious fanatics. We now know that these suicide attackers come from a far broader range of backgrounds. Perhaps the most important aspect is the ideology of the attackers—we can identify the ideology for 38 of the 41 Hezbollah suicide attackers:

- 20 per cent (8) were Islamic fundamentalist
- 71 per cent (27) attackers were secular; communists or socialists from groups such as the Lebanese Communist Party
- 3 were Christian—one a Christian high school teacher with a Bachelor of Arts degree

The project collected hundreds of recruiting pictures of suicide attackers. It is striking to see them in Western clothes with Western make-up—hardly the image of the Islamic fundamentalist. This is not the image that would be projected if the aim were to recruit Islamic fundamentalists.

The project also found interesting characteristics concerning the suicide attackers overall. Interestingly, female attackers are almost always older than male attackers. Female bombers are commonly presented as young women who are easily swayed. However, any comparison of the ages of male and female attackers shows that about 46 per cent of female attackers are over the age of 24. These are not young adolescent girls; these are mostly mature, fully formed personalities, adult mature women.

... about 46 per cent
of female attackers are
over the age of 24.

The socio-economic data on the Arab attackers adds an interesting perspective. These attackers are much more educated than many expect. Only 10 per cent have primary education or less compared to almost half in their respective societies; 54 per cent have some degree of post-secondary education, compared to only a small fraction in their surrounding societies. Income provides a different perspective again: the attackers are overwhelmingly working class or middle class, not unemployed. A total of 17 per cent occupy the bottom rung of society or are unemployed compared to a third in their societies as a whole, and 76 per cent are working or middle class. They are technicians, mechanics, waiters, police, ambulance drivers, security guards, and teachers. Many quit their jobs just a few days or a few weeks before their attacks. Both secular and religious attackers have the same income distribution, and religious attackers are more highly educated. Suicide attackers are not—and have not been from the beginning—mainly poor, uneducated religious zealots, but well-educated workers from both religious and secular backgrounds. Many are people who would go on to lead productive lives if they had not chosen to commit a suicide attack.

CONCLUSION

The war on terrorism is heading south. The threat is growing and a core reason for this is that the Global War on Terror has been waged on a faulty premise that has led the United States and its coalition partners to exacerbate the causes of terrorism. The faulty premise is that suicide terrorism is mainly a product of Islamic fundamentalism. If that were the case, it would make perfect sense to transform Muslim societies, to wring the Islamic fundamentalism out of them, even at the point of a gun, as has been occurring now for five years. However, although there are multiple factors, the main cause of suicide terrorism is not an ideology independent of circumstance. The main cause of the threat we face is the sustained presence of US and Western combat forces on the Arabian Peninsula. In 2001, there were 12 000 American combat soldiers on the Peninsula: 5 000 inside Saudi Arabia, 7 000 in other countries. Today, over 170 000 Western combat forces occupy Iraq and other countries on the Arabian Peninsula. As this presence has increased, suicide terrorism—first by Iraqis and then by al-Qaeda—has been surging. This does not mean that the Coalition should simply ‘cut and run’. The stability of this region is crucial to that of the entire Middle East and Iraq, in particular, holds oil assets vital to the global community. On the other hand, Coalition forces should not simply stay and die; the longer Western combat forces remain on the Arabian Peninsula, the greater the risk of the next 9/11, 7/7, Bali bombings or worse.

In my book, *Dying to Win*, I map out a new approach, a new military strategy for the Persian Gulf. I call this strategy ‘offshore balancing’. The core of the idea is not to have military forces stationed ashore on the Arabian Peninsula, but to have them offshore, poised and ready to intervene in a military crisis. This strategy is quite similar to the military strategy the West used for decades before 1990. In the 1970s and 1980s the West successfully maintained its core interests in the Persian Gulf without stationing a single combat soldier on dry land. Instead, an alliance was formed with Iraq and Saudi Arabia, and even critics of the war in Iraq should see the benefits of this policy. The US has numerous aircraft carriers stationed off the coast of the Arabian Peninsula as a matter of course, and readily available airpower which is far more effective than it was 30 years ago. Finally, in the 1970s and 1980s the United States maintained a system of bases without ground troops, but bases through which troops could rapidly deploy in a crisis. That strategy worked splendidly to reverse Saddam Hussein’s aggression against Kuwait in 1990. An offshore balancing approach is, once again, the best strategy to secure US interests in the Persian Gulf and to prevent the rise of a new generation of

... the Global War
on Terror has been
waged on a faulty
premise ...

terrorists. It is a strategy that can be maintained, not just for a year or two by sheer dint of effort as is the case now, but for decades, which is what it will take even in the most optimistic assessments. The US should be moving to an offshore balancing strategy with a phased withdrawal of ground troops from the Persian Gulf over the next three to four years. Over the last ten years since 1995, our enemies have been dying to win. But with the right strategy, it is the United States and its military allies that are poised for victory.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Naturally, US Department of Defense officials were quite eager to access this data and, in return, they funded the update and expansion of the database which forms the basis for my book on the subject, *Dying to Win*.
- 2 Additional funding for this project was provided by the Carnegie Corporation in New York, Argonne National Laboratories and the University of Chicago itself.
- 3 PKK (*Partiya Karkerên Kurdistan*) is the acronym used by the Kurdish Workers Party.

THE AUTHOR

Robert Pape, Professor of Political Science at the University of Chicago, is the author of *Dying to Win: The Strategic Logic of Suicide Terrorism*, which was published in this country last year by Scribe. Professor Pape has also published *Bombing to Win: Airpower and Coercion in War*, and his articles include 'Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work' and 'The Determinants of International Morale Action'.



POINT BLANK



THE COMPLEXITIES OF COUNTERTERRORIST OPERATIONS

MAJOR GENERAL RANJIT NADKARNI (RETD)

ABSTRACT

Counterterrorist operations are a visible sign of government efforts to ensure the safety and security of their citizens. Yet, when a nation hasn't suffered direct attack and its general population may not feel itself at war, such operations can be easily misunderstood and may generate significant backlash, especially in the all-pervasive media. This article explores the challenges of counterterrorist operations and offers some insights and suggestions to mitigating the risks.

INTRODUCTION

The 9/11 terrorist strikes, the Bali bombing and the London suicide bombings were events that shook much of the world from a comfortable and long-held complacency. The response to these incidents, and the era of fear and insecurity that they heralded, varied throughout the international community. The Australian Government responded by enacting a brace of anti-terrorist legislation that led to the conduct of the first counterterrorist operations on Australian soil. Australians,

unprepared for the intrusion of terrorist reality into their 'relaxed and comfortable' lives, greeted this unprecedented legislation with a mixed response. Doubts over the validity of this unwelcome intrusion rankled in the minds of ordinary Australians. Like many of their overseas counterparts, Australian citizens tend to regard counterterrorist operations with some suspicion and react badly to media images that imply that the forces involved are inexperienced and heavy-handed in their dealings with alleged offenders. Such adverse media coverage is inevitable in a nation in which success is not universally lauded, while failure—particularly obvious and public failure—draws widespread and bitter condemnation.

For the agencies responsible for enforcing the Government's anti-terrorist legislation, the question is whether, realistically, the pitfalls of counterterrorist operations, such as adverse media coverage and harsh recrimination, can be avoided. That such operations will become a permanent feature in a world without sanctuary from the threat of terrorism is beyond doubt.

Ideally, therefore, counterterrorist operations must be conducted without the attendant hail of bad publicity. How will Australia achieve this? There is no easy answer to this fundamental question. Yet, particularly for nations such as the United Kingdom and India, terrorism is an age-old dilemma. The experience of these nations may provide an insight into ways of winning the battle for hearts and minds on home soil. Their experience also adds an experienced perspective in justifying counterterrorist operations to the public and media alike.

The conduct of counterterrorist operations is fraught with difficulty—even with the blessing of public and media. These problems are further compounded if such actions take place in densely populated urban areas. Aside from the complexity inherent in their conduct, these operations occupy a particular place in the public psyche. Given the necessary veil of secrecy, the public may never be aware of the extent of the terrorist threat that may have been averted by the action of counterterrorist agencies. Yet the aftermath of such operations—successful or otherwise—may be infused with acrimony. Australia's strong civil liberties movement and the Aussie sense of natural justice and 'fair play' may well adversely affect the public perception and persuade ordinary Australians away from the official explanation—often precisely because it is 'official'. In Australia, in particular, community groups are fierce in their protection of the rights of the individual, and it is this sense of looking after the 'battler' that may predispose many Australians to regard counterterrorist operations with a jaundiced eye.

... the pitfalls of
counterterrorist
operations, such as
adverse media coverage
and harsh recrimination,
can be avoided.

THREAT PERCEPTION

Australia's perception of its terrorist threat is, naturally, based on the experiences of its overseas counterparts. Yet, rather than dictate precisely what shape a terrorist group would universally adopt, the overseas experience demonstrates that a terrorist cell shapes itself specifically to the conditions of the target country. Logically, therefore, an Australian-based terrorist force is likely to be very restricted in size, probably limited to squads of up to twenty members. Given the size of the country, these squads would most likely be based in different cities, operating under one umbrella organisation and controlled externally and receiving funding from overseas. Sydney, Melbourne, Perth, Canberra and the other state capitals could potentially all host a terrorist squad or cell. In structure, these squads may resemble those operating in Palestine, Israel or Kashmir, which typically comprises a commander, one or two intelligence agents, two members trained in the handling of explosives, a few well-trained security personnel and some suicide bombers. Well-structured and funded terrorist cells are not simply a motley bunch of criminals intent on mindless violence and creating a public nuisance. Rather, these cells consist of a highly motivated force capable of causing deadly chaos and mass hysteria. Terrorists seek to strike at the very heart of the public psyche, to threaten Australia's most highly prized asset—a sense of safety. Unlike their counterparts in Afghanistan or Kashmir, Australian terrorist squads are unlikely to pose a military threat and would not become involved in attacks on security forces, police stations or any other form of military operation. For the most part, they have no need to launch such attacks; a well-placed suicide bomber can wreak far more havoc by targeting the haunts of ordinary Australians, such as pubs, cafes or popular beaches.

Terrorist threats may range in size and complexity depending on the nature of the cell and the sophistication of the group's aims. At the lowest level, terrorist groups may issue a series of bomb threats directed at public places, such as airports and markets, and on public transport infrastructure, including bus and train lines, resulting in mass evacuations. Such threats seek to heighten community frustration and anger, eroding the public sense of security. Other forms of threat may include extortion and the kidnapping of state or federal leaders. At the top of the scale is the use of bombs or other explosive devices in crowded places or public spaces. This form of threat is the deadliest, given its potential to incur a high cost in collateral casualties.

... an Australian-based terrorist force is likely to be very restricted in size ...

Australia's most likely terrorist targets can be found in her largest centres of urban population—cities such as Melbourne. Terrorist targets in Australian cities could include:

- commuter trains
- railway stations
- airports
- shopping complexes
- stadiums and sporting venues
- schools and educational institutions
- power stations and transmission lines

The community response to a perceived terrorist threat will typically move through a series of levels or stages:

- Initial heightened suspicion of a particular community—often dictated by media scrutiny or the actions of security forces.
- Media hype may also uncover latent social tensions that will find expression under cover of reaction against a threat to public security.
- Public reaction and a heightened sense of insecurity may also work to pressure the Government to introduce tough legislative measures that have a perceived impact on the sacred realm of civil liberty.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF COUNTERTERRORIST OPERATIONS

Counterterrorist operations are the most dangerous, complex and, at times, confusing forms of combat—they are not simply another form of police operation. The members of counterterrorist security forces require special training and equipment to tackle the threat of terrorism. However efficiently the operations may be conducted, the greatest risk remains that of collateral damage involving the harming of innocent bystanders. Collateral damage has the potential to seriously undermine the morale of the community and harm the image of the security forces. As a result, there are very few countries that accept collateral damage as inevitable. The negative consequences of such incidental casualties are accentuated in many democratic countries because of the depth of media scrutiny and the activity of community and non-government organisations. During 2003, a terrorist attack on Srinagar Airport in Kashmir was foiled by security forces. During this counterterrorist operation, there was significant

Counterterrorist operations are the most dangerous ... forms of combat—they are not simply another form of police operation.

collateral damage to vehicles and buildings and a number of casualties among bystanders. The public outcry was immense and completely overshadowed the success of the counterterrorist operation in preventing greater carnage. This is a significant factor that should be considered in any assessment of the reaction of security forces to a terrorist threat.

Media coverage is an issue which merits careful consideration as it can have dramatic implications for security forces and their relationship with the community. A major terrorist act or incident can lead to an adverse public reaction unless handled deftly. In the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi by a Sikh, public reaction took an ugly and violent turn as many Sikhs were killed in retribution. The unfortunate Sikhs were already prominent in the public's consciousness given the often militant separatist movement in the Punjab at the time. In a case such as this, the media can be used in a positive way to persuade the public of the individual nature of such an act rather than allowing it to be imbued with an ethnic or religious motive.

The combination of command, control and coordination is singularly the most crucial factor in counterterrorist operations. Within international security forces there are many examples of various command, control and coordination systems. During the British security forces' involvement in Northern Ireland, the police hierarchy retained overall control, whereas in Israel control is vested in the defence force. In Kashmir, a unified command led by the Chief Minister exercises control. The real challenge for any security force, however, lies at the tactical level. Psychological operations also comprise a necessary component of any counterterrorist operation—albeit, perhaps the least understood.

Civil libertarians and their organisations that seek to scrutinise the conduct of security forces add another complexity to counterterrorist operations. While these agencies play a vital role in safeguarding civil liberties and hard-won freedoms in democracies such as Australia, they are often quick to enlist media and public support where they believe that individual human rights have been violated by security forces.

From a government perspective, Australia has already legislated to provide a legal basis for its counterterrorist operations; the efficacy of these laws will be judged as time elapses. The difficulty will always lie, however, in the enforcement of these laws. Australia's security agencies must operate with great care in a society historically prone to regarding internal security laws as excessive and tending

Australia's security
agencies must operate
with great care in a society
historically prone to
regarding internal security
laws as excessive ...

to encourage heavy handedness in those forces tasked with dealing with alleged terrorists. In the public mind, such laws may be equated with the sanctioning of security forces to 'shoot on sight' or 'on suspicion', sparking images of more draconian regimes in the public consciousness.

SOME SUGGESTIONS

International models for counterterrorist forces often see the creation by security agencies of their own brand of special forces. Internationally, this has resulted, in some cases, in a plethora of highly trained, elite, well-equipped and effective forces often operating at cross-purposes or encroaching on the jurisdictions of others. Given this potential for duplication and the blurring of boundaries, the answer may be to have one special security force comprising members from a number of different agencies. The German GSG9 and the Indian National Security Guard are both special security organisations formed from a number of disparate agencies. The Indian National Security Guard comprises volunteers from all police units and the armed forces. Its roles include counter-terrorism, the resolution of hijacking scenarios, VIP security and a host of other specialised jobs. Yet this Indian model is far from perfect, as there are also a number of other special forces with similar roles resulting in a discordant effect—the bane of counterterrorist operations.

On the other hand, gaps in the tasking of the various security agencies involved in counterterrorist operations may also provide a window of opportunity for the terrorist cell. Guidelines for the tasking of security agencies may include:

- protection duties allocated to state police and civil security agencies in respect of static routine targets
- surveillance and patrolling to local police
- search and destroy missions including any large-scale operation in the hinterland or outback to the Regular Army
- strikes on terrorist hideouts and houses to the special forces

... gaps in the tasking of the various security agencies involved in counterterrorist operations may also provide a window of opportunity for the terrorist cell.

The best response to any terrorist threat lies in forward planning. It is vitally important to identify likely terrorist targets and construct a detailed security management plan to protect these targets. Poor planning can mean that areas of the target that are deemed less important are ignored, with disastrous consequences, as these may be the very areas the terrorists target. Some examples include:

- protecting power stations but ignoring transmission lines and infrastructure
- catering for the security of airports but overlooking approach funnels
- identifying important installations in the provision of security measures but overlooking their approaches

To draw a medical analogy, the correct form of medical treatment is to tackle the disease and not the symptoms. The symptoms must be used to identify the disease. In the world of counterterrorist operations, it is crucial to identify likely terrorist centres of gravity which could include terrorist leadership, sources of financial support for terrorist organisations, and terrorist training camps and bases.

A significant, yet frequently overlooked factor in any counterterrorist operation is the role of the media that can be used effectively as a force multiplier through:

- the formulation of a clear media policy
- the use of official spokespersons at various levels
- media training for all security personnel
- the conduct of regular media conferences and briefings

KEY RESULT AREAS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

While the techniques used by the different security forces internationally may vary considerably, the underlying principles are fundamentally the same. Key result areas must remain the point of focus so that security operations remain practical and workable. Some key result areas are:

- organisation and coordination of special forces
- protection of human rights and creation of human resource cells
- pragmatic tasking of all security agencies to achieve optimum results
- detailed planning for identification and security of likely targets
- media management
- coordination of intelligence acquisition
- timely introduction of appropriate legislation
- implementation of sound command, control and coordination structure
- identification of terrorist centre of gravity
- well-orchestrated psychological operations
- avoidance of collateral damage

CONCLUSION

Counterterrorist operations have become a necessary part of the Australian landscape in recent times and will take time to gather momentum and gain some degree of public acceptance. These operations are, by their very nature, complex and, at times, controversial. They require an immense degree of care in their planning and great skill and finesse in their execution. Success is difficult to measure and casualties equally difficult to justify. Yet operations such as these may be the only means to a secure and safe society in an uncertain age. Media support and winning the battle for hearts and minds on the home front may be the keys to ensuring that counterterrorist operations garner the support of those they seek to protect.

THE AUTHOR

The author is a retired Infantry officer from the Indian Army and is now a permanent resident of Melbourne. Commissioned in December 1965, he is an alumnus of the Indian National Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College and the College of Defence Management. During his long career, he has the distinction of having commanded two infantry battalions, an armored brigade, an infantry division and a special counterinsurgency force in the Kashmir Valley. He has been a member of the Directing Staff/Head of Faculty at the College of Combat, the School of Artillery, the Defence Services Staff College and the College of Defence Management—a decade of teaching. He has seen combat at close quarters as a company commander during the 1971 India–Pakistan Conflict, as Colonel General Staff of a division in counterinsurgency operations in North East India, and as General Officer Commanding of a special counterinsurgency force at the height of the terrorist movement in Kashmir.

IDEAS AND ISSUES

LESSONS FROM THE PAST

GETTING THE ARMY'S DOCTRINE 'RIGHT ENOUGH' TODAY

BRIGADIER GENERAL HUBA WASS DE CZEGE (RETD)

ABSTRACT

This paper sets the scene for the 2006 Chief of Army's Exercise on mission command and the importance of systems thinking. The paper describes a US perspective and outlines various key developmental positions over the past twenty years within the US Army.

Today's Army must create adaptable doctrine, force structures and equipment through its institutions and encourage all elements to adapt as necessary to changing mission needs. The Army and its soldiers must learn and adapt much more rapidly under far more complex conditions. Officers will require the ability to think both critically and creatively about changes in the military science and art. They must understand both hierarchical and very complex organisations, and also the principles that shape force development, new concepts for operations, and military leadership in a dynamic and uncertain future.

INTRODUCTION

No doctrine is perfect, but getting it ‘right enough’ is strategically important. Operating without applicable doctrine can have strategic consequences. The lessons from the US Army’s struggle to get the doctrine ‘right enough’ after Vietnam are worth heeding as the present generation carries out the current revision of our Service’s capstone operational doctrine. There are important parallels between the current period of military reform and those that began in 1973 and ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. One of the biggest challenges of the earlier period was framing the strategic and operational problem well enough to produce a useful doctrine. That continues to be the principal challenge today. This paper has two purposes. The first is to offer lessons about how the US Army arrived at a doctrine that was ‘right enough’ for the closing decade of the Cold War. The second is to share insights of what ‘right enough’ doctrine might be, and what it might be about.

The US Army of the early 1970s needed to address new and serious realities very quickly. It also needed to revise an outdated doctrine, and do it quickly. The challenges facing the US Army today are even greater, but similar enough. Besides being deployed and at war for several years in situations and against adversaries for which it has had little useful doctrine—and daily facing novel conditions in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other places not as familiar—the US Army is going through revolutionary changes. Not only is the Army completely reorganising into a more modular force, it is also radically reorganising from an Army that primarily mobilises to meet sudden and large strategic emergencies to one that meets steady-state strategic demands constantly. To meet such demands, it readies, deploys, and then regenerates its brigades in three-year life cycles. It has become an expeditionary rather than forward-based Army. To provide the intellectual guidance for current reforms, the US Army is in the process of revising its capstone operational doctrine.

Doctrinal revisions since the 1991 Gulf War were heavily influenced by Army experiments into the power of digital communications, command and control systems, and the so-called ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’ (RMA). During the 1990s, the more technical Services provided the intellectually attractive ideas that began to shape joint doctrine and concepts. From this enthusiasm for information technology-based weaponry, surveillance systems, networks and high-speed computers emerged a number of concepts that appealed to important audiences

To provide the intellectual guidance for current reforms, the US Army is in the process of revising its capstone operational doctrine.

outside the Services: 'Shock and Awe', 'Global Reach – Global Power', 'Operational Maneuver from the Sea', 'Rapid Decisive Operations', 'Network Centric Warfare' and 'Effects Based Operations'.¹ These ideas were attractive because they suggested that far fewer people would be needed, especially in the ground forces, and that such savings would pay for the required technological investments. The US Army, for many complex reasons, did not challenge the intellectual flaws in the groupthink of the time.² Instead, it put forward a technical solution that fitted into the prevailing logic. First, shrink the tonnage of its heavy armoured and mechanised divisions by reducing the combat platoon fraction by one fifth and replacing those soldiers with 'digitisation'. Secondly, form medium-weight motorised brigades that could be transported to trouble spots by air more quickly within current air-lift constraints. These efforts failed to change the essential flow of procurement funding over two Administrations and eight Congresses. Moreover, until recently the doctrines of the US Army and the advice of its leaders was heavily criticised by many in the civilian leadership of the Department of Defense for being behind the times and slow to respond to new opportunities. Even into the summer of 2003, many defence intellectuals advised reductions of up to two Army divisions in order to afford technical transformation, believing that the course of events in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq had vindicated RMA-based concepts.

Another similarity between the period of the transition from fighting in Vietnam to facing down the Soviet threat and the present one is the need to address new realities head-on. An important weakness of the early post-Vietnam doctrine was an incomplete framing of the problems the doctrine needed to address. Until very recently, the US Army and the other services relied primarily on scenarios that were a mere down-scaling of the principal strategic problem of the Cold War for their investigations of future concepts and requirements.³ These familiar paradigms left to the host sovereign the problems of public support, rear-area protection against unconventional threats, maintaining security and control of the population, humanitarian assistance, reconstruction planning and other messy complications. These were issues Cold War doctrine did not need to address. Changing regimes, enforcing peace and warring

The US Army, for many complex reasons, did not challenge the intellectual flaws in the groupthink of the time.

... effort should be to recognise what is different, what is new, and how to create and express useful doctrine.

with angry and implacable transnational political movements introduce a host of new problems. Not only has the nature of major combat operations changed significantly, but also the insurgencies of the Cold War were very simple compared to those the US Army is now facing. It is time to try to make sense of it. An important part of this effort should be to recognise what is different, what is new, and how to create and express useful doctrine.

TOWARD ACTIVE DEFENSE

The so-called Active Defense Doctrine emerged between 1973 and 1976. It refocused the US Army from Vietnam to the Central Front of Europe. Active Defense also emphasised the 'First Battle' against Soviet aggression, highlighted the new 'battle calculus' founded on experiences during the Yom Kippur War, and described the optimum tactical employment of new weapons in the defence. Tactical commanders were to control the current defence, the preparation of the next defence, and the planning of the third, all simultaneously. The doctrine concentrated narrowly on what was new and topical at the time: the first defensive battle against the Soviet Army in the Fulda Gap.

This new doctrine was centrally conceived and written by 'the boathouse gang'—a small group of bright officers convened at Fort Monroe, Virginia. With minimal consultation with the field, Active Defense was published in 1976. It was creative and radical, but the Army was not well-prepared to receive its teachings. Internal critics felt the new doctrine was too mechanistic, paid too little attention to the human or 'moral' dimension of combat, and ignored the potential impacts of not only electronic warfare but also chemical, biological and nuclear weapons. Some deplored the deletion of the traditional Ten Principles of War. Others called attention to the important conceptual terrain neglected since WWII, namely the art of campaigning or, as the Soviets then called it, 'operational art'.

Between 1976 and 1980, outside critics such as William S Lind, Edward N Luttwak, John Boyd, Jeffrey Record and others took the Army to task for a number of sins. They argued that the Army placed too much value on lethal technology and too little on maneuver and cunning, preferring 'attrition warfare' consisting of direct, stereotyped frontal

engagements oriented against enemy strength and tailored to whittle the enemy down to size by destroying his fighting men and machines. They saw US Army officers as hidebound bureaucrats cultivating managerial skills over leadership,

... the Army placed
too much value on
lethal technology and
too little on maneuver
and cunning ...

being wedded to archaic methods, ignoring the study of military history and theory, and favoring safer technology over innovative military art. They said the Army compensated for lack of imagination with sophisticated materiel and a tendency to treat military challenges as if they were simple engineering problems.

In truth, efforts in leading these early intellectual efforts and overseeing the production of the 1976 version of Field Manual (FM) 100-5 are given far too little credit today. While it is true that the 1976 revision stirred debate and controversy, it also got the Army's attention and shifted its focus to concrete new developments. The physics of the battlefield were as much misunderstood during the early 1970s as was counterinsurgency warfare in the immediate wake of 11 September 2001. The US Army did require a doctrinal wake-up call, and 'Active Defense' was the first, and crucial, step of what turned out to be a three-step reform. As a result, the officer corps became intimately aware of tactical details it had ignored for many years. With a firm foundation in the new physics, the profession could turn to other new complexities, such as how to maintain unit cohesion and unity of purpose on a very stressful and messy battlefield, and how to prolong the strategic defence in the shadow of nuclear release.

... the profession could turn to other new complexities, such as how to maintain unit cohesion and unity of purpose on a very stressful and messy battlefield ...

REFRAMING THE PROBLEM AGAIN

In late 1979, General Edward C. Meyer, the Chief of Staff of the US Army, directed the TRADOC Commander to develop a revised version of FM 100-5. This action, the first of several reforms he launched, instigated the second stage of the post-Vietnam transformation. However, it took until 1982 to write and field the revision. The new TRADOC Commander, General Donne Starry, made some immediate changes in the way the revision would be done. He would stay personally involved, but he would place the actual responsibility on the Department of Tactics in the Command and General Staff College faculty.

Preparatory study included the best examples of previous United States, German and Soviet doctrine, as well as writings on military theory and history: for instance the 1940 US Army FM 100-5; the recent revision of the German HDv 100/100 *Truppen Führung*; translations of Soviet General Rheznichenko's *Taktika*; Soviet Colonel Siderenko's *The Offensive*; the current literature of internal and external critics; as well as the writings they often referenced. The crucial breakthrough in the

preparatory work was to grasp the real problems allied forces faced against the Soviet threat in Europe. Reading the Soviet authors helped, as did the histories of the battles and campaigns from which Soviet authors drew their inspiration, like the Battle of Kursk and the Manchurian Campaign. From studying these works, it became obvious that thinking primarily in terms of winning successive line-of-sight engagements, as the 1976 doctrine emphasised, was a sure path to failure for reasons more profound than the several the critics had outlined. US forces would have to be flexible and robust enough to endure certain penetration and comprehensive and systemic disruption. This was expected to be caused by a combination of specialised mechanised formations designed to penetrate on narrow fronts and large numbers of unconventional, highly trained special forces infiltrating to great depths. Dealing with this challenge comprised what later came to be known as the ‘rear battle’.

The problem of the ‘close battle’ was recognised by the 1976 doctrine, but the remedy of engaging the enemy at arms length and from successive defensive positions was too predictable—and psychologically disabling—and it would require the infusion of pre-planned counter attacks at various levels, the acceptance of open flanks, and much greater non-linearity across the forward edge of the battle area. The greater challenge, however, was to coordinate the close and rear battles with a very systematic attack of the Soviet formations in depth. This was intended not only to attack their ability to mass and generate overwhelming artillery and rocket fires, but also their ability to regulate the flow of successive echelons into gaps found or created by penetrating and close battle forces before defending forces could react laterally. The reach of Army weapons was insufficient for this, and the Air Force, under a joint and combined command, would have to carry out what would become known as the ‘deep fight’. There was no such doctrine in place. Finally, if these were not challenges enough, allied forces would have to fight in the shadow of nuclear release. This meant that whatever doctrine was developed it would have to work both in the period before selective release of nuclear weapons by either side and during all the subsequent stages until conflict resolution.

Dealing with this combination of challenges led to a number of doctrinal innovations. The logic for the ‘Close, Deep, and Rear’ organising framework prompted leaders at all levels to frame solutions to address these challenges simultaneously. The Army’s adoption of the ‘mission orders’ command philosophy in the face of a very centralised command and control culture was not just a new paradigm, it was

... thinking primarily
in terms of winning
successive line-of-sight
engagements, as the 1976
doctrine emphasised, was
a sure path to failure ...

essential to survival and robust performance in this environment. The doctrine also addressed important issues in the psychological/leadership dimension, raising the level of focus to division-level tactical maneuver and leading to a more systemic approach to thinking about combined-arms operations and the integration of other Service support. Finally, this manual broke with Army doctrinal tradition by differentiating not only between the tactical and strategic perspectives, but added a third between them—the perspective of major operations and campaigns. This was called the ‘operational level of war’. Little consensus had developed within the Army leadership on just what differentiated the operational level of war from those below and above it, and it was wise not to impose immature ideas too soon. In 1981, there were those who saw the operational level of war simply as a long range fire-power employed intelligently to reduce the size and coherence of second-echelon Warsaw Pact forces. However, doctrine needed to also address operational level maneuver, which the Army had virtually abandoned thinking about after the atom bombs exploded at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Doctrine needed to assume the possibility that both sides might delay nuclear release long enough for large-scale maneuver to play a role before conflict termination. Doctrine needed to address how to do it. The introduction needed to be accomplished in two stages. Not only was there a competition over what operational art comprised, but also the institution needed more time to explore how to think and talk about operational art. The 1982 manual spoke of tactics as engagements and battles. It also addressed how the latter were fought, using long-range fires in depth delivered by missiles and aircraft complemented by and complementary to large-scale maneuver.

The resulting manual was very innovative and much more theoretical than its predecessor in very subtle ways. The title, AirLand Battle, was chosen to emphasise that neither defensive nor offensive maneuver were possible in contemporary warfare without a close integration of air and ground forces. It urged commanders to look beyond the range of their weapons and picture the enemy in organisational wholes within the context of higher commands and support, arrayed on the terrain and postured to perform missions. To the foundational understanding of the physical dimension of modern war, this manual added the enduring complexities of the human dimension and the effects of fear, fatigue, fog, friction and leadership. It synthesised the tradition of decentralised command from the American mounted

... adoption of the
‘mission orders’ command
philosophy in the face of a
very centralised command
and control culture was not
just a new paradigm, it was
essential to survival ...

forces of World War II with the more developed theory of 'Mission Orders Command' borrowed from German doctrine. The battlefield framework may have been a spatial one of close, deep and rear areas, but the conceptual emphasis was on the synergy of organisational functions taking place in those areas during performance of the mission in a contest with an opposing force also performing such functions. The manual not only described offensive and defensive tactical methods but added short, clear discussions of the enduring theory and principles underlying current method. It specifically addressed tactical methods in an environment where electronic warfare would be normal, and chemical, biological, and of nuclear weapons could be initiated by the enemy at any time. In one holistic embrace, this manual outlined the physical, moral and intellectual logic of modern engagements, battles, major operations, and campaigns, but it also raised the focus of the doctrine from fighting engagements and battles to the conduct of major operations and campaigns. This proved to be fortuitous because it prevented operational art from becoming only the art of deep fires. Some predicted that it would take a decade for the Army to absorb this more conceptual or theoretical substructure and they were proved right.

[The 1982 AirLand Battle] manual added the enduring complexities of the human dimension and the effects of fear, fatigue, fog, friction and leadership.

Largely because of the openness of the process, including wide consultation, field acceptance was positive. However, it also appeared that some aspects of the doctrine were misunderstood. For instance, some interpreted the doctrine as a shift from defence to offense where a balanced treatment was intended. Consequently, those engaged in writing the manual anticipated the need for what became the 1986 revision even before the 1982 manual was published in order to clarify misunderstandings and to build-up the content on the operational level of war. This version took less time, even though two drafts were circulated widely. The collegiality of content discussions between general officers and authors was maintained in the drafting process. The final draft and the manual were published by mid-1986.

THE CONTEXT OF THESE REFORMS

The decade after the Vietnam War was a rare period for the US Army, when the pursuit of ideas was as serious and intense as the pursuit of technological solutions. The depth, breadth and substance of the doctrine, and the understanding of it, had reached levels never before attained. A comparison of the 1986 FM 100-5 text and

the soon-to-follow Joint Publication 3.0, the joint doctrine for the operational level of war, would reveal a striking similarity and underscore the acceptance of AirLand Battle in the joint world. The logic of AirLand Battle also became the logic of not only joint doctrine but also of the 'Reagan Build-up'. It impressed adversaries and contributed in no small way to the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union.

Ground-breaking advances in training followed. Several of these involved significant cultural changes. The Combat Training Centers evolved, beginning with the National Training Center at Ft Irwin, California, and culminating with the Battle Command Training Program at Ft Leavenworth in the late 1980s. Even before the establishment of the combat training centers, military training transitioned from emphasising process to analysing outcomes. Training doctrine was based on criterion referenced training principles. This training approach helped focus the drive for excellence in technical and tactical performance under the new conditions. Whatever soldiers and units needed to be able to do was soon delineated in terms of tasks, conditions, and standards. Gone were the age-old and vague training evaluation checklists. Performance could now be rated on a 'go' and 'no go' basis. This was revolutionary.

The Army also abandoned scripted command-post exercises designed to test communications and staff procedures. In their stead, the Army adopted simulation-driven exercises. Now, suddenly, colonels and generals had to make decisions that mattered, the enemy now had a vote in mock battle outcomes, and scarce resources had to be combined effectively to avoid embarrassment. This forced leaders to exercise their military artistry and tested their understanding of doctrine. Before this decade, all unit-level tactical training involved 'umpires' with adjudication rulebooks and subjective professional judgment. After this decade, trainers could simulate most of the physical phenomena of the line-of-sight battle and many of the indirect fire effects, even at home station. At the National Training Center, it was possible to diagnose battalion level battles to individual soldier and platform detail. The rigour of training rose to all-time heights. Today we take facilitated after-action reviews (AARs) for granted. Before AARs, as we now know them, training event critiques focused on staff processes and avoided the sensitive issues of command decisions. Commanders learned to participate in frank discussions of what happened and why. In fact, mission failures became an opportunity to learn. This was a significant change in the Army's culture.

... the pursuit of ideas
was as serious and
intense as the pursuit
of technolog[y]

In the 1980s, the US Army also took other important steps to improve the understanding and practice of the military art and science. The Combat Studies Institute and the Center for Army History changed from emphasising institutional history to the history of warfare and operations. The Center for Army Lessons Learned was established to quickly share good ideas from the field with the institution and then back to the field. The predecessor of the Foreign Military Studies Office was established to examine the thinking of our adversaries and allies. The TRADOC Analysis Center (TRAC) was organised from its predecessor and began using more advanced and varied analytical methods. The US Army established a relationship with the Arroyo Center, an agency of the Air Force sponsored ‘think tank’, the Rand Corporation, and the Army Research Institute became more heavily engaged in examining questions of human performance in combat and organisational design.

However, even more important than all of these innovations taken together was the fact that the Army’s attitude toward military education changed significantly during this time. Officer education advanced in breadth by having all officers attend a 12-week Combined Arms and Services Staff School (CAS3), and by instituting the study of the theory underlying Army doctrine at the School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS). Prior to this decade, the majority of Army officers received no formal military education after their fourth or fifth years of service. All in all, it was an exciting decade in every aspect of doctrine, training, and leader development. However, the time for doctrinal innovation has only just begun. An initial draft of the new FM 3.0 – *Full Spectrum Operations* was published in June 2006.

...the Army’s attitude
toward military
education changed
significantly ...

LESSONS FOR TODAY

Sound and useful doctrine is anything but doctrinaire. At the core of any adaptable doctrine are a number of enduring ideas. Historically, armies that have evolved successfully adapt doctrine, organisation, weapons and equipment as opponents, technology, conditions, and strategic missions change. Of course, when these all change rapidly and simultaneously, the business of evolving useful doctrine is greatly complicated.

A doctrine is actually a sum total of the ‘thought models’ that commanders in the field, their staffs, and their subordinates share. ‘Thought models’ are mental frameworks or ways to think to solve problems. In the military profession they address, for instance, how to combine arms or capabilities to gain concentrations of effort

and synergy, or how successful defences or offences are composed. Such abstractions are the enduring foundation underlying successful methods and they become the basis for the evolution of new ones. To produce very useful and elegantly simple abstractions, we naturally reduce mental frameworks to bare essentials, stripping away ideas irrelevant to explaining the logic of relationships and features. However, the profession must remain vigilant because changes may elevate the importance of former irrelevancies to prominence. Experts learn 'thought models' through experience and education and apply them intuitively. Sound doctrine records, propagates, and renews those most useful.

Wise doctrine and wise commanders respect their foes, recognising that enemy leaders are also thinking and adaptive. Nothing is more interactively complex than groups of human beings engaged in warfare. Any doctrine that is mostly concerned with managing internal processes and relationships, rather than coming to grips with the military problem, the mission, or the enemy, will fail. Current doctrine must address how internal processes and organisational relationships serve the institution in future contests with uncooperative adversaries and within unforeseeably more complex environments filled with viscous matter and unpredictable frictions.

Doctrine for such contests cannot provide ready-made formulas. It must encourage commanders to leverage their own advantages and mitigate their own vulnerabilities, maximise the potential of their own and supporting capabilities, organise flexibly, and delegate decision authority to leaders most familiar and up-to-date with changes in the local situation. Sound doctrine shares the virtues of a sound operations plan in many ways. For instance, doctrine can be excellent without being perfect, but it needs to be acceptable to the profession, outline the best wisdom available to guide current operations, explain it well, and provide a basis for evolutionary change. Good enough doctrine sooner is better than perfect doctrine later. Doctrine refreshed frequently is better, and more readily absorbed, than doctrine which changes at long intervals. A controlled evolution, even if rapid, is easier to 'get right' in the creation and easier to digest in the field. This is increasingly important as the rate of change continues to accelerate.

Nothing is more
interactively complex than
groups of human beings
engaged in warfare.

Good enough
doctrine sooner is
better than perfect
doctrine later.

Changes in doctrine, as in a plan, must explain clearly both what is new, and what endures. Such balance results in better understanding, especially when clear and concise language avoids broad generalisations and mis-communication. Doctrine, like an acceptable operations order, must be expressed in clear, unambiguous language. Broad generalisations are less useful than clear, nuanced definitions. Definitions should be as 'backward compatible' as is good software.

Like a plan, less doctrine is more. Every idea, theory, taxonomy, thought model, process, approach, or method must be useful toward solving some relevant problem of the present or near-term future. Useful doctrine is regularly stripped of useless intellectual adornments. Minimising the number of doctrinal publications reduces both the number of authoritative sources the profession needs to consult and the burden of keeping them up to date. There were fewer doctrinal manuals to update during the stable Cold War-period than now exist in this turbulent time. In the interest of economy, the Army could have only one authoritative doctrinal reference on the essentials of ground force military science and art. It does not need a strategic, operational, and tactical capstone manual. The advice of AirLand Battle doctrine was as applicable to task force commanders as it was to corps and field army commanders and staffs. It addressed the essential logic for every kind of operation relevant to the strategic missions of the day, every level of organisation, and left the details of method to manuals devoted to organisational echelons and functional areas.

Sound doctrine, like an operational plan, is in large part the manifestation of all accumulated wisdom projected onto current strategic problems articulated in the language of the present. Just as in a flawed plan, superiority in numbers, effort or technology cannot overcome basic conceptual flaws. While technology may radically transform military methods, the logic of military force acting on an adversary is rooted in human behavior and social dynamics. One major failing of the Active Defense Doctrine was that it simply ignored the Army's doctrinal roots. The AirLand Battle revision built on the excellent 1940 version of FM 100-5, as well as its immediate successor after World War II, and brought their relevant wisdom forward. The 1986 FM 100-5 was also influenced by what was learned from all of our adversaries since 1940 (especially the Germans and the Soviets), and it was influenced by Sun Tzu, the most enduring theoretician, and Clausewitz, the most comprehensive. The language and early industrial age analogies used by Clausewitz may be dated,

Like a plan, less
doctrine is more.

... the logic of military
force acting on an
adversary is rooted in
human behavior and
social dynamics.

but the meaning of ‘fog’, ‘friction’, ‘chance’, and ‘moral dimension of war’ can easily be translated into modern interactively complex systems and chaos theories. That’s why roots need to be cultivated and brought forward using modern analogies and language. Similarly, while much of the AirLand Battle taxonomy and mental frameworks are outdated, many key ideas of AirLand battle merely require re-cultivation.

Revising or updating doctrine, like military planning, is inherently a creative process. Such processes are normally idiosyncratic and non-linear. The planning process provides a framework for organising and controlling the work, establishing timelines, ensuring that certain perspectives are heeded, and shaping the product. However, it is not the process that creates a unique and useful plan. Genius finds and uses the line of least expectation and least resistance to the enemy’s center of gravity by way of an unguarded vulnerability. Senior generals who are blessed with creative operational genius, and happen to like thinking about tactics and operational art, invariably produce creative plans. Commanders who have a genius for finding and harnessing the genius of others also produce creative plans. Creative genius is rarely the product of a committee in which all members have an equal say. Military genius is not evenly distributed within the profession, nor does rank, education or experience necessarily correlate with it.

Like a plan of action, doctrine is based on assumptions and hypotheses about the impossible-to-foretell future. Better initial framing of the problem leads to better doctrine. However, all doctrine necessarily has a limited life-span. This period for AirLand Battle doctrine extended through the First Gulf War of 1991. It remained applicable to a counter-aggression campaign against the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait as it was to the defence against communist aggression in Europe and Korea. However, some faulted AirLand Battle Doctrine as early as the late 1980s for not addressing the many small operations even then in evidence, such as the invasion of Grenada, the insurgency in El Salvador, the Iranian hostage crisis, the Beirut bombing, several emergency non-combatant evacuations, the incipient stages of what is now termed ‘The Global War on Terror’, or even the 1989 invasion and ‘regime change’ in Panama.

As it turned out, the long-delayed revision of AirLand Battle following these campaigns was influenced more by emerging technology and the lessons learned during the ‘counter-aggression campaign’ fought in a pristine, depopulated desert environment and not by the ‘regime change’ campaign fought among the people of Panama. In retrospect, the key to getting the Cold War-era doctrine ‘right enough’ was to frame the problem properly. Just as the first post-Vietnam doctrine revisions failed to frame the problem adequately, so have the post-Cold War revisions up to now.

**Better initial framing
of the problem leads
to better doctrine.**

To usefully describe the challenges the Army will face, and evolve useful operating concepts, will require looking forward and reframing the problem yet again. The future is likely to pose a wide range of strategic problems that cannot be portrayed usefully on any linear spectrum. Given the variety of missions the Army has performed in the past decade, and looking forward to similar challenges ahead, it is difficult to picture what a 'full spectrum operation' might be. The problem of all Army operations is not only balancing offence, defence and stability operations. It will be much more complicated.

The logic of mission categories must make sense in grand strategic terms, as they did during the Cold War, and operating concepts must explain the logic of various mission types within such categories. Current doctrine authors should avoid categorising missions by distinctions that contribute little utility and bear in mind that the logic of operating concepts and campaign design is less about intensity and scale and more about other things. The most useful distinctions will address strategic aims and salient conditions. The purposes American military operations will serve, and the likely conditions under which forces will be committed, will differ greatly. In many cases, US forces must be prepared for operational maneuver from strategic distances and under some very unfavorable and complex initial conditions, and in some cases operational maneuver can commence from forward deployed, established and familiar locations. War aims will differ between those that seek merely to restore pre-aggression conditions and those that seek to transform political regimes and the international system regionally, if not globally. Some wars will necessitate sudden reactions to the unexpected initiative of an adversary, and some will be at the time and place of our choosing. Some wars will pose escalatory risks and some not. Some of these may risk horizontal escalation to include regional neighbors or other global powers, and some may risk vertical escalation to weapons of mass destruction of varying kinds under different conditions. The book to describe the fundamental logic for employing Army forces, FM 3.0, should be clear about the relevant aspects of possible strategic missions and how to think usefully about them.

In conclusion, no doctrine survives 'first contact' with a new strategic problem whole and intact. Every strategic problem will be unique. The strategic context, the ends of strategy, the 'enemy', the physical conditions, social contexts, and technologies will change constantly, and doctrinal methods are mere

The future ...
cannot be portrayed
usefully on any
linear spectrum.

... no doctrine
survives 'first contact'
with a new strategic
problem ...

points of departure for adaptation. To be sound and useful, however, doctrine cannot be a vague discussion of hypothetical cases. It has to provide solutions for very real, specific, and salient strategic problems. When the key elements of that set of problems change, the doctrine loses utility and can no longer provide sound precepts. Given the rate of change in the challenges the US Army will face during this century, it will be impossible to maintain the currency of any method and process-based doctrine. Meaningful abstractions that capture the considerations most important today and in the near term future will be most useful. A doctrine that is firmly rooted in a durable conceptual base not only absorbs nuanced change more readily, but also facilitates adoption of new methods and approaches.

THEN AND NOW

Efforts by the US Army to discern the requirements of a rapidly changing strategic and technological landscape have been underway for more than a decade and a half. They began almost immediately after the Persian Gulf War with the Army's 'Louisiana Maneuvers' and continued throughout the 1990s with a series of Advanced Warfighting Experiments and 'Army After Next' studies and wargames. The Army then extended these efforts through a more focused series of Army Transformation studies and experiments, including major wargames such as the annual 'Vigilant Warrior' series and field exercises at Fort Hood, Fort Lewis, and the National Training Center. These did not foresee the specific nature and extent of the al-Qaeda attacks on 11 September 2001, but they did anticipate the threat of combinations of terrorist networks and criminal syndicates based on the territory of rogue nations and shielded by their conventional military forces. In Financial Year 2003, the Vigilant Warrior Series morphed into the Unified Quest series. These jointly sponsored Army and Joint Forces Command exercises anticipated some of the complications of 'regime change' in Iraq by pointing out the fundamental imprecision of war, the deadly possibilities of adversaries who combine regular with irregular forces using modern technologies, the manpower cost of securing attacking forces, and the challenges of stability operations in the wake of large scale offensives. In combination, and with a healthy dose of historical perspective, these provided a sound basis for the Army to undertake meaningful revisions in its doctrine. The difficult challenge for the Army's doctrine writers will be to describe the relevant aspects of possible strategic missions and the fundamental logic for employing Army forces successfully. It may be useful to begin by differentiating the past from the present.

The AirLand Battle Army planned deliberately for a known threat under familiar conditions; trained to perform missions that could be decomposed into specific tasks, conditions, and standards; adapted doctrine, force structure and equipment

through institutions responsible for adaptation over the longer term; and operated within boundaries established by fixed chains of command, fixed doctrine, fixed force structure, and within a stable and well understood grand strategic construct. Soldiers lived in a world of near certainty within these boundaries. The Army was largely forward deployed and stood ready to engage the enemy within 48 hours. Those soldiers stationed at home, whether active or reserve, stood by to react to standing plans for preconceived contingencies. Being able to do all of this represented a potent deterrent to an adversary who understood what they could do. If soldiers had fought, they would mainly have fought on the soil of a host-nation ally to expel an invader. For this brief period in history, doctrine could focus on a much more narrow set of issues. In the world of AirLand Battle doctrine, there were many conceptual problems to overcome, but the technical ones were dominant and proved to be decisive in the conclusion of the Cold War. United States forces became accustomed to differentiating cases of war by scale and intensity because the other factors that matter in war planning and campaign design were broadly similar among cases within the greater embrace of the Cold War.

Today's Army must plan more conceptually and adapt quickly to changing and unpredictable strategic challenges and missions. It must create adaptable doctrine, force structures and equipment through its institutions and encourage all elements to adapt as necessary to changing mission needs.

Its training programs must rely on intensive (and lengthy in comparison) mission specific pre-deployment preparations. Further, it must operate with flexible, 'modular' chains of command with dynamically variable force structures and situational allies against often ill-defined opponents that tend to evolve rapidly and unpredictably. Soldiers live in a world of far greater uncertainty today. Only one symptom of this variability is that it is far more difficult to devise standardised training programs based on generic tasks, conditions and standards.

Additionally, soldiers have traded the uncertainty of *when* and *whether* they will engage for uncertainty about *whom* and *where*. Instead of needing to react to a hair trigger, the US Army now serves a nation that can choose much more often whether and when it will engage, and soldiers are less likely to fight near where they are garrisoned and their families live. While more of the force is stationed at home, even those stationed abroad deploy and serve the national interest elsewhere in a cyclical rhythm. That brief window in history when doctrine could comfortably concentrate primarily on defeating regular military forces was made redundant when the Warsaw Pact began to collapse in 1989, with the exception of countering the invasion of Kuwait in 1991.

**Today's Army must
plan more conceptually
and adapt quickly ...**

The AirLand Battle authors envisioned the requirement for inter-Service operational-level integration. In fact, the conceptual leap from the Active Defense to AirLand Battle doctrine involved the realisation that, even in the continental environment of Central Europe, the idea of 'landpower' made no sense at the levels of war that mattered. Those who care to check will find no reference in the 1986 manual to 'landpower'. That doctrinal term was just no longer useful, and it is a mistake to revive it. The requirements for tight integration of Service operations have increased. This trend will compel changes in methods of integration beyond increasingly impractical spatial 'deconfliction'. The logic of the joint commander should be to use the tools and capabilities of whatever Service provides him the greatest 'comparative advantage' under the circumstances. The current doctrinal revision should embrace this concept.

[S]oldiers have traded the uncertainty of when and whether they will engage for uncertainty about whom and where.

CONCLUSION

Changes in warfare also favour tightly integrated joint task forces capable of projecting 'power on the ground' that is discriminating and focused. The nation's security interests will be contested increasingly in populated and urbanised terrain or remote hidden outposts. Strong, agile, discriminating and knowledgeable land-component forces will be required to contest control of the ground domain. Careful review of operations in Kosovo, Afghanistan and Iraq lead to the same conclusions. Naval, air, and space forces may gain information about objects and activities on the ground and they may influence activities and strike objects. However, only truly integrated operations employing sufficient ground forces can control activities of adversaries and enforce desired outcomes in all cases. Naval, air, and space forces may be able to do so in special circumstances when the strategic aim is to deter, warn, suppress, or punish. Yet, when implacable foes have to be defeated and the desired outcome is a specified new condition, only unified action including a significantly large land force can secure it.

The implications of these lessons clear for the Army as an institution. The changes in warfare tend to favor 'labour intensive' over 'capital intensive' solutions. However, 'labour intensive' solutions will

The Army and its soldiers must learn and adapt much more rapidly under far more complex conditions.

emphasise quality or ‘street smarts’ over quantity. The Army and its soldiers must learn and adapt much more rapidly under far more complex conditions. Officers will require the ability to think both critically and creatively about changes in the military science and art. They must understand both hierarchical and very complex organisations, as well as the principles that shape force development, new concepts for operations, and military leadership in a dynamic and uncertain future. This means that doctrine and the military art and science must evolve to keep pace with relevant changes. Its evolution must remain coherent, comprehensible, and disciplined. Today, these overly simplistic and technology-based formulas for modern war have lost their appeal and war is recognisable again as a complicated and deadly struggle of human groups within an increasingly complex global environment.

The one inescapable aspect of warfare in this new century will be ‘warfare amongst the people’. Population densities are increasing everywhere, especially in underdeveloped and failing states. Knowledge of social dynamics and the cultural mosaic is an imperative. Even when soldiers engage in warfare with other states, they may also make war against stateless allies while they cooperate with some social groups or communities within it, compete with some, and maintain neutrality toward others. Rules of engagement have become more specific and of greater strategic importance. This trend will continue. Not only will conventional and unconventional forces become more synergistic, conventional forces will increasingly adopt means and methods formerly thought unconventional. For instance, it will be difficult to imagine cases in which psychological operations and civil affairs specialists should not be embedded in ‘conventional’ staffs and units.

More recently, much of the profession has returned to the literature of irregular warfare, and that too will provide some wisdom, even though ‘class struggle’ insurgencies of the last century and the 21st century struggles for power in failed or failing states, or among transnational organisations and states, are quite different. In addition to wisdom in these areas, the profession needs to understand more about how human beings think and how ideas are propagated through societies. Warfare is as much about influencing the decisions of others as it is forcing adversaries to accept our terms. The best preparation the authors of the new FM 3.0 could have would be to read about the science of how people think and how social groups are influenced.

... the profession needs
to understand more
about how human
beings think and how
ideas are propagated ...

In the world of AirLand Battle doctrine, the technical problems were more dominant than the conceptual ones. In the future this condition is reversed. This will require the re-interpretation of the recent and ongoing technical revolution, the renewal and enrichment of old or forgotten concepts, an adjustment of command and control doctrine, a new and more specific logic for estimating the need for ground forces, and a broader reframing of the problem to arrive at a more satisfactory logic for mission categories and operational concepts. The current challenge is well beyond that of the Active Defense/AirLand Battle era and there are some very important differences that make writing sound doctrine much more difficult today. However, today's Army is far better educated, it has conducted some very useful studies of future challenges, the accumulated experience since Operation Urgent Fury in Grenada has provided useful intuition, and the current Army leadership is as capable as any the US Army has ever had.

ENDNOTES

- 1 There is more of a literature in support of these ideas than against them, for instance: Harlan Ullman, James Wade, Jr. with LA Edney, Frederick Franks, Jr., Charles Horner, Jonathan Howe, and Keith Brendley, *Shock & Awe: Achieving Rapid Dominance*, Center for Advanced Concepts and Technology (ACT), funded by the C4ISR Cooperative Research Program of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (C3I), Department of Defense, USA, 1996; David S Alberts, John J Garstka and Frederick P Stein, *Network Centric Warfare*, Center for Advanced Concepts and Technology (ACT), funded by the C4ISR Cooperative Research Program of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (C3I), Department of Defense, USA, 1999; William A Owens, *Lifting the Fog of War*, Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, New York, 2000). One could easily add the Defense Science Board "Summer Study" Task Forces of 1998 and 1999. See also 'A Critique of RDO' by your author published in *Army Magazine*, June 2002, based on *A Concept For Rapid Decisive Operations*, J9 Futures Lab, USJFCOM, 9 August 2001.
- 2 For instance see 'A Critique of RDO' by your author published in *Army*, June 2002 based on *A Concept For Rapid Decisive Operations*, J9 Futures Lab, USJFCOM, 9 August 2001. See also 'Using Information Technologies to Reduce the Army's Echelons' by Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege, US Army (Retd) in *Army Magazine*, April 2002, p. 8.
- 3 See Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege, US Army (Ret), 'Wargaming Insights', *Army Magazine*, February 2003. Also Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege, US Army (Ret), 'The Close Combat Imperative: Some Compelling Ideas on the Road to a Future Army', *Armed Forces Journal*, August 2002.

THE AUTHOR

Brigadier General Huba Wass de Czege retired from active duty in December 1993 as the Assistant Division Commander (Maneuver) of the 1st Infantry Division. He was one of the principal developers of the Army's AirLand Battle concept and the founder and first Director of the School of Advanced Military Studies, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. He has served as a consultant for the US Army Training and Doctrine Command advanced warfighting experiments, and as an advisor on future joint operating concepts for the Joint Staff and Joint Forces Command. In a previous assignment, he was a Special Assistant to the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and Secretary General of NATO. He is a 1964 graduate of the US Military Academy and holds an MPA from Harvard University.

IDEAS AND ISSUES

BURNING BRIGHT

DEFENCE POLICY, STRATEGY AND THE IMAGINATION

BRENDAN SARGEANT

ABSTRACT

The author examines some of the profound drivers of Australian defence and strategic logic by seeking the divide between imagination and reality. The nature of strategic debates in Australia has recently been vigorous, with the decades-old orthodoxy being contested in light of new and emergent threats such as terrorism. The imagination of the nation, of the people, and of the Department of Defence all shape threat perception; the author argues that this has led to over-estimating the dangers facing the nation and thus the correct responses to extant threats.

They became what they beheld.

William Blake — *Jerusalem*¹

In his poem, *The Tyger*, William Blake presents a vision of the Tyger as a monster that in its majesty seems to transcend categories of good and evil. The poem's speaker describes the Tyger through a series of questions that build a picture of the creature. In doing so, the speaker creates a vision that seems to challenge fundamental assumptions about the nature of reality. This vision terrifies him, and he ends up silent, cowering before it, fearful.

Blake's great theme was the imagination. In this poem he enacts a consciousness terrified at the creative power of its own imagination. The Tyger is no more than a creation, ultimately of words, and has no reality outside this. Yet it terrifies. The drawing published with the poem shows a rather benign-looking cat.² This emphasises how ironic the poem is, and how weak the consciousness of the poem's speaker is in the face of its own creation. When we stand with Blake in eternity to read the poem, we can see its power and irony, and Blake's rhetorical sophistication as he analyses one aspect of the relationship between imagination and reality.

How do we know the imagination? The short answer is, by its works. These may be words, or they may be deeds. In the Department of Defence we see its manifestation everywhere, but indirectly. We barely understand it, and because of this we can be blind to the full meaning and dimensions of our policy and strategic thinking. If we do not understand our imagination, we cannot understand ourselves. Nor can we understand the organisations in which we live and work.

What do we mean when we talk about imagination? Can we read our policies, strategies and programs as products of an imagination? What do our policies and strategies tell us about *our* imagination? Does it make sense to talk about an Australian strategic imagination?

If we do not understand
our imagination, we
cannot understand
ourselves.

In his book, *Assassin's Gate*, George Packer discusses the recent origins and unfolding of the Second Iraq War.³ He repeatedly refers to a failure of imagination. He uses this idea in many contexts and with reference to quite different events, but at the core of his argument is the idea that the strategic and operational failures in Iraq originated in the inability of policy-makers to step into another version of reality and to look out, including back at themselves. The world they saw was the one they had constructed, sometimes over many years, and it was powerful enough to exclude everything that did not conform to its patterns and representations of reality. They were fully in that world, and worked within the context it sanctioned. We saw at work here something stronger than ideology; there was a fully formed, coherent vision of the world, a vision that had great explanatory power. But like all worlds, fundamentally, it was an imagined one. It was a world sufficiently imagined to be powerful enough to exclude other worlds.

In this subtle, but very important sense, Iraq was an imagined construct. Once the shape and dimensions of that construct were fashioned, and this version of Iraq was positioned within a broader imagined universe, a further cascade of decisions, well known and amply discussed by Packer and others, were inevitable. This is not to argue for a crude determinism, nor to diminish the policy and strategic issues that made Iraq such an urgent concern. Nor is it to question the good faith of those involved in decisions associated with Iraq. Rather, it is to recognise that decisions are made by people and people are governed by their perceptions of what is real and meaningful, and that these in turn are constructions of their imagination.

... decisions are
made by people and
people are governed
by their perceptions
of what is real ...

The vision of Iraq animating the perceptions and actions of US policy-makers has been contested in Iraq and elsewhere, and this in turn has evolved into a struggle that is taking many different forms—insurgency, terrorism, and political disputation. Behind this, a more fundamental struggle is taking place. It is an imaginative struggle, or perhaps more precisely, a struggle between imaginations. This struggle is manifested in different conceptions of Iraq and attempts, often violently, to ensure the supremacy and hence reality of a particular conception of what Iraq is and what it should be.

So, what is imagination? There are many definitions, all of which make sense in their context, but lose their explanatory power once one begins to generalise. My personal favorite is that of Thomas Hobbes, who described it as a kind of decayed memory.⁴ The Macquarie Dictionary defines it as ‘the action of imagining, or of forming mental images or concepts of what is not actually present to the senses.’⁵ My own working definition is more personal and impressionistic. Imagination lives most powerfully in dreams, memories, barely conscious urgings, in those instincts that run deep through our lives and drive us to take what materials we can and fashion from them a world that defines us and in which we might be able to live. It is imagination that allows us to create, to turn visions, dreams and desires into something real enough to make us breathe differently and be able to say that we live in a place we have made our own. It is through our imagination that we connect with the world and create more meaning and more life out of the crude materials it gives us. This is a large definition, but imagination is a large thing, capable of spawning worlds.

Countries, crowds, organisations—like people—have an imagination. One hesitates to name it as a quality, but you know it when you see it, or perhaps more to the point, feel it. Sometimes we identify it with a dead metaphor, such as when we say that an organisation has ‘a life of its own’. We invoke it when our language

attributes a personality and an implied consciousness to an organisation, such as when we say, 'Defence believes' or 'Defence thinks', or feels or wants or has any number of desires, actions and emotions. For me imagination exists, I suppose, as a kind of background murmur, a whispering that shapes and guides, cajoles and sometimes mourns. In an organisation, it might seem like a personality, a kind of life that one knows in its traces—in the passion behind an argument about policy, or in rituals and codes, or the physical arrangement of things. A characteristic of imagination is that it is in constant turmoil, change and growth as it contends with the world and with other imaginations. The life of a large and complex organisation is always interesting because invariably, at the level of imagination, we are witness to a process of contention, rejection, absorption, change and growth. Conversely, when an organisation loses its imagination it dies, though that death may take time to become evident.

... when an
organisation loses
its imagination it
dies ...

To understand the imagination of an organisation, how it is created and sustained, how it evolves, is to understand that organisation and its life in the world in profound and complete ways. It is to understand relations and patterns, the deeper connections between things, not always evident in their surface manifestation. Imagination most often speaks to us on what the nameless narrator in Ralph Ellison's novel, *Invisible Man*, calls 'the lower frequencies'.⁶

Many of our problems in the Department of Defence are problems of imagination, which we frame as administrative, management or even policy problems in an attempt to deal with them. Yet so many of our choices, our responses to events, emanate from who and what we are, and from what we and our organisations are and aspire to be. Our choices are not in any complete sense the result of rational and disinterested processes, though we hold to this idea—as we must. These choices are, at a certain level, products of our imagination. In saying this, I am not arguing for a kind of organisational unconscious, though I do suspect the existence of such a creature. Rather, our dreams, ideas, and emotions are all different manifestations of our imagination, which through our action and talk we put into play, and through this shape what is possible, what is allowed to exist. This in turn shapes policy and strategy.

Perhaps we come closest to acknowledging the reality of something like an organisational imagination when we talk of values and seek to incorporate them into our decision-making processes. This is not because values are a surrogate for imagination, though they can be this. In accepting values, we give credence to the idea that non-rational human and contingent constructs can be brought into existence through the agreement of a community, and that these can shape and influence decisions in an organisational culture built on the ideal of rational decision-making.

Management literature does not often speak of imagination. It is too incongruous with the rational, purposive ideology underpinning most thinking about the nature and purpose of organisations. When the literature does stray into this area, it is usually in the context of discussion on leadership and tends to be framed around the importance of vision. Even so, such discussion is usually truncated in the sense that most writing on vision is a surrogate for exploring strategies to achieve alignment and control, rather than as a vehicle for, and expression of, an organisation's imagination.

Every leader, whether by accident or design, consciously or unconsciously, interacts with and helps shape an organisation's imagination. In my view this is the most important and the most fundamental of leadership tasks. It is a staggeringly complex activity, undertaken in as many different ways as there are individual leaders, and manifested in the multitude of actions and decisions that leaders make every day. The core question any leader must ask—or find a way of asking—is ‘how have I shaped this organisation's imagination?’ Is my imagination large enough? Leaders defeat themselves when they fail to understand the imaginative forces that swirl around them, or their role in shaping and guiding those forces.

The most strenuous, challenging and lonely leadership situations occur when a leader's imagination confronts that of their organisation. This has occurred in Defence and is always a crisis, but also the most fruitful path to renewal. Defence, like any other big and complex organisation, is many things, but it is primarily a work of the imagination. Or rather, the imagination of Defence is the ongoing work of many imaginations. Sir Arthur Tange knew this, and like all significant leaders, knew how the imagination speaks to an organisation. His work in building the Department of Defence, recognisably the organisation we have now, involved challenging deeply held conceptions about the nature of defence in the Australian strategic context, and how this should find expression in policy and administration. His work was not just an administrative challenge, but an imaginative challenge. It meant imagining and conceptualising a new world and asking people to live and work in it. For this reason the emotional and intellectual cost to all involved was high.⁷

Before it is anything else, Defence is an arena where imaginations contend. This begs the question, contend in relation to what? Where is the arena for this contention? What is an ‘imaginative’ struggle as opposed to other kinds? My answer

The most strenuous,
challenging and lonely
leadership situations
occur when a leader's
imagination confronts
that of their organisation.

is that at the heart of Defence work is a process of imagining the world, the adversaries that might populate it, the way the future might unfold, and the position we as a nation might want to occupy. To undertake Defence's work we need to be able to summon these things into consciousness, to give them a reality and then to struggle with them to create the means by which we might counter or defeat them, might, so to speak, defend against them. To do this well we need to struggle imaginatively against ourselves, as well as those we work with.

This struggle shapes our imagination, even as we use imagination to do it. In many ways, this work is potentially hazardous—to the spirit, to one's moral being, to one's sense of harmony with the world. For the imagination, 'defence' is dangerous and treacherous ground. The imagination is tempted by apocalypse, by spectacle and violence, as Osama Bin Laden knows, as do those US defence intellectuals who promoted the concept of 'shock and awe'. The power of this subject matter can and often does loosen the imagination from its moorings in the physical, touchable world. Hugh White has written on this searchingly in his essay 'Primal Fears, Primal Ambition'.⁸ His argument, put very crudely, is that our current sense of threat is disproportionate to the reality of that threat. There is, so to speak, an imaginative surplus that is having real consequences in terms of security policy decision-making. He argues for discipline and rationality, for rigorous process and for a sense of limits. In my view he is arguing that we need to control our imagination, especially our imagination of disaster. The essay is a revealing insight into our contemporary situation and reflects a sceptic's sense of limits and a deep awareness of the danger of undisciplined imagination.

Disaster has always been the currency of popular culture. The shock of 11 September 2001 was in part its realisation of disaster beyond all but the wildest conception in book and film. As a culture, we have struggled to absorb this realisation. No contingency is too far fetched. No scheme or plot or horror lies outside the realm of possibility, even probability. Avian influenza, nuclear terrorism, bioterrorism, suicide bombing in our cities and suburbs, threats to the food supply, invasion by armadas of refugees, global warming—all these take their place as an evolving reality in a new, timeless and non-hierarchical world of undifferentiated and existential threats. One watches the film *War of the Worlds* with a sense of relief that at least that contingency still seems unlikely.

In the realm of imagination, relations between words and deeds are always mutable. One does not necessarily have more meaning or more power than the other. Their relations evolve, subordinate to the imagination's primacy as the shaper and decider of reality. When imagination loses control, when it separates from what

... our current
sense of threat is
disproportionate
to the reality ...

is tangible, when it fails to discriminate in its interactions with different orders of reality, when it becomes the unconstrained arbiter of what is real, the danger then is that it can create an environment for decisions or judgements that are wrong, dangerous, or worse.

Before 11 September, our guide to the future was history. It grounded our imagination, sketched the circumference of the possible, and provided a sense of limit, which was a kind of security, at least ontologically. The events of 11 September 2001 subverted this. By enacting the unthinkable, something beyond normal imagining, it opened infinite possibilities, all dreadful. Words and things, the real and the possible, have become one, a continuum of potential threat upon which our imagination feeds as it calibrates future disaster and dares not leave any possibility unattended. That day in September 2001 proposes that there is no security, no defence. This tends to make all threats existential. The sense that 11 September represents a discontinuity undermines one's sense that history is a reliable guide for handling the future. The contemplation of the spectacle overwhelms any analysis built on the foundations of proportion and priority. It takes us outside history and places us into the timeless realm of myth. Indeed, bin Laden wields the power of imagination, including the power of the Western imagination, with great assurance and effect. His ongoing strategic advantage has been his capacity to sustain himself as a myth, eternal and outside the constraints of time and place, the embodiment of his own imagination.

Perhaps more than in any other area of life, the imagination, when it deals with defence, needs to ground itself. This is one reason, in my view perhaps the most important reason, why geography matters. It is both a trope for reality and, in the Australian strategic context, the surest path to an understanding of limits. For Australians, geography is the beginning of realism. History, especially in our contemporary environment, has become a perilous adventure—its materials are words and memory. Too often, in the light of the imagination and an emotionally charged public discourse characterised by rhetorical excess, history sheds its factual skin and emerges as myth. Pondering it, we lose ourselves in the contemplation of splendour and catastrophe.

In Defence, we try to put in place elaborate processes to control imagination, to socialise and constrain it. We do this through administrative practice, through conceptual work, through the use of rational, abstract language. The fruits of this

... bin Laden
wields the power
of imagination ...

... in the light of
the imagination ...
history sheds its
factual skin ...

socialisation, this constraint, this subjugation of desire to the rigours of process give birth to that artifice we call policy, and sometimes strategy. Some of these methods are more successful than others. Policy and strategy are always the crippled progeny of a more pure, ungoverned imagination. They represent our accommodation of limits. They whisper subversively of our compromises and of what they might have been if we had been courageous. As imagination asserts itself, we renounce these children as we seek versions that are more complete.

Perhaps it is our good fortune that we have a Defence decision-making culture that is bureaucratic, technical, and rational in its aspiration, instrumentalist in its processes and fundamentally pragmatic and practical in its orientation. Yet this culture can fail us if we administer decisions without awareness of the imaginative life animating ideas and proposals, and do not recognise that, as an organisation, we deal in some of the nation's deepest anxieties and phobias. We hold in custody the nation's dream of security. The decisions we make, the things we do, the language we speak have a direct impact on the culture, helping to build the nation's story in ways disproportionate to our size as an organisation. Whether we want to or not, we deal in forces that are a powerful magic in the culture.

The heart of all Defence work is a struggle as old as Homer's *Iliad*. It is the contest with an adversary, a contest that never ends, and ranges across every domain and embraces every element of reality. It never stops. It is a contest for meaning, life, space, security, supremacy, whatever we require to allow us to believe that we are—for however long we can make this moment last—safe. So we imagine worlds, terrible worlds, because we must, inhabited by monsters as potent and malign as any nightmare creature of mythology. Thus, we build policy and strategy to control these threatening imaginings, to make them manageable and to forestall their realisation. How often are we like Blake's speaker, in awe of and frightened into submission by the Tygers we create?

The Australian strategic imagination is shaped by geography and history. It is inextricably entwined with national identity. Its expression in grand strategy has been relatively constant over the decades; at least, in my view, since the end of the First World War.

As a settler society, Australian identity has been shaped by two large forces: the struggle to come to terms with a new and difficult landscape and the emotional ties to a predominately Anglo-Celtic source culture. Landscape, country, geography—these have functioned as a governing trope for what is unique and difficult in Australia. Australian identity, shaped by natural forces of adversity, embodies a

How often are we like
Blake's speaker, in awe
of and frightened into
submission by the
Tygers we create?

profound ambivalence towards landscape, a sense of both belonging and alienation. This ambivalence is reflected in Australian literature and art, in the design of our cities, in our attitude towards everything from aboriginal dispossession to environmental conservation. Calling us away from land is the lure of the source culture which, as the world changes, continues, ironically enough, to be re-imagined to meet the needs of our alienation. What was once empire is now the US alliance and globalisation that, as empire once did, takes us into larger communities, imagined communities of shared culture and strategic interest. Such communities' place us in a metaphysical space built out of values, relationships, and shared interests. This offsets the need to place ourselves in this landscape and come to terms with our country.

The Australian strategic imagination seeks to straddle this divide. It seeks to answer two questions: 'what is Australia' and 'what is an Australian' in order to answer the secondary question of how Australia and Australianess might be best defended. This is as much about identity as it is about the harsh realities of threat and response.

National identity is never finally settled, and the Australian identity in particular is still maturing. By world standards, it is very young and still in formation. This creates an uncertainty and fragility in the Australian self that is reinforced by the vastness and hostility of the land, its ambiguous provision of bounty combined with its unforgiving treatment of those who underestimate it. Yet the source culture, however constructed, offers only ambiguous refuge, as Henry Handel Richardson dissects with such relentless and scrupulous care in her treatment of her character, Richard Mahoney, in her trilogy, *Australia Felix*.⁹ The experience of Australia changes the source culture so that it can no longer be home, even as Australia continues to be a place of alienation. Mahoney goes mad, an exile with no place to go, his imagination unable to reconcile geography with his history.

These ambiguities, this unstable relationship between place and history in the formation of identity becomes richer when one considers the relationship between people and country created through sacrifice in war, particularly wars where Australians died overseas, to defend their possession of this country. At an abstract level, these deaths, these wars, pursued to maintain a global strategic order favourable to Australia, become, through the sacrifice involved, a means by which our possession of the country is legitimated. The landscape becomes sacred. It acquires more meaning and therefore more value. It becomes imaginatively potent, though not necessarily in ways that the official rhetoric of security and strategic policy can accommodate easily.

National identity
is never finally
settled ...

The landscape
becomes
sacred.

In the canon of Australian strategic thinking and writing, geography is the central organising idea. The history of strategic policy, since the Vietnam War in particular, has been the increasing centrality of geography as the foundation of the Australian strategic imagination. This is summed up in that phrase of extraordinary cultural and political resonance, ‘Defence of Australia’. Geography emerges as the means by which nationalism and a particular vision of Australian identity, expressed in defence and strategic thinking and action, asserts itself. Defence is about the land, the physical reality that one can feel and touch. It demonstrates how much of our national identity is bound up with our feelings for and our imagination of the landscape. It is why the work of people such as Arthur Tange, Kim Beazley, Paul Dibb and their successors continues to have such resonance and centrality. My view is that the 1986 Dibb Report is the central document, the one in which geography as an organising trope for the Australian strategic imagination achieves its apotheosis. It is a seminal work that, to my reading, constructs Australia as a physical entity that can and must be defended:

Australia must have the military capacity to prevent any enemy from attacking us successfully in our sea and air approaches, gaining a foothold on our soil, or extracting political concessions from us through the use of military force. To do this we must develop our own solution to our unique strategic circumstances.¹⁰

Soil is the interesting word—rich in association, with an emotional and metaphorical resonance beyond its function as a referent for land. It is the only time that I am aware of that the word has been used in any Australian strategic policy or planning document. Its uniqueness tells us that something very important is being said, and, perhaps, even more is being implied. The emphasis on ‘unique strategic circumstances’ also functions as a trope for the idea of an inimitable Australian strategic response and, by implication, an Australian strategic culture and identity. Taken together, there is the sense that our strategic identity arises out of our geographical circumstances and is bounded by this.

I think we get a suggestion of this when we consider Kim Beazley’s speeches about Australian security and defence needs, particularly when he contemplates Prime Minister Curtin’s decision in 1942 to bring the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) back to Australia to defend against a possible Japanese invasion.¹¹ As one reads his speeches over many years, one feels in his words a sense of the importance of land, of our physical relationship with Australia as the source of our wealth and identity and, more intangibly, the potential fragility of our possession. There is a suggestion that in a profound way the integrity

... our strategic
identity arises out
of our geographical
circumstances ...

of collective selfhood, our legitimacy as a people, of our entitlement to be here, is bound up in our relationship with the land and our willingness to defend it. To surrender close, almost physical stewardship in the name of empire, alliance or globalisation is to breach a kind of covenant. To the extent that Beazley is a representative of the main currents of the Australian strategic imagination, it becomes clear how land and geography are its foundation. In this context, it is fascinating to read him on the US–Australia alliance. He is a sophisticated commentator, but one senses that his intellectual and emotional starting point is always Australia, and Australia as a physical reality located in a particular place. His strategic imagination is grounded in a sense of Australia as primarily a geographical entity, a place.¹²

The Dibb Report resonates with metaphors of self containment, of clear boundaries and borders. At a deeper level, it is an expression of national identity and of a powerful strategic imagination, grappling with questions of what Australia is and of what must be defended. The power of the Dibb Report is, in my view, out of proportion to the analytical and factual content of the document. It traffics in the uncanny because of the particular imaginative resonance of the central trope of geography in Australian culture. The detail of policy has moved on from the Dibb Report, and the report still trails the residue of its birth within a strategic order constructed out of a global superpower rivalry at a time when the world created by that rivalry was ending and a new one had not yet emerged. Subsequent work, particularly the 2000 White Paper, has refined and adjusted the Dibb vision, but never overturned it. Dibb's central idea that geography must be the foundation of Australian defence strategy remains potent, not just because it is sound strategic theory, but because of the centrality of landscape, country and soil in the Australian imagination.

One could write a history of strategic policy over the past decade that focuses on the attempt to overthrow geography as the primary organising idea in the Australian strategic imagination. This attempt has failed for the time being, but the failure tells us interesting things.

In some recent strategic policy, particularly as expressed in many of the speeches by then–Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill, there has been a tendency to use globalisation and its manifestations as an alternative organising idea for strategic policy.¹³ The events of 11 September 2001, Australia's position as a trading nation integrated into the global system, our alliance with the United States, our other strategic relationships, and the emergence of serious non-state transnational

The power of the
Dibb Report is ... out
of proportion to the
analytical and factual
content of the document.

threats have all at one time or another been deployed to support an argument that says to use geography as the organising idea for defence policy and strategy is to misread the contemporary security environment and its demands. Whether this argument is correct or not is less interesting than its function as a critique of one conception of Australian identity and its challenge to the mainstream of Australian strategic thinking. The problem with this critique is that it has never had the power to overthrow the conception of Australia that underpins what in shorthand construct we call 'Defence of Australia'.

The vision of Australia and of Australian identity implied in Minister Hill's speeches does not have the imaginative power of Dibb's conception. This is not a question of rhetoric or analysis. The Hill critique, for want of a better term, was always secondary and had less persuasive power because it was not, in my view, as congruent with deeper forces shaping Australian culture and identity. It lacked, crucially, the imaginative power of the Dibb formulation, a power evident in the images of solitude, fragility and destiny conjured by Beazley in many of his speeches. Beazley's genius was his ability to connect country, culture and strategy in a way that spoke directly of who we are. Hill's rhetoric and the imaginative underpinnings of it never presented a vision of Australia and of Australian security that, to use a metaphor, touched the soil. It never dealt, even in a negative way, with the link between land and identity. For geography it attempted to substitute the abstract language of values and interests. It put forward a globalised vision of Australian culture that remains contestable. It was less concerned with geographic proximity as a driver of strategic decision-making. It had a tendency to believe that alliances and technology could substitute for space and place. It tended to prefer relationships over national autonomy or self reliance.

But in advocating this vision of Australian strategy, Hill and his supporters are also saying something important about Australian identity, who our history says we are, in particular our links to source cultures. This is why the view they advocate has continuing resonance. But how congruent is their reading of Australia's strategic history with the way that history is read in the wider community? Put very crudely, the fight has never been primarily

... geography as the organising idea for defence policy and strategy is to misread the contemporary security environment ...

... the fight has never been primarily for ideas or systems; it has been for land and identity ...

for ideas or systems; it has been for land and identity, even if the fight takes place on the other side of the world. Some have argued that we express identity through values and that we fight to preserve values and a way of life. To some extent this is true, which is why the expression of strategy in actual decisions and deployments always embodies compromise. If nothing else, politics takes care of that. But as time passes, the legitimacy of deployments is measured by their relationship with the defence of Australia as, above all, a physical entity. Notwithstanding current debates on the policy and strategic significance of Iraq, Afghanistan, Solomon Islands and East Timor, the reality is that the ultimate legitimacy of a strategy is determined by the extent to which it is congruent with the imagination and identity of the nation sustaining it. Whether a strategy works is not necessarily, in this context, a first-order issue. In the Australian context, any strategy or expression of strategy that seeks to break free of the realities of geography is struggling against major countervailing cultural forces. Our history has many examples of the way the meaning of operational events is transformed in the re-telling to create a strategic significance that may not have been apparent at the time. Gallipoli is a distant place that, through a complex process of re-imagining, is being turned into Australian soil. Anzac is a legend that establishes Australian identity and, through memorials and the memory of absent men, has changed our perception of the Australian landscape and our relationship with it.

Gallipoli is a distant
place that ... is
being turned into
Australian soil.

In my view, broader cultural anxieties about Australian identity work over time to change the meaning of our deployments. The Australian landscape is our destiny and thus the final reference point for the deep legitimacy of our defence strategy and, ultimately, of our deployments, no matter where our soldiers might be or the stated reasons why they are there. No war or deployment can be understood without understanding how it interacts with anxieties about identity. The Dibb strategic construct creates a greater sense of security because it reinforces ideas about Australian identity congruent with our primary cultural experience. It more closely aligns strategy with culture that, as I have suggested, arises predominately out of our experience of the landscape. The alternative approach challenges Australian identity because it works, whether it intends this or not, to separate the idea of Australia from the place we call Australia. I have myself called Australia an evolving idea in a global community. But is an idea in a community real enough to sacrifice blood and treasure for? As a

... is an idea in a
community real
enough to sacrifice
blood and treasure for?

nation, we have said ‘yes’ to this, but the consensus has always been fragile. I think it is true to say that the greater the distance from our shores, the lower the public’s tolerance for Australian deaths on operations, and the greater the hysteria when they do occur.

The critique mounted by Hill and his supporters could adjust, but could not usurp, the governing Defence of Australia framework. Whether this critique develops and grows as Australia moves through the twenty-first century will be a fascinating story. It will be a story about the globalisation of Australian culture and where that might take us, about the national imagination and the evolution of identity in a global community. Will this supplant geography as the governing idea of the Australian strategic imagination? Perhaps, but this will also mean that we will be in a different culture. Cultures change slowly, so it would need a very large discontinuity, which globalisation might be in time, to change Australian culture. We do not know the future, but we do know these forces will shape our national imagination and in time policy, strategy and force structure.

Perhaps the most interesting challenge to Defence of Australia has been from Army, an institution I greatly admire. Elements of Army’s contemporary vision, as set out in *Complex Warfighting*, present a sort of post-apocalyptic world of undifferentiated threat.¹⁴ The document is rhetorically compelling, but in some ways curiously self-referential. If one is prepared to enter the imaginative world animating the document, a world dominated by the pathologies of globalisation, coagulated into an anarchic and infinitely threatening, predominately urban environment, the unfolding logic makes a kind of sense. This logic culminates in the need for capabilities appropriate to what the document calls complex environments. Thus, we have the origin of the Hardened and Networked Army. This world is persuasive, which shows its imaginative strength. But how real is it? Does it make sense in an Australian context? The document’s status as a draft and as a vehicle for advancing a hypothesis about future warfare indicates that Army is still considering this.

Armies—and the Australian Army is no different—are about land. Armies come from the land, work in the land, and are of the land; their mission is to seize and hold land. *Complex Warfighting* knows this at a profound level.

... a world dominated
by the pathologies of
globalisation, coagulated
into an anarchic and
infinitely threatening,
predominately urban
environment ...

Army’s story is
embedded in
myths of sacrifice
for the soil ...

In a subtle, weirdly ironic way, the document is shadowed by land, most specifically, by the Australian landscape, which exists as a kind of absence, particularly as the kind of warfare envisaged is almost inconceivable in Australia and, in my view, is problematic in the context of our immediate neighbourhood. To my reading this document reflects an attempt by Army to resolve the tension between history and geography by creating an imaginary geography, a landscape legitimised by a particular reading of history and global strategic trends. Army, more than any other Service, has experiences and traditions that go to the heart of our national story. Army's story is embedded in myths of sacrifice for the soil, to invoke Dobb's word. Army has a profound connection with the land. Army has traditions of arising from the people, as we see in the legend of citizen soldiers and of such men as General Monash.

This arising from the people, and perhaps out of the Australian landscape, is a large part, for example, of the Gallipoli and Kokoda stories. Even today we see these myths animating elements of the Reserve. Yet Army's warfighting history has been expeditionary and in coalition. These forces pull Army in different directions. In this respect the ambiguities of Army's experience mirror broader Australian national experiences. Army's struggle, the struggle of Army's imagination, has been to develop a conception of itself large enough to reconcile these forces. *Complex Warfighting* does not achieve this, and to be fair, this is a burden beyond the scope of any single document, no matter how comprehensive. But the document does reflect a set of confusions, or perhaps anxieties, that mirror a broader ambivalence in Australian culture about the relationship between geography and history, between whom we are and who we might want to be.

Army's story shows the importance of not underestimating the power of an organisation's imagination to create and shape that organisation and its relationship with the world. We need to be able to ask the question about any organisation, what does it dream at night? Army's story, including its relationship with the rest of the ADF and Defence, reflects a larger story about Australia and its identity in a globalising world. Because of Army's particular significance in Australian culture, decisions about Army always provoke anxiety because they reflect deeper cultural anxieties. Do we have the imaginative capacity in our thinking about defence and strategy to resolve these anxieties?

... Army's warfighting history has been expeditionary and in coalition.

Do we have the imaginative capacity in our thinking about defence and strategy to resolve these anxieties?

The decision to acquire the Abrams tank that, perhaps unfairly, is increasingly the avatar of the Hardened and Networked Army, is interesting, not simply in terms of the debate about its merits and the utility of that capability. The level of debate it has provoked reflects deeper anxieties about identity and the future.¹⁵ To this extent the Abrams represents more than just a capability. It represents ideas about what Army is and might become. This is why the arguments about the Abrams, when conducted in terms of capability, never quite settle the question of whether it should have been acquired. The decision contains any number of potential meanings as it is interpreted against an evolving strategic, cultural and political environment. Like any significant capability, in some contexts it makes sense, in others it does not. The reality is that we do not know what the long term consequences of this decision will be. What will be interesting is how over time and in response to events and culture the Australian strategic imagination evolves and in doing so re-interprets the nature and meaning of this particular capability. Will the tanks represent a state the Army passes through as it continues to imagine itself and undertake operations and struggle with the soil from which it has grown? Will they change core elements of Army's identity and culture? Will they function as a manifestation of Army's desire to transform itself into something, a different sort of force, to liberate it from Australia's strategic geography? What will they say in time about the quality of Army's imagination? I do not know the answer to these questions. What I do know is that the answers will be shaped by the continuing development of Army's imagination as it works and is challenged by events and ideas, and as it experiences the reality of operations.

The American imagination is vast. To paraphrase one of its great poets, Walt Whitman, it contains multitudes. Perhaps the most important thing we could do is to study it, for it influences us profoundly. Taxonomy of the American strategic imagination and its expression in defence policy is beyond the scope of this essay, but its effects are well known. There is the restless quest to re-make the world, the idea that force, especially military force, can shape redemptive outcomes, the desire for geographical transcendence, the belief that technology can liberate strategy from the constraint of time and space. These ideas, pathologies in some contexts, are deeply rooted in American history and culture.

Because our defence relationship with the United States is so close and the power of the American imagination so pervasive, particularly as it expresses itself in technology, one of the major challenges we face is establishing and maintaining our own strategic identity. We are influenced whether or not we want to be because our imagination is challenged and influenced. The extent to which we lack awareness

What will they say
in time about the
quality of Army's
imagination?

of the nature of that influence means that we live and work in an imaginative reality that we don't understand as completely as we need to. An interesting tension in recent years in strategic policy has been the interaction between the US strategic imagination, unbounded in its conception of reality by any limit, and the Australian strategic imagination with its careful construction of limits. The relationship with the United States has been an imaginative challenge that has found expression in policy and action. A subtext of recent debates about Defence of Australia versus the ADF as expeditionary force or, more broadly, the role of geography in shaping strategy, has in part been about the extent to which the American strategic imagination should be allowed to shape the reality we might choose to live in. The US alliance provokes anxieties and contradictory feelings both within the policy community and more broadly, because it challenges our imagination and hence our construction of what we are and might be. Its most powerful and seductive challenge is to our sense of geographical realism.

There are many other examples of how imagination shapes in ways we do not necessarily understand. In Defence, imagination appears in many guises and has many voices, often contradictory or, as I suggested above, in contention. In this sense Defence is a conversation, an incomplete work, an evolving imagination in formation through the interaction of many imaginations. I have tried briefly to discuss Army from the perspective of eternity, but one could talk of the other Services or Defence or its agencies in the same way. The Defence Signals Directorate, for example, is an organisation with a powerful imagination. Navy and Air Force have their dreaming, as does the Public Service. We do not have, and perhaps do not need, a conceptual vocabulary to analyse and discuss the life of imagination in Defence. Yet we need to understand it, where it lives, and how to influence it. As I said above, this is the core leadership task. But beyond that we need to be able to stand outside and see it, to know what it is saying and might be making us say. If we are unable to do this, we end up as the speaker of Blake's poem, *The Tyger*, frightened of our own creations.

As I reflect on this essay, it occurs to me that we are in most danger when we allow our imagination to separate from those realities in the world that establish limits. Geography, distance, time, limited numbers of people—the obstacles that have shaped us as a culture—these are the core elements that have shaped and make up the Australian strategic imagination. Our glory is our imagination's struggle against them as we try to live fully in a global community. Our peril is the temptation to ignore what they have to say to us about the limits of what we are or might become.

We do not have ... a
conceptual vocabulary
to analyse and discuss
the life of imagination
in Defence.

THE TYGER¹⁶

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forest of the night
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And What shoulder, and what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? and what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain?
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears,
And watered heaven with their tears,
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the lamb make thee?

Tyger! Tyger! burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?¹⁷

ENDNOTES

- 1 Available by download from: <<http://www.blakearchive.org/exist/blake/archive/-work.xq?workid=jerusalem&java=no>>.
- 2 View the image at: <<http://www.blakearchive.org/blake/images/songsie.z.p42.300.jpg>>.
- 3 George Packer, *The Assassins' Gate: America in Iraq*, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, New York, 2005.
- 4 Thomas Hobbes, 'Of Imagination', *Leviathan*, Chapter 2, downloadable from: <<http://oregonstate.edu/instruct/phl302/texts/hobbes/leviathan-a.html#CHAPTERII>>.
- 5 *Macquarie Concise Dictionary, Revised Third edition*, 2004.
- 6 Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*, 1947.
- 7 See Peter Edwards, *Arthur Tange: Last of the Mandarins*, Allen and Unwin, 2006, for an excellent discussion of Tange as Defence reformer.
- 8 Hugh White, 'Primal Fears, Primal Ambitions', *Arena Magazine*, Number 76, April–May 2005.
- 9 Henry Handel Richardson, *Australia Felix*, a trilogy published in one volume in 1930.
- 10 Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities, Report to the Minister for Defence*, March 1986, p. 3.
- 11 See in particular Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report and Ministerial Statement, Hansard, 3 June 1986. Many of Beazley's speeches circle around the theme of self reliance, the relationship of geography to strategy, and the decision John Curtin made to return the AIF to Australia. The continuity of theme and thinking over nearly three decades has been strong. The speech referred to above is a particularly important one because of the link with Dibb's work, commissioned by Beazley, and, through the reference to Curtin, the argument for an historical continuity in strategic thinking. In my view, Beazley's speeches in totality represent the main canon of Australian strategic thought. Much of the argument of recent years has been attempts of varying success to challenge this status.
- 12 See *Beyond Iraq, Address to the Lowy Institute Sydney*, 10 August 2006, and *The U.S. and Australian Alliance in an East Asian Context*, delivered at the University of Sydney, June 30, 2001.
- 13 See *Australia's Defence and Security: Challenges & Opportunities at the Start of the 21st Century*, 14 September 2005, ASPI Inaugural International Conference 2005.
- 14 Department of Defence, Future Land Operating Concept: *Complex Warfighting* (Draft Developing Concept), Australian Army, 1 June 2006, accessible from: <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/lwsc/Publications/Soldier_21stC.pdf>.
- 15 A recent example of such anxieties is the Bulletin article, *The Wrong War*, of 27 September 2006.
- 16 Downloaded from <<http://www.poetry.com.au/classics/titles/t/tiger.html>> on 1 November 2006.

- 17 For a comprehensive exploration of the poem and its interpretations, see
<<http://www.english.uga.edu/wblake/SIE/42/42borowsky.bib.html>>.

THE AUTHOR

Brendan Sargeant is a career public servant who worked in Defence for many years. He has held senior appointments including Counsellor Defence Policy Washington, Deputy Director Intelligence, Defence Signals Directorate; and Head, Strategic Policy Division. He is now working in Centrelink on the Access card Project.

IDEAS AND ISSUES

BOMBERS AND TANKS

UNDERSTANDING THE MYTHS*

DAVID KILCULLEN

ABSTRACT

The decision by the Australian Government to purchase the M1A1 Abrams main battle tank, although widely misunderstood by analysts and media alike, complements exactly the Australian Defence Force's concept of combined-arms teams in complex environments. Much of the poorly informed commentary about the decision drew inspiration from myths about the role and utility of armour in the Australian context. Here, the author dispels those myths with a careful study of the importance of the firepower, mobility and protection the Abrams offers, especially when used in conjunction with infantry and air power.

* This article is derived from an internal discussion paper written by Lieutenant Colonel Kilcullen as part of development efforts for the Army's Future Land Operating Concept, *Complex Warfighting*, of which Lieutenant Colonel Kilcullen was the author. He has since left the Army and now works overseas for another agency. The editors of *AAJ* have decided to publish the piece as a contribution to the ongoing topical debate about the M1A1 Abrams tank

The approach to the town of Cambrai in northern France traverses a windswept, bleak landscape of poplar-lined avenues, dense woods and chalk downs: the backdrop to the First World War. In the public gardens, near the town centre, is a war memorial next to a monument commemorating the pioneer aviator Louis Blériot.

THE ANGEL'S WINGS

While the sheer number of war monuments on the Western Front is somewhat overwhelming, the memorial at Cambrai, scene of the first major tank battle in history, is unique. It is surmounted by an angel, leaning forward into the wind, wings trailing. Huddling for protection under the angel's wings are several grim-faced infantry soldiers. The wings, as they sweep backward, gradually assume the form of a tank. For an infantry officer, the symbolism is obvious. The guardian angel of infantry in battle—and rarely did anyone have more need of a guardian—is the tank.

Many innovations emerged from the slaughter of the Western Front. One was the dream of armoured warfare, appositely expressed in the angel's wings—the notion that tanks could break the deadlock of the trenches and protect the infantry in close battle. Another, evoked by the Blériot monument, was the idea that aeroplanes could defeat the enemy through long-range strategic bombardment, avoiding the close battle altogether. Between the wars this came to be known as the 'Bomber Dream', and found its clearest expression in the writings of Italian theorist Giulio Douhet.

Both ideas influenced warfare into the new century: consider the 'shock and awe' air campaign and the armoured 'battle for Baghdad' in the 2003 Iraq war. Both notions contain a large measure of truth and yet, unfortunately, their protagonists have often seen land and air forces as competing capabilities when, in fact, their greatest strength is that they are complementary. The attempt to portray tanks and aircraft as opposites dominates recent writing—much of it from people who should (and perhaps do) know better—on the Government's decision to replace the obsolete Leopard 1 tank, in service since the early 1970s, with the newer Abrams M1A1.

The public discussion over the need for a new tank has spawned several myths—myths in the classical anthropological sense of validatory beliefs

The guardian angel
of infantry in battle
... is the tank.

The attempt to portray
tanks and aircraft as
opposites dominates
recent writing ...

that justify the holder's attitudes and behaviours. In this article, my aim is not to contribute to the polemics of the debate, but rather to examine some of these myths from a military-technical standpoint, and to show how the claimed contradiction between air forces and armoured forces (the sub-text that underlies the 'bombers versus tanks' debate) is equally mythical.

TEN TANK MYTHS

Based on a completely unscientific survey of Australian media reporting, academic and pseudo-academic writing about the tank purchase, it appears that the ten most widely held myths about the tank are these:

1. Tanks are old technology.
2. Tanks are primarily intended for killing other tanks.
3. Tanks are primarily intended for high-intensity warfare.
4. All tanks are basically the same.
5. Tanks are very expensive.
6. Attack helicopters have assumed the role of tanks in modern war.
7. Infantry bunker-busting weapons can do the job of the tank.
8. Tanks send an unacceptable political message.
9. Tanks are unsuited to the terrain of Australia and the Asia-Pacific.
10. Tanks are difficult to deploy outside Australia by ship or aircraft.

Since these myths are sometimes exploited in support of arguments about Australian strategy and capability, each is worth exploring in detail.

MYTH 1 — TANKS ARE OLD TECHNOLOGY

According to the first myth, warfare has moved on since tanks were invented in the early 20th century. Given today's technology, this myth suggests, there must surely be a better approach than to put a cannon into a big metal box and drive it at the enemy.

Of course, the idea of the tank has been around for a long time. Leonardo Da Vinci produced a number of tank designs, Richard Edgeworth developed the caterpillar track as early as 1770 and a small number of steam-powered tracked vehicles were used in the Crimean War. In late 1915, responding to the deadlock of trench warfare, a British team under Lieutenant Colonel E. H. Swinton designed the first true tank—a protected, direct-fire weapon on a high-mobility platform, used for crossing broken terrain under fire, to conduct close combat. By 1918, tanks were used by all major armies and achieved key successes in lives saved and territory gained.

So, yes, tanks are old technology. But they are old technology in the same sense that aeroplanes and interplanetary rockets are old technology. Modern tanks bear about as much resemblance to ‘Mother’ (the first tank of early 1916) as modern combat aircraft bear to the Blériot monoplane, or modern guided weapons to Goddard’s experimental rockets of the 1920s. The technologies have changed enormously since the early days, but the basic principles of these weapons are still valid. *Homo sapiens* is still a terrestrial, land-dwelling mammal. There is still a need to defeat the enemy and control the land—where human beings live—to prevent conflict or prevail in war. To do this, some form of protected firepower and mobility is still required.

This requirement for protected firepower and mobility is what is sometimes referred to in military circles as the problem of ‘the last three hundred metres’. This is the zone where the enemy can see and kill friendly troops using rifles and heavy weapons, but where friendly air-delivered bombs and artillery cannot be used because, due to their blast radius, they damage friendly troops as much as the enemy. In this zone, precision direct fire—fire from weapons where the firer can see and engage the enemy directly—is essential to allow the force to close with the position. But in the extremely lethal environment of modern battle, a direct-fire system must be protected if it is to survive long enough to do its job. This means it must avoid being hit (through stealth and mobility) or be able to survive a hit (through protection—which, given today’s technology, means armour). When firepower and protection are combined with mobility, we have an armoured platform that can manoeuvre across the lethal zone of the last three hundred metres, apply precision fire, and allow the force to manoeuvre. We call this platform a tank.

A related misconception is that tanks are less necessary in modern network-centric warfare with an all-pervasive communications network providing situational awareness and responsive fire support. In fact, the communications systems that enable this network-centric approach are a critical factor. Without armoured vehicles, every communications system has to be carried through the firefight on someone’s back. This limits the power and range of communications systems to the amount individual soldiers

... there must surely be
a better approach than
to put a cannon into
a big metal box and
drive it at the enemy.

Without armoured
vehicles, every
communications system
has to be carried ... on
someone’s back.

can carry across rough terrain while someone is shooting at them. Needless to say, this amount is tiny compared to what vehicles can carry. Moreover, in an infantry fight everyone is constantly taking cover, entering buildings and tunnels, crawling through confined spaces and so on—the ability to communicate is severely hampered by interference from the terrain. By contrast, when tanks are present they provide a protected, mobile communications node that can survive ‘out in the street’, providing an anchor for the dismounted soldier’s communications network and relaying information without terrain interference. The tank’s thermal and visual sensor systems also provide a wealth of information that contributes to the sensor and communications networks. Far from being an anachronism, tanks are central to a network-centric capability for close combat.

This leads to the next myth—that tanks are designed for killing other tanks.

MYTH 2—TANKS ARE PRIMARILY INTENDED FOR KILLING OTHER TANKS

Most people visualise tanks as heavy armoured behemoths sweeping across the desert or the plains in *Blitzkrieg* style, destroying enemy tanks at long range. In the Australian context, tanks have never been employed in this way. The notion previously described—tanks as the key to the ‘last three hundred metres’—is quite different.

Australian tanks have always operated primarily as part of a combined-arms team with infantry, engineers, air power and artillery. They have mostly been employed in complex terrain—urban, jungle and coastal areas—rather than in open country. High mobility and the capacity to traverse open areas under fire are still essential, but the primary role of the tank in close combat has been as part of an infantry-tank team. For this reason, tanks employed by the Australian Army have often been quite different from those of other armies that *do* primarily engage in sweeping manoeuvre in open country. A few historical examples serve to illustrate this fact.

In the Second World War, the Matilda tank was almost useless for tank-on-tank combat in Europe and North Africa. It was too slow and, although very well protected, its gun was too small for tank-on-tank engagements. By contrast, in New Guinea, Bougainville and later in Borneo, the Matilda was an ideal intimate support weapon for infantry fighting in jungle and plantation areas. Even in mountainous country, these tanks were so valuable in saving lives that the pace of tank movement often regulated the speed of an advance. Tank-on-tank engagements were very rare, whereas actions against bunkers and infantry were the norm.

In the Second World War, the Matilda tank was ... too slow and, although very well protected, its gun was too small for tank-on-tank engagements.

Similarly, in Vietnam, the Centurion tank—already obsolescent in NATO and heavily modified by the Israelis for desert manoeuvre—was found to be ideal against bunkers and in complex urban and jungle terrain. Indeed, it was introduced into the Vietnam conflict specifically to address an identified weakness in the survivability of Australian infantry forces against Viet Cong heavy weapons and bunker systems. A 2002 study by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation found that attacks on bunker systems in Vietnam by Australian infantry and artillery without tanks only succeeded in 65 per cent of cases and involved significant Australian casualties. When tanks were present, the success rate climbed to 95 per cent while the ratio of friendly to enemy casualties was *six times lower* than in attacks without tanks. The study's authors concluded that 'armour made a major contribution to the effectiveness of attacks', both in terms of lives saved and increased chance of success.

Are these historical conclusions still valid? Ask anyone who participated in the battles of Basra or Baghdad, or the fighting in Fallujah. No tank unit in the Coalition forces in 2003 suffered a single fatality through enemy tanks or anti-tank weapons during the entire period of major combat operations. Although many tanks have been disabled in the insurgency that followed, the firepower, communications capability and protection afforded by armour—as part of a combined-arms team, including air power—has been shown to be essential time after time.

In today's context, the primary purpose of Australian tanks remains close combat as part of a combined-arms team with infantry, artillery, aviation and engineers. Infantry and tanks work intimately together—the tanks systematically destroy enemy positions that could harm the infantry while the infantry destroy anti-armour weapons that could harm the tanks. Combined with air power and suppressive artillery or naval gunfire, this method produces excellent results in complex terrain such as cities and jungles. In protecting themselves against one weapon system, enemy soldiers expose themselves to another. Clearly, however, the requirements for tanks in this type of operation may be quite different from the requirements for rapid manoeuvre in open country, regardless of the intensity of the battle.

This leads to the third myth—the idea that the tank is primarily intended for high-intensity conflict.

No tank unit in the Coalition forces in 2003 suffered a single fatality through enemy tanks or anti-tank weapons during the entire period of major combat operations.

MYTH 3—TANKS ARE PRIMARILY INTENDED FOR HIGH-INTENSITY WARFARE

Just as people tend to visualise tanks conducting sweeping manoeuvre and destroying other tanks, likewise there is a persistent—albeit inaccurate—notion that tanks are best suited for high-intensity warfare and are irrelevant in lower-intensity conflict. Again, it is true that tanks originated in the extremely high-intensity environment of the First World War, were refined and developed in the Second World War, and have been widely used in high-intensity conflicts since then.

However, it is important to understand what we mean by ‘high intensity’. The notion of ‘high intensity’ reflects factors such as the size of forces engaged, the tempo of combat action, the degree of sophistication of weapons employed, and the overall cost in lives. Clearly, the problem of ‘the last three hundred metres’ exists in any conflict where two opposing sides engage in close combat, independent of the factors that make an overall campaign ‘high intensity’. Indeed, the difference between high- and low-intensity conflicts actually reflects *how often* troops encounter highly lethal force, rather than the absolute level of lethality. In a high-intensity conflict, lethal force might be encountered every day, whereas in a lower-intensity conflict this might be a less frequent experience. Yet the absolute level of lethality would be the same—there is no such thing as a ‘low-intensity’ lethal firefight. Particularly for a defence force and a national population base as small as Australia’s, even a few casualties during these (albeit infrequent) lethal firefights in low- or medium-intensity conflicts can have major strategic implications.

The implications of battle casualties have largely provided the impetus behind the widespread use of tanks in peacekeeping or peacemaking operations and low-intensity conflict. All major peacekeeping forces in the former Yugoslavia, Africa and the Middle East have employed armoured fighting vehicles, often including main battle tanks. Tanks have been critical in preventing bloodshed by dissuading militias or guerrillas from interfering with the peace process. Where combat has been unavoidable, even in peacekeeping situations, tanks have allowed peacekeeping forces to quickly overmatch the opposition, saving both enemy and friendly casualties and preventing combat from escalating by ending it quickly. Many instances of the use of tanks in Bosnia-Herzegovina fall into this category.

Particularly for [Australia],
even a few casualties during
... low- or medium-intensity
conflicts can have major
strategic implications.

This successful employment of tanks has made them an imperative for any army before it can engage in military operations involving the possibility of serious armed opposition—including peacekeeping. Even in East Timor, had only a few engagements gone slightly differently, there would have been an immediate need for tanks to avoid significant Australian casualties. Indeed, the Army's tanks were forward-deployed to Darwin's port facility during the Timor campaign in order to meet precisely that eventuality. In a very real sense, an army that lacks tanks is limited to all but the most benign threat environments and to the conduct of constabulary-type tasks. An army without tanks is, in effect, a police force.

These factors apply to armoured vehicles more broadly, not just tanks, and here it is important to understand another myth—that all armoured vehicles are basically the same.

MYTH 4—ALL ARMOURED VEHICLES ARE BASICALLY THE SAME

Many people assume that all armoured vehicles represent essentially the same capability. In fact, even in the smaller category of 'main battle tanks', the variation between models is enormous. Moreover, as described, the requirements for tank-on-tank engagement are different from those of intimate support in complex terrain; so, not only are Australian tanks different from other tanks, they *need* to be different.

Thus, when the United States Army and the British Army announced their intention to move to lighter-weight tanks that were more deployable in a greater variety of circumstances, some assumed that the same requirements applied to Australia. That is, they assumed that we too should be replacing our tanks with a lighter-weight 'medium vehicle' such as the US 'Stryker' vehicle, which is similar to the Australian six-wheeled light armoured vehicle (ASLAV).

It is important to understand that ASLAVs are not tanks and cannot be employed in the same way. ASLAVs have extremely light armour, excellent speed, good sensors and capable weapons. They protect themselves by detecting the enemy first, moving fast, and engaging the enemy from stand-off range before they can be hit. This makes the ASLAV an outstanding asset for reconnaissance and fast-moving operations in open country. But it also means that taking it into a close fight in complex terrain without support is asking for trouble. As cities and jungles are 'cluttered' environments, the enemy cannot be detected except at very close range, or until they reveals themselves by firing. Under these circumstances, the ASLAV's method of protection breaks down—it cannot avoid being hit, and it is too close for stand-off engagement.

It is important to understand that ASLAVs are not tanks and cannot be employed in the same way.

Its sensors are degraded and its light armour becomes a critical weakness. Importantly, one way ASLAVs can survive in this environment is to shoot first (at anything that looks as if it *might* be a threat) and ask questions later. Yet this approach is unworkable where innocent civilian bystanders are present—particularly in urban operations. By contrast, tanks have excellent armour and a capable weapon, although they are slower and less stealthy than ASLAVs. They can sit in a street or a patch of jungle, accept and survive an unexpected hit, and decide whether or not to fire back or move, depending on the threat of collateral damage or civilian casualties. Tanks, in this type of environment, are much better protected against short-range snapshots from a hidden enemy using RPGs. The ideal situation is to fight with both ASLAVs and tanks, along with infantry and air power as part of a balanced combined-arms team. But ASLAVs cannot stand in for tanks in such a team—both are needed.

The ideal situation is to fight with both ASLAVs and tanks, along with infantry and air power as part of a balanced combined-arms team.

So, all armoured vehicles are not the same. Medium-weight vehicles are not a cheaper substitute for tanks, they have a different purpose. Moreover, if Australia were to match the new ‘lighter’ tanks sought by our allies, this would actually mean *increasing* the weight of our tanks. Of course, Australia’s strategic requirements are not necessarily the same as those of our allies, but the point is that the word ‘tank’ applies to a wide range of vehicles. Arguments that are valid in describing our allies’ heavy tanks cannot be simply transplanted across to Australian conditions. Leopard 1 is like Merkava or Challenger in the same way that a Porsche is like a Range Rover. Both are luxury cars but their uses, characteristics and relevance to any particular owner’s lifestyle are quite different. The use of luxury cars as a metaphor highlights the next myth—that tanks are extremely expensive.

MYTH 5— TANKS ARE VERY EXPENSIVE

It is true that military capabilities are extremely costly. Warfare is one of the most capital-intensive enterprises in the world, and its tools are expensive to purchase and to maintain—which is a good reason for ensuring this process is efficient. In this sense, tanks *are* expensive; yet there is more to ‘expense’ than meets the eye.

In the first place, in comparison with other capabilities, tanks require a relatively modest outlay. A Leopard 1 tank cost about A\$1 million (in 1971 dollars) when purchased, whereas a modern tank today could be purchased for about A\$3.5 million (a broadly equivalent amount in today’s dollars). In context, the Government’s decision to replace Leopard with Abrams (Project Land 907) involves a total cost of

around A\$550 million. This compares to a total cost of around A\$15 *billion* for the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter. This is not to criticise the cost of the Joint Strike Fighter—there is a demonstrated need for advanced air warfare capability and this is inevitably expensive. Rather, the point is that *all* military capabilities are expensive, but advanced land capabilities—in this instance the tank—tend to be an order of magnitude cheaper than advanced capabilities for air or maritime warfare.

Further, the cost of tanks needs to be considered in the context of the cost involved in conducting military operations without them. These costs are both human—as discussed previously, tanks save lives by a factor of about six—and financial, if we mount a military campaign at enormous cost but without success, thus wasting large amounts of taxpayers' money for no national benefit.

The example of the Joint Strike Fighter highlights the Bomber Dream—the notion that air power can eliminate the need for close battle, rendering ground forces irrelevant. The latest iteration of this is the myth that attack helicopters have replaced the tank.

MYTH 6—ATTACK HELICOPTERS HAVE ASSUMED THE ROLE OF TANKS IN MODERN WAR

The attack helicopter is a phenomenal capability. It is fast, agile, well-armed and has outstanding sensors and surveillance capabilities. As an air platform, it is free from the friction of topography and can manoeuvre more easily than ground elements. As an anti-tank platform the attack helicopter is highly capable, and thus appealing as a potential replacement for the tank. This viewpoint was expressed by a very senior civilian Defence official at an Army conference in 2003, and is thus a viewpoint that deserves to be taken seriously.

Unfortunately, in the Australian context, this too is a myth. As previously discussed, the Australian Army uses tanks far differently from its allies, its primary purpose in using tanks being to provide intimate support to a combined-arms team in close combat, not just to kill other tanks at long range. In terms of long-range anti-tank capability, attack helicopters are highly capable. But in terms of close combat, they are severely restricted in comparison with tanks.

Tanks have direct protection—the ability to *survive* being hit. They can sit on a street or in a jungle, under the canopy or the urban clutter, identify targets of immediate threat and neutralise them in an extremely precise manner using optics,

[Replacing the Leopard]
involves a total cost of
around A\$550 million
[compared] to a total cost of
around A\$15 *billion* for the
F-35 Joint Strike Fighter.

sensors and direct-fire systems. Given appropriate rules of engagement, the risk of civilian casualties is low compared to air systems that sit above the canopy/clutter and have more difficulty in identifying targets. Tanks have indefinite endurance—they can accompany other elements of the team and stay present on the ground permanently. Helicopters require immense amounts of fuel to achieve such endurance and, in fact, can achieve only a fraction of the full-time intimate presence achieved by tanks.

Moreover, the Army's new Eurocopter Tiger helicopters are not 'attack helicopters'. They are instead 'armed reconnaissance helicopters' optimised for stealth, reconnaissance, long-range fire support and strike missions. Unlike tanks, they rely on indirect protection—the ability to *avoid* being hit. They lack some of the anti-tank punch of true attack helicopters, which is appropriate since their role is different. They are operational-level tools applied by the commander to affect the course of an entire campaign, rather than assets such as the tank, which also have operational-level application but are primarily tactical tools.

None of this is a criticism of attack helicopters, or of air power generally—these are essential, war-winning elements in an overall combined-arms and joint service team. But they do not replace the tank. It is not a question of air power versus tanks—both are needed. The question is one of balance: how much of each is needed? This will be examined shortly, but meanwhile there is another, similar myth that needs to be explored—the idea that infantry bunker-busting weapons can replace the tank.

MYTH 7—INFANTRY BUNKER-BUSTING WEAPONS CAN DO THE JOB OF THE TANK

The infantry capability to destroy tanks using unguided and guided weapons has increased dramatically in recent years. The Government's purchase of Javelin missiles has given the Australian infantry unrivalled capability to destroy armoured vehicles—but Javelin requires long sight lines, has a distinct minimum range, and needs time to acquire a target. In close, complex fighting in villages, towns and jungles, such range and time are not necessarily available. To supplement guided

... in terms of close combat, [attack helicopters] are severely restricted in comparison with tanks.

Javelin requires long sight lines, has a distinct minimum range, and needs time to acquire a target.

weapons, infantry soldiers therefore carry unguided rocket and recoilless systems known as ‘bunker-busters’ because they are also effective against hard points such as fortifications.

Again, there is a view (outside the infantry, by the way—few infantry soldiers would agree with it) that bunker-busting weapons have now reached such sophistication that they can replace the tank. Unfortunately, again, this is not actually the case.

A simple logic flow clarifies this point. To replace tanks, infantry bunker-busting weapons would need to be capable of destroying enemy weapons and troops, reducing hard points and creating entry points in buildings. They would need sensors and communications to allow them to detect and engage targets and work with the rest of the combined-arms team. This would require a crew-served weapon and would mean carrying several rounds (tanks typically carry around 70) in order to sustain the battle. Even with only a few rounds, the team would need some kind of vehicle to carry their ammunition, sensors and communications, or they would quickly become exhausted. The bunker-buster team would also need to cross rough, broken terrain under fire in order to move around the battlefield. Thus the vehicle carrying their weapon would need all-terrain capability. In approaching the battle, they would need protection from enemy artillery and mortars—without such protection, they would not last long. They would also need sufficient protection to expose themselves to fire while scanning to acquire targets.

So, to make infantry bunker-busters a viable replacement for tanks would require a heavy weapon able to penetrate buildings and destroy strongpoints, served by a crew of two or three, mounted in a high-mobility vehicle with protection against enemy fire and with sensors to acquire targets. In other words, to replace tanks with bunker-busters would mean turning the bunker-buster into a protected, mobile weapon system able to conduct close combat: in short, a tank. What this means is that, given the technology of today and of the foreseeable future, some form of tank or armoured gun system will still be needed. Indeed, most lay people, when looking at any type of armoured vehicle, would consider it a ‘tank’.

This highlights the next myth—that tanks send an unacceptable political message.

... to replace tanks with
bunker-busters would
mean turning the
bunker-buster into ...
in short, a tank.

MYTH 8—TANKS SEND AN UNACCEPTABLE POLITICAL MESSAGE

Some have argued that deploying tanks sends an aggressive political message, creates ill-feeling in the region, and thus counterbalances any tactical advantage gained by using tanks. Most recently, a well-known academic theorist expressed this in an article arguing that the Australian Government would be extremely unwilling to risk the opprobrium of deploying tanks in the capital cities of our regional neighbours.

Again, this is a myth. In the first place, a glance at the evening news will provide ample evidence that most people in the world cannot tell the difference between tanks and other types of armoured vehicles. Regularly, news footage of armoured personnel carriers, reconnaissance vehicles or ASLAVs is accompanied by voice-overs labelling them ‘tanks’. In the often-quoted example of East Timor, where tanks stayed behind but other armoured vehicles deployed, it is worth looking at the media reporting of the operation—many media reports mention ‘Australian tanks’ in Dili. Although the Indonesian media also spoke about ‘Australian tanks’ in Timor, criticism of Australian heavy-handedness focussed on troops’ demeanour rather than the presence of armour, emphasising posture rather than platforms. Looking at this same issue from a different perspective, should the Government decide that a situation warrants the deployment of military forces (with or without tanks) to a regional city, the situation would probably be so politically serious that the presence of tanks would make little difference to regional perceptions.

It is obvious that some people will perceive any use of military forces, of any type whatsoever, as aggressive. The issue is not whether someone may be offended by the presence of armour. The issue is how many casualties Australia would be willing to accept in order to avoid giving such offence. As indicated, tanks are vital in minimising friendly casualties in close combat. Thus, in any situation where combat might occur, a decision not to deploy tanks would probably increase the likelihood of additional Australian dead or wounded. If these losses were accompanied by mission failure—quite likely in the absence of a complete combined-arms team—the political fallout could also be quite negative.

In short, the idea that tanks send an unacceptable political message is a myth. The same message is sent by any deployment of forces, of whatever composition. Moreover, failure to use tanks—and the accompanying increase in casualties and potential mission failure—would send an equally negative message.

... a decision not to deploy tanks would probably increase the likelihood of additional Australian dead or wounded.

**MYTH 9—TANKS ARE UNSUITED TO THE TERRAIN
OF AUSTRALIA AND THE ASIA–PACIFIC**

Regardless of political impact, some have argued that tanks are of little practical value in the terrain of the Asia–Pacific. The region is perceived as an expanse of impenetrable jungles, impassable swamps and mountains where tanks are believed to be of little practical value. This too is a myth.

This myth is almost identical to a widespread misconception in Malaya before the Japanese invasion of 1941–42. This misconception held that the Malay Peninsula was impenetrable to tanks or mechanised forces and that, as a result, the primary threat was from the sea. This proved tragically misguided as the Japanese rapidly penetrated the peninsula with a balanced mix of light and mechanised forces—including tanks.

The fact is that the region is increasingly urbanised and even rural areas are often sparsely vegetated. Even in jungle areas the use of tanks is not particularly problematic, as Australian forces demonstrated during the Second World War in Bougainville, New Guinea and Borneo. Similarly, all parties to the conflict in Vietnam employed tanks, as does every major regional army today. Tanks are readily employable throughout the region as our regional partners continually demonstrate. The notion that tanks cannot be used in the region is a myth. The related idea that tanks cannot be used in northern Australia is equally mythical—Australia’s tank regiment has been based in Darwin for years and exercises regularly in the north.

Clearly, conditions in northern Australia and the Asia–Pacific are different, and methods of operating tanks in the desert or in Europe would not necessarily be appropriate for this region. The same issues apply equally to light troops and air power. But this is precisely the point: Australia does not need, or intend, to employ tanks for sweeping *blitzkrieg* or tank-on-tank manoeuvre at long range. The need is for protected firepower and mobility as part of a joint combined-arms team in the close battle. The issues involved in using tanks in the region are well understood, and Australia—and every other major regional army—have been using tanks for decades.

Even in jungle areas the use of tanks is not particularly problematic, as Australian forces demonstrated during the Second World War in Bougainville, New Guinea and Borneo.

MYTH 10—TANKS ARE DIFFICULT TO DEPLOY OUTSIDE AUSTRALIA

The final myth is that tanks are ‘strategically unusable’ because they are difficult to deploy outside Australia. They are portrayed as heavy metal machinery which cannot be moved by air or sealift and is therefore ‘stuck’ in Australia. Again, this idea is a myth.

In fact, tanks can be easily deployed using the Navy’s amphibious landing platforms, HMAS *Manoora* and *Kanimbla*, and will be even easier to deploy with the planned replacement ships for these vessels. Using these amphibious ships, the entire tank regiment can be moved in one lift and disembarked by landing craft that are easily able to handle tanks (indeed, they were specifically designed for such a purpose).

Moreover, amphibious ships only need to move tanks if the intention is to land tanks across the shore away from a port. This is a necessary capability but it would not be a first choice. Wherever possible, the preference would be to secure a port facility as a sea point of disembarkation. Wherever a port is available, any appropriate civilian ‘roll-on, roll-off’ vessel or car ferry can be used to deploy tanks. This is precisely what happened when the 1st Armoured Regiment moved from Melbourne to Darwin in the mid-1990s. For this move, the entire regiment with all its vehicles (including tanks, support vehicles and administrative transport) was shipped using only three decks of a nine-deck civilian commercial vessel. In a low- or medium-intensity environment, a port facility would almost certainly be available. Similarly, in both Gulf Wars, Korea, Vietnam and other high-intensity conflicts, ports were readily available to disembark armoured vehicles.

Clearly, tanks cannot be carried in Australia’s current RAAF transport aircraft. But the Government’s decision to purchase the C-17 transport aircraft will overcome this limitation, and in the meantime tanks can be carried in allied aircraft and chartered civilian transport aircraft. Similarly, all of Australia’s other armoured vehicles can be moved by C-130 Hercules. So the deployability issues surrounding the tank are well understood and represent no significant obstacle to their employment. The idea that tanks are difficult or impossible to deploy is, in short, a myth.

Wherever a port is available, any appropriate civilian ‘roll-on, roll-off’ vessel or car ferry can be used to deploy tanks.

THE REALITY OF TANKS IN THE AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

Having examined these myths, it is clear that the word ‘tank’, originally used by Lieutenant Colonel Swinton in early 1916 as a codename to hide the real nature of the new vehicles, is still (unfortunately) capable of generating confusion. The myth is that tanks are old, expensive, technology, primarily intended for killing other tanks in high-intensity warfare. Those who believe this myth would argue that attack helicopters have assumed the role of tanks in modern war, while infantry bunker-busting weapons can do an equally proficient job. Moreover, the same armchair commentators argue, tanks send an unacceptable political message, are unsuited to the Asia-Pacific terrain and are difficult to deploy outside Australia.

The reality is that modern tanks are flexible, high-technology weapon systems that provide an enormous advantage, reducing casualties by a factor of six in the close battle. In the Australian context they operate primarily as part of a combined-arms team with artillery, light forces and air power. Long-range *Blitzkrieg* in open terrain is largely irrelevant to this reality—instead, agile, well-armed, well-protected tanks are essential in the manoeuvre of a balanced joint team. This applies at every level of intensity because of the need to cross ‘the last three hundred metres’, and it applies to warfighting, peace enforcement and humanitarian operations in any environment where Australian forces are likely to encounter opposition.

The reality is that modern tanks are flexible, high-technology weapon systems that provide an enormous advantage, reducing casualties by a factor of six in the close battle.

AIR POWER—THE BOMBER DREAM AND THE ‘AFGHAN MODEL’

Like the tank, air power has generated considerable myth and confusion, not least the idea that capable air forces and capable ground forces are in some sense opposed or competing assets. This has led to the myth that Australia must choose between high-technology, capable air forces and capable ground forces. This misconception is also a legacy of the same trench warfare that produced the tank.

The ‘Afghan model’ is a powerful idea and needs further exploration.

In the 1920s the idea emerged that independent, self-protecting air forces could attack an enemy nation in its homeland. These air forces would conduct ‘strategic bombardment’, undermining the enemy’s industrial base and terrorising the enemy population, causing it to turn against the enemy government. This would cause the enemy to collapse without the intense ground combat that had characterised the First World War. Giulio Douhet, in his classic work *The Command of the Air*, was one of the first and most prominent advocates of this idea. American Billy Mitchell and British theorist Arthur ‘Bomber’ Harris were also key advocates of independent strategic bombing that became popularly known as the ‘Bomber Dream’.

The application of these ideas in the Second World War produced mixed results—the Blitz merely strengthened British resolve, while German industrial production actually increased significantly under round-the-clock Allied bombing in 1944–45. However, the use of the atomic bomb to force Japan’s surrender and the terror bombing of Dresden and Tokyo demonstrated the impact of well-targeted strategic bombing. The idea of independent strategic air power has been powerful ever since.

The most recent incarnation of this idea is the so-called ‘Afghan model’—a concept that combines precision air power with a small number of specialist forward observers operating with local indigenous ground forces. The idea of using precision air power to reinforce local indigenous ground forces (known in the US as ‘surrogate armies’) was first advanced during NATO operations in Kosovo, but limited results were achieved because the Kosovo Liberation Army proved difficult to coordinate with NATO air power. In Afghanistan, the model was refined to include special-forces advisers coordinating the Northern Alliance ground forces. Combined with precision air power, these forces achieved significant gains against the Taliban—although considerable US ground forces still had to be committed. In the Iraq war, similar use of ‘surrogate armies’ occurred in northern Iraq in 2003, with US light forces acting as advisers and controllers for supporting air power.

The ‘Afghan model’ is a powerful idea and needs further exploration. It is not a new idea: like tanks and air power, originating in the early 20th century. The French artillery doctrine of the 1920s was remarkably similar—the idea that precision long-range strike plus a network of forward-deployed observers would reduce the need for manoeuvre forces. This, in fact, was the tactical concept around which the Maginot Line was devised.

... German industrial
production actually
increased significantly
under round-the-clock
Allied bombing in
1944–45.

Success in Afghanistan and in the initial combat phase in Iraq does not alter the fact that significant ground forces—and armoured forces, at that—are still required. In Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance contained a significant proportion of armoured forces (including tanks) and engaged in several large-scale battles before the campaign objectives were achieved. Similarly, in the 2003 Iraq War, the combination of precision air power and armoured forces approaching Baghdad from several directions was the key factor in the Iraqi defeat, more so than the Kurdish–US operations in the north.

The key factor is that, in order to destroy enemy forces from the air, they must first be identified and forced to concentrate. While they remain hidden and dispersed their chances of survival are high—as demonstrated by the survival of most of the Serbian 3rd Army in Kosovo against sustained NATO bombing. Through deception, dispersion and concealment, the Serbs preserved the bulk of their forces. By contrast, in Afghanistan the Northern Alliance ground forces made the Taliban break cover and concentrate—failure to do so would have left them vulnerable to ground attack—but once they exposed themselves they could be destroyed from the air. Indeed, this concept of combining the tactical effects of air and armoured forces to place the enemy on the horns of a dilemma is fundamental to modern tactics, and was a key element of *Blitzkrieg* in the Second World War.

The true power of the Afghan model is not the idea that large-scale ground forces can be rendered unnecessary. On the contrary, such forces were highly necessary as the contrasting results in Kosovo showed—but in Afghanistan the ground forces were indigenous, non-American forces working with American air power. The rather harsh logic of the Afghan model is not that ground forces can be eliminated, but rather that the ground operation can be ‘outsourced’, transferring the risk to the forces of indigenous allies. This logic is not necessarily applicable in all circumstances, as subsequent campaigns have shown. The (highly traditional) use of advisers to support local indigenous allies in Afghanistan was the key element—not the well-proven efficacy of precision air in concert with ground forces.

... in Afghanistan the
Northern Alliance ground
forces made the Taliban
break cover and concentrate
[so] they could be destroyed
from the air.

THE SYNERGY OF GROUND AND AIR FORCES

What deductions can be made therefore from recent operations? Among other things, one key conclusion is that air power and armoured manoeuvre are not actually contradictory or opposing methods of warfare. On the contrary, all successful modern military operations include both precision air power and protected ground manoeuvre, and a balanced, strategically relevant capability needs both. This combination of measures, particularly when sea power and information warfare have been factored into the equation, poses a dilemma for the enemy. To protect themselves from one class of threats, the enemy must expose themselves to another. To survive against armoured ground forces, the enemy must concentrate and manoeuvre—exposing themselves to detection and attack from the air. To survive against air forces the enemy must disperse and hide—becoming vulnerable to ground forces.

... air power and armoured manoeuvre are not actually contradictory or opposing methods of warfare.

One implication is that, if a force develops capabilities to destroy the enemy in open terrain from the air, it must also develop the ability to fight and defeat the enemy on the ground in complex terrain, because this is where the enemy will be, taking cover from the air assault. Air power and armoured forces are not alternatives, they are two sides of the one coin—equally necessary components of a balanced force.

The term we in Australia use to describe this type of warfare is ‘combined arms’—a balanced, combined team in which each arm is employed to maximise its strength against enemy vulnerability, while the weaknesses of each arm are balanced by the strengths of the others. This is the context in which tanks would be employed—as part of a balanced, combined-arms team that includes capable light forces, air forces, maritime forces and other government agencies.

So, in developing the future ADF, the question is not ‘do we need new tanks?’ or ‘do we need new combat aircraft?’ We need both. The question is how many of each we need, and how much emphasis we should place on armoured ground force capabilities as against air power capabilities. Again, the question is not solved simply by expanding the size of the infantry force, though the Government’s recent decision to do so was clearly a sound response to ongoing operational commitments. Australia has some of the most capable infantry forces in the world, well able to operate in intense combat environments in a range of circumstances. Rather, until the decision was made to upgrade the obsolete Leopards, the problem was the lack of a correspondingly capable armoured element in the combined-arms team—without such capable armour, the risk of casualties was simply too great. As it is a

single team, the lack of a key element such as armour in the combined-arms team can undermine the entire force, rendering it unable to operate in some environments—and this applies to the whole ADF, not just the Army.

Instead, we need balanced, agile forces able to respond to a variety of environments and conflicts, and I would suggest that we will probably never achieve this while we seek to optimise the ADF for a given ‘snapshot’ in a rapidly developing strategic environment. By the time strategic assessments are written, let alone implemented—a matter of years not months—the situation they were intended to meet has almost always changed, sometimes

fundamentally. Thus, in the 1990s the Australian Army undertook a series of expeditionary deployments (Cambodia, Somalia, Rwanda, Bougainville, East Timor) with a force structure designed in the mid-1980s to defend continental Australia against a very low-level incursion threat. Meanwhile, the Navy and Air Force focussed on denying the so-called ‘sea-air gap’. These tasks were overtaken by events almost as soon as the strategic concept papers were published.

Would it not be better to optimise the force for balance, agility and versatility—the ability to conduct a variety of tasks in a range of environments, react quickly to change, and transition smoothly from one task to another? This would result in a balanced force that could provide a range of options for Government and operate in a joint ‘combined arms’ setting to maximise its capabilities. It would also avoid the need to second-guess a developing strategic environment.

Most importantly, this approach would allow us to distinguish capability acquisition decisions (what equipment we should own) from strategy (what activities we should undertake, in peace and war, to achieve national political objectives). Too often some commentators confuse equipment purchases with strategy. True enough, the capabilities we purchase set parameters around the strategic decisions the Government can make, but the two are not the same. Imagining that they are is like confusing a decision about which car to buy with a decision about which road to drive.

... we need balanced, agile forces able to respond to a variety of environments and conflicts ...

... we need a balance between advanced air warfare capabilities, advanced maritime capabilities and capable ground forces.

WHAT THEN?

What does all this mean? I would suggest that we need a balance between advanced air warfare capabilities, advanced maritime capabilities and capable ground forces—ensuring we do not purchase so much of one type of capability that we cannot afford a minimum acceptable level of the other types. All are important, and must be balanced within a joint team, if any element is to be viable.

We have moved an enormous distance beyond the battle of Cambrai, with its prototype tanks, primitive aircraft, and colossal casualties. The twin monuments at Cambrai—to the protective ‘guardian angel’ of the tank, and the pioneering spirit of air power—are a reminder that modern warfare is immensely harsh and hostile. It is an environment that cannot be overcome by blindly following ‘myths’ or ‘dreams’ of whatever hue, but only by considered and diligent development of a combined arms joint team that includes both air power and capable armoured forces.

THE AUTHOR

Dr David Kilcullen is a former Army officer currently serving on secondment to the United States Government. He has deployed to Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier Province, the Horn of Africa and Southeast Asia on counterinsurgency and counter-terrorism operations.

Before leaving the Army in 2005, he served as a platoon commander, company commander and operations officer with the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), commanded mobile training teams with the Indonesian Army in 1994 and 1995 and was the Australian Exchange Instructor at the British Army School of Infantry from 1995 to 1997. His operational experience included tours of duty as a reconnaissance officer with the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus and as operations officer with the Headquarters of the Peace Monitoring Group in Bougainville. He commanded Support Company 2RAR during the INTERFET campaign in East Timor in 1999–2000. David Kilcullen is a graduate of the Royal Military College, the Australian Command and Staff College and the ADF School of Languages. He holds a PhD from the University of New South Wales, his doctoral dissertation being a study of Indonesian terrorist and insurgent groups and counterinsurgency methods. He remains a Lieutenant Colonel in the Australian Army Reserve.



CURRENT OPERATIONS

THE ESSENTIAL THING

MISSION COMMAND AND ITS PRACTICAL APPLICATION

LIEUTENANT COLONEL ROGER NOBLE

ABSTRACT

This article explores the implementation of 'mission command' in the complex operational environment of Al Muthanna Province, southern Iraq, by the commander of the Al Muthanna Task Group 1, using his experience as a case study. The author discusses the role of the leader in preparing, enabling and executing a mission command mind-set with a bias for action 'amongst the people' by implementing *at all levels* clear intent, trust and accountability.

The essential thing is action. Action has three stages; the decision born of thought, the order or preparation for execution, and the execution itself. All three stages are governed by the will. The commander will tell them (his subordinates) what he considers necessary for the execution of his will, but no more, and he will leave them freedom in the manner thereof which alone ensures ready co-operation in the spirit of the whole. There will always be details in which a commander must just hope for the best.

General Hans von Seeckt, 1930¹

Success now, as it always has, rests with humans and the links and relationships between them. A human command system that generates ‘decision[s] born of thought’ and provides a robust freedom to act will enable military organisations to seize opportunities and perform in a coherent, coordinated decentralised manner. Systems based on centralised direction and rigid controls are not sufficiently adaptable. No amount of technology will ‘fix’ the weaknesses of the centralised approach. Humanity, reality and the ‘astonishingly complex environment’² will simply not allow it. Armies must focus on people, mission command and ‘the essential thing’—enabling coherent, focused action in accordance with ‘the spirit of the whole’.

This paper is focused on how to enable ‘the essential thing’ at battle group or unit level. The first Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG1) is used as a relevant contemporary operational case study.³ It is one example of the type of modern, complex and chaotic operational environments faced by Australian troops deployed around the world today.

The first section of this paper will describe why mission command⁴ is the logical, optimum and, perhaps only, practical philosophical approach for dealing effectively with complexity. The AMTG1 case study admirably demonstrates the ‘astonishing level of complexity’ faced by troops during modern operations. Using the case study as a tool, the key variables that generate complexity will be examined. These include terrain, threats, friendly force composition and mission aims and objectives. The purpose of the examination is to demonstrate and explain why mission command—‘decentralised decision making within the framework of superior commander’s intent’⁵—is essential to mission success.

The second section will describe how a deliberate organisational framework can be fashioned to foster and support the application of ‘mission command’. Again the AMTG1 experience will be used to provide practical examples of the framework. The paper will describe the key intellectual, moral and physical components of a mission command framework at battle group level. The primary value of this paper is as a practical, if imperfect, mission command case study and discussion generator. My firm conclusion is that mission command is the key to enabling action and will maximise the chance of success in complexity. Alternatively, micro-management and over-control will almost certainly result in failure.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT: 'WAR AMONGST THE PEOPLE'

We fight amongst the people, not on the battlefield.

General Sir Rupert Smith⁶

Uncertainty, friction, humanity and violence are the enduring characteristics of conflict that combine to deliver complexity.⁷ A close examination of the AMTG1 operational environment provides an example of just how complex it can get. The environment is the context in which a force must operate and command systems must function. While each operational environment will be different, the common thread in modern operations is complexity. Following an examination of the case study, the paper will then examine the implications for command and action.

THE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT: THE FULL PICTURE

The environment is 'composed of physical, human and informational elements which interact in a mutually reinforcing fashion, leading to extremely high-density operating environments and enormous friction upon military operations'.⁸ Understanding 'the full picture' relies on appreciating the combined impact of the physical, human and informational environment. The AMTG1 case study 'full picture' provides a practical example of the context in which modern forces are required to act.

TERRAIN

Physical Terrain. Modern Western forces are increasingly operating in complex physical terrain as the threat groups use the environment for support and to hide, survive and strike at our weaknesses. The physical terrain encountered by AMTG1 in southern Iraq was diverse. The Al Muthanna Province includes wide variations in physical terrain—from close country along the banks of the Euphrates, to highly urbanised centres in the major cities, and pure, open sandy and rocky desert. For mobile security forces, transition through terrain types was a constant tactical challenge.⁹ The physical terrain represented a continually changing, irregular jigsaw in and over which all operations had to be conducted.

Human Terrain. The social and human dimension of a society is the central source of complexity. The human terrain of southern Iraq is a tremendous example of chaotic intricacy. The AMTG1 Area of Operations (AO) was conducted amongst a population of 500 000 people who were linked by an extremely complex Arabic maze of shifting and interrelated cultural, social, political, religious, tribal and family influences. It is markedly different to Australia and was utterly alien to the majority

of our troops. At the most basic level, the language was different and our organic expertise in Arabic was limited. Cultural norms and conduct, such as the role of women, differ noticeably to that encountered in the West. In the constant cross-cultural exchange, a simple mistake could become an obscenity without the 'guilty' party even being aware of the error. Religion is a powerful influence, and religious leadership is closely entwined with political leadership. Located far from Baghdad, Al Muthanna is intensely parochial and regional in character. Local geography is important and the cities and towns of the Province have unique interests, organisations and identities. Tribal influence is crucial and pervades all aspects of daily life and action.¹⁰ The Province is politically fluid, active and prone to overheating at short-notice.

At the time, over 13 political parties were active in the Province, as well as a number of illegal organisations, such as armed militias and criminal organisations. A full range of new and evolving government, judicial, security and bureaucratic institutions were active and evolving within an incomplete and uncertainty policy framework. This complex human system, embedded in a jigsaw of complex terrain, was the AMTG1 'battlefield'.

Human complexity is not only a function of the domestic society. External stakeholders import their own significant contributions to complexity. First among these in the AMTG1 case study was the Multi-National Force (MNF). Like all large coalitions, the MNF consisted of a vast array of national troop contributions with different capabilities, characteristics and missions.¹¹ Inside the AMTG AO, Australian, British and Japanese troops were overlaid, using up to three languages, each seeking linked but not identical goals. An extended range of government and civil agencies, such as various national diplomatic services and aid agencies, operated across the AMTG1 AO. Within this mix there were also a limited number of independent non-government agencies.

All these stakeholders were in constant, often completely independent, interactions with Provincial and Iraqi central government agencies. Amongst the milieu were private contractors, which range from large-scale logistic providers through to a multitude of private security detachments. This extended, external, and complicated mix fed directly into the local human system.

... a simple mistake
could become an
obscenity ...

Human complexity is
not only a function of
the domestic society.

Informational Terrain. The final aspect of the complex environment was the informational system. While the remote, regional, rural Province of Al Muthanna struggled with the provision of the most basic essential services, it was fully networked into the global communications grid.¹² Press networks were ever-present. While Western press were scarce, they employed a number of local ‘stringers’ who were armed with handheld video cameras and an open licence to rove. The Eastern press, notably Turkish satellite television, were on the ground and active. The Province had its own newspapers and television station. The sum result of the informational terrain was constant coverage and a network potentially linking all activities into the local, national and global pool of information in ‘real time’. For the friendly force, and almost everyone else, the eye of this network was constant and persistent. Given its instant, unpredictable feedback into the environment, the information network was capable of creating an unpredictable and diverse range of second- and third-order effects.

THE THREAT

And what are the clothes of the Mahdi Army? So that I can distinguish them from others. They don't have a specific uniform. They are people gathered by love, and faith is their weapon.

Moqtada al-Sadr, Spiritual Leader of the Mahdi Army Militia¹³

The threat groups confronted on many modern operations, including major combat operations, are increasingly irregular, unconventional and lethal.¹⁴ The threat groups faced by AMTG1 fit this model closely. Across southern Iraq, threat groups not only operated ‘amongst the people’; more often than not, they were ‘the people’. The threat was almost impossible for the AMTG1 to *physically* identify before it commenced offensive action and, if Moqtada al-Sadr’s comment above is to be believed, even he had difficulty identifying his own forces. Local and regional extremist groups, such as the Mahdi Army, pursued a variety of agendas through a combination of political, social, cultural and military means. In the south during 2005, the Coalition faced no concerted al-Qaeda-led Sunni extremist insurgency.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the possibility of such an insurgency remained a constant factor to be considered and countered. Threat elements pursued a classic guerrilla methodology married to the power and lethality of modern technology.¹⁶ Threat tactics emphasised dispersion, ‘fluidity of force’, low profile and avoidance of battle.¹⁷ They operated ‘like a vapour [that would]

... threat groups
not only operated
‘amongst the people’;
more often than not,
they were ‘the people’.

offer nothing material to the killing.’¹⁸ AMTG1 faced a complicated patchwork of heavily armed, largely local militia forces operating literally ‘amongst the people’. It was war by the few, but was dependent on the support of the many.¹⁹ Interaction with the threat took place in the context of the complex environment.

FRIENDLY FORCE COMPOSITION

Complexity is not only a by-product of the physical, social and informational terrain and the threat profile. Modern security missions require the case-specific creation of combined joint interagency task forces (JIATF) to achieve designated missions within a complex environment. These teams aim to ‘incorporate all elements of national power in an integrated framework, tailored and scaled to the requirements of specific a mission.’²⁰ The intent is to build a force that is able to ‘control the perceptions and behaviours of specific population groups’ and not merely apply force.²¹ JIATFs are, therefore, rarely standing organisations or groupings. They are custom-made and case specific.

AMTG1 is one example of a modern battle group-level JIATF. It was not a standing organisation and was non-traditional in structure. It incorporated a broad range of capabilities drawn from joint, Defence and national resources. It consisted of 450 personnel from two Services, 56 Army units and 19 Corps. The considerable diversity is reflected through an example table shown below at Figure 1, which shows the sources of AMTG1 Army personnel. The force also included a selected range of specialist civilian personnel. AMTG1 was a diverse, unique grouping of capabilities that were rapidly concentrated, formed and deployed.²² The composition and rapid deployment of a custom-made force was essential, but generated unavoidable internal complexity and friction.

THE COMPLEX ENVIRONMENT: THE IMPLICATIONS FOR COMMAND

For the soldier on the ground, the environment is quite simply a sea of complexity. Situations rapidly develop, constantly change and demand immediate case-specific responses. The problems encountered are never purely military or tactical; they are also social, cultural, legal, moral and political. Drills and templates provide assistance and guidance, but success requires thinking, decision-making and adaptation to the specific circumstance. A constant, recurring theme of modern operations is that complexity means that ‘the possible permutations

The problems encountered are never purely military or tactical; they are also social, cultural, legal, moral and political.

of all ... interactions are innumerable.²³ Success, therefore, relies on shaping and influencing outcomes and then quickly adapting to and exploiting those outcomes. War amongst the people requires soldiers who are *face to face* with the people to have the will, means, authority and freedom to act to achieve the mission. The environment demands mission command.

MISSIONS AND METHODS

AMTG, as part of UK led Security Sector Reform, is to conduct security operations and provide training and adviser support to the Iraqi Army in AL MUTHANNA province for at least 6 months from 3 May 05 in order to enhance the security of the Japanese Iraq Reconstruction and Support Group and support the Governorate of AL MUTHANNA province to realise the process of UNSCR 1546 and transition to Iraqi self reliance.

AMTG1 Mission Statement²⁴

Missions on modern security operations almost always seek objectives that are beyond purely military results. This has the effect of broadening the range of tasks to be performed, increasing the types of capabilities that are deployed and requiring the employment of sophisticated methods that are tailored to the complex environment.

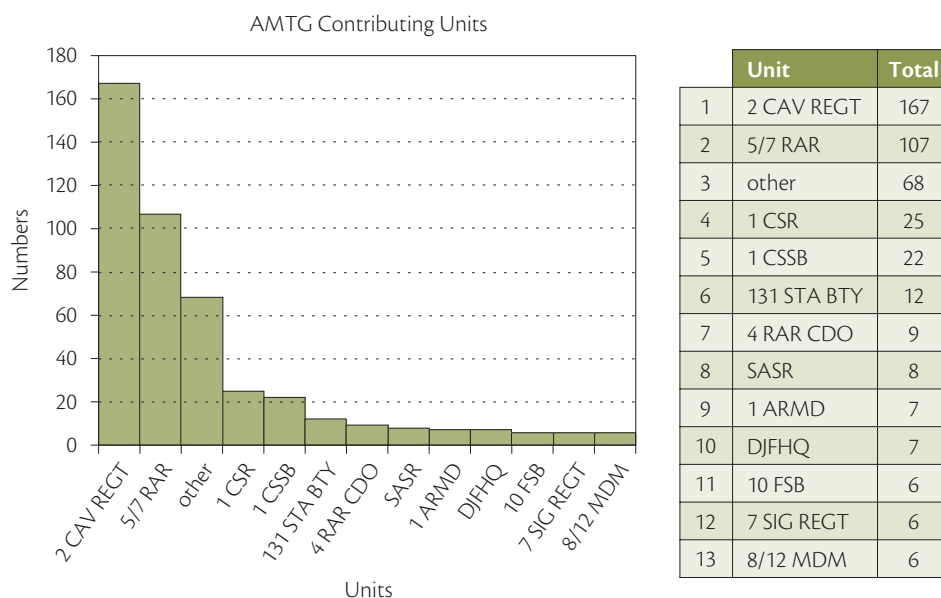


Figure 1: Army Units contributing more than five members to the AMTG

The AMTG1 mission (detailed above) provides an example of a mission that generates a need for sophisticated and disciplined methods applied by a force armed with a range of capabilities. AMTG mission success would ultimately depend on collective local community opinion.²⁵ The focus was not the destruction of the threat, but rather the defeat of their intent to use illegal and violent action to achieve their ends. Success could be achieved as much by indirect means as through any clash of arms. The AMTG1 was, therefore, unavoidably required to execute a broader range of tasks than those required of a purely conventional military security task. It also required a sophisticated sensing of changes in the environment and quick adaptation to exploit opportunity. While the case study is unique, it bears similar traits to missions and requirements underway from East Timor to Afghanistan.

The nature of modern missions and complex environments demands decentralised action and adaptability. For example, the AMTG1 environment and mission demanded that no set patterns be developed in order to dislocate the threat. The force was required to operate in dispersed, small, but powerful groups that could survive and defeat an attack, yet not alienate the locals through unnecessary disruption to, and interference in, their lives. AMTG1 had to establish and sustain a continuous, open, face-to-face dialogue with people at every level across our AO. The force, therefore, had to act effectively in a dispersed, decentralised, face-to-face manner.

Decentralised and sophisticated methods, reliant on adapting to circumstance, require a binding 'glue' to ensure that action taken is coherent and directed towards a common end. A centralised, hierarchical system relying on detailed direction from above has limited adaptability, responsiveness or situational awareness to support a force operating in a 24-hour, dispersed, mobile roles. The essential glue that enables coherent action is not a piece of technology or a detailed web of predictive rules, but rather the establishment of an adaptive human system of mission command. The difficult part is establishing a mission command framework that enables effective, coherent action.

BUILDING A MISSION COMMAND FRAMEWORK

Given the importance of adaptability and the pressing need for effective decentralised action, the key issue becomes how best to build a mission command environment? This paper proposes that effective mission command relies on the establishment and nurturing of a mission command framework. The framework must consist of a series of intellectual, moral and physical components that together provide freedom of action and support to subordinates within boundaries.

The nature of modern missions and complex environments demands decentralised action and adaptability.

Intellectual Components. An effective mission command framework relies on a clearly articulated and understood philosophy of mission command. This idea must then be clearly explained and articulated across the entire organisation. For example, AMTG1 had a short description of the philosophy of command that would apply on operations. The philosophy included the five specific individual characteristics required of the soldiers, non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers of the battle group:²⁶

- Mission Focused/Task Orientated
- Imbued with a culture of mission command and a bias for action
- Tactically and technically excellent
- Highly Disciplined
- Adaptable

The command philosophy provided the behavioural rules against which all decisions, plans, training and actions would be developed and then assessed. In AMTG1, action was emphasised as a critical idea and was a mandated behavioural requirement:

The AMTG must have a *bias for action*. Individuals must *independently* act to solve a problem and achieve the mission in a *timely* manner based on the available information and resources. Decisive, determined action, based on the commander's intent and targeted against the enemy's critical vulnerabilities must be the hallmark of AMTG operations. Uncertainty is a constant, always act decisively.

**The AMTG
must have a bias
for action.**

A philosophy that describes mission command and explains what is important is the first and critical element of any mission command framework.

Mission Command relies on a clear understanding of the commander's intent across an organisation. The intent must be articulated, explained and updated regularly. This is formally achieved through the promulgation of an operations order. Perhaps more importantly it was constantly reinforced through the 'battle rhythm' of an organisation.²⁷ Intent became the issue of discussion throughout the organisation. In AMTG1, this was achieved through a variety of formal and informal means. Commanding Officer's (CO) hours with the soldiers would begin with a discussion of the mission, tactics and the threat. Visits, sub-unit training, meals, and tactical operations all provided occasions for commanders (at every level) and soldiers to discuss and understand intent. One excellent example was the regular 'sand table' tactics training held by Combat Team Eagle, where intent was an open forum topic for discussion and suggestion by all ranks. Intent must become a 'living' idea that is a constant topic of discussion, and must be deeply understood.

A clear intellectual accountability framework, understood by all, is vital. Accountability is essential, as it holds subordinates and the entire organisation to the mission. Each individual must be held accountable against his appropriate level of responsibility. Therefore, it is vital to agree on what constitutes an error.

A considered and collective definition of what constitutes a mistake is fundamental. To enable a culture of mission command, a mistake should be defined as a decision made without systematic regard for the commander's intent or the mission. It must not be seen as an action that generates an adverse or negative result. Friendly force action is but one element in a complex system; the end consequences will be the result of multiple inputs and influences. A mistake, therefore, may well be both a decision leading to an action or the absence of a decision that results in a *lack of action*. It is important to recognise that a failure to act may be as significant as any decision to act. Where the actions are clearly connected with intent but the results are adverse, subordinates must be strongly supported in their actions. The incident or action should be reviewed and analysed with a view to improving performance. Coaching or retraining may be initiated, or the actions taken may be reaffirmed and validated. Where this definition of a 'mistake' is the norm, and the commander's intent is the yardstick, the organisation will automatically self-correct and adapt at every level to achieve a common purpose. Action is, therefore, likely to be coherent, focused and encouraged. Subordinates will feel empowered to take action in uncertainty when they are certain that it passes the assessment against the intent test.

In AMTG1, the responsibilities for the actions of a force were the responsibility of the immediate commander, who was held accountable against the intent and the mission. Where the commander acted outside the boundaries of, or contrary to, the intent articulated, he would be formally disciplined and/or removed from his post. This was required on a small number of occasions and it was absolutely essential in order to build trust, preserve freedom of action and reinforce a disciplined application of mission command. Conversely, where a decision is taken in accordance with the intent and the mission, the subordinate must be supported

... a mistake should be defined as a decision made without systematic regard for the commander's intent or the mission.

... where a decision is taken in accordance with the intent and the mission, the subordinate must be supported ...

and the commander must accept responsibility and ‘own’ any adverse consequences that arise from that action. This approach grows trust, liberates subordinates to act, and binds every level of action to the mission.

Effective accountability fundamentally relies on systematic command supervision. As a general rule, supervision needs to be constant, multi-level and available to subordinates. It should be helpful and should not be delivered as a superior, audit-style oversight. Importantly, supervision should be personal, direct and detailed. This requires commanders at all levels to operate forward in the field rather than within the security and connectivity of the firm base. This ensures that the key supervision is located in the optimal location for any given plan.

Moral Components. Trust is the essential moral component of mission command. Commanders must accept and own risk in order to demonstrate trust. As trust must flow both down and up, it depends on knowing individuals and understanding how they think and act.

As General von Mellenthin accurately observed, ‘Commanders and subordinates start to understand each other during war ... the better they know each other, the shorter and less detailed the orders can be.’²⁸ This proved to be an observation relevant to AMTG1. The development of trust and understanding was facilitated by a combination of supervision and close interaction between commanders at every level. This is a *face-to-face*, human business rather than a hierarchical, formal process achieved through constant email contact. AMTG1 deliberately lived, worked and went on leave in its small team groupings—both section and patrol. Trust develops and spreads like a virus—upwards, outwards, downwards and cross ways. Trust cannot be mandated, directed or wished into being.

Trust develops
and spreads like
a virus ...

Where trust is breached, or not developed, personnel must be removed or placed in positions where close supervision is possible or where the risks are minimal. Breaches of trust cannot be tolerated, no matter how small, as it is the true currency that underpins all mission command-based organisational action. On a number of occasions, breaches of trust within AMTG1 resulted in disciplinary action and the removal of personnel from appointments, or modifications to the level of freedom of action assigned. Failure to act on breaches of trust, at any level, will seriously undermine mission command. This means that the rule must apply to all, equally, top to bottom. Rank, age, and specialty can offer no sanctuary.

Physical Components. A physical control framework is required to support effective mission command. A control framework must be established to provide security, confidence and support to junior commanders. The control system must assist decision-making and command. It must be responsive and adaptable to

changes. Commanders must be empowered to modify it and there must be a constant dialogue on the boundaries of action and control measures. Senior commanders should speak directly and regularly to junior commanders. The vertical hierarchy and position is less important than the mission: when they know they need to, junior commanders must be encouraged to speak directly to senior commanders. The key to an effective mission command is the construction of a co-ordinating framework that is highly accessible to subordinates, responsive to the environment and capable of adapting quickly.

Empowerment of the staff to make decisions, support subordinates and to support the execution of the mission is the aim of an effective control system. In AMTG1, the S3 became the lead control officer. His core business was the regulation and management of the commander's intent and the execution of the mission. Jokingly, and appropriately, he was called 'The Intent Policeman' and constantly patrolled the mission and intent. In AMTG1, the S3 did not act as the deputy commander, but was instead tasked with building, servicing, repairing and modifying the control framework. He was a key adviser to all commanders and did not compete with them. All branches of the BGHQ staff effectively served the operations staff and the S3. They were vital to feeding and sustaining the framework, keeping it up to date and triggering the need for change or adjustment. The tools of the staff were fragmentary orders, control measures and the transmission of key information between commanders, across the battle group and outside to the broader Coalition.

Formal orders provide the behavioural rules and guidance to allow subordinates to act inside an agreed framework and give them freedom of action. In AMTG1, the operations order formed the bedrock operational guidance and 'law' that guided all behaviour and decision-making. It was effectively a 'one-stop shop' for formal policy. The AMTG1 operations order included issues as diverse as detainee policy, the Rules of Engagement (ROE), safety policy, training policy, compensation and act of grace payments and discipline. It was revised and adjusted regularly, with five separate versions being issued. Against this order were issued Fragmentary Orders. All tactical and administrative activities were instigated and covered by formal written orders. When time was limited, orders were issued verbally and the written order followed shortly thereafter. This methodology empowered the staff to make actions against the formally stated intent. As they were charged with executing the operations order, it needed to be comprehensive enough to guide decision-making. Orders were to be complied with and were written to confirm intent, describe freedom of action and guide behaviour and decision-making.

The operations order should set the rules for behaviour rather than focus on developing predictive details on specific actions in certain circumstances. In the case of AMTG1, behaviour and responses to unexpected situations were critical. The AMTG1 needed to operate in a low profile way, so the AMTG1 was always seeking to be in ‘the corner of their eye’ rather than directly in the faces of the local people. All activity had to be conducted against the reality of the local cultural norms, not in accordance with our own world view. From this, ‘consent’ could be built. Therefore, the operations order and intent emphasised ‘rules of behaviour’ being applied on a case-by-case basis. The three rules are:

- Always Low Profile—‘Corner of their Eye’
- Always Culturally Aware
- Always Highly Disciplined

When followed, even in difficult circumstances and against powerful threat information operations, respect and support would almost always grow. Subordinates could take the rules and apply them, as required, to whatever particular circumstance arose.

The organisational battle procedure must serve subordinates and act to continually update, assess and modify intent and control arrangements as required. AMTG1 evolved a systematic operational cycle that focused on a constant assessment and update of intent and adjustment of the control framework. This became the primary purpose of the Daily Operations Update, which was a ‘short’, daily operational assessment and discussion forum. This was supported by a deliberate seven-day planning cycle that identified and resourced known tasks seven days out. This provided maximum warning and planning across the sub-units. The effect of a disciplined operations and planning cycle is a coherent, constant control across a battle group. It supports and enables decentralised, detailed execution, and supervision at combat team level and below. Ideally, it should ideally be focused downwards and on execution.

The development of effective Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) reduces friction and allows rapid adaptability to changing situations. SOPs should therefore be threat-, environment- and capability-driven. They must be discussed, argued and improved. In AMTG1, the operations staff owned the SOPs and modified them in consultation with the entire battle group, most notably the combat teams. The duty of the combat teams was to ‘road test’ SOPs and to consistently question and improve them.

All activity had to be conducted against the reality of the local cultural norms ...

Shared situational awareness, supported by an effective command information system (CIS) network, is critical to maximising the chances of coherent action. A mission-command control framework must have the aim of furnishing its people in the field with timely and effective intelligence that leads to high levels of situational awareness. Navigating the flood of information, finding the key pieces and interpreting them effectively are not simple tasks. This process requires a careful, intimate linkage between the intelligence and operations staff, both of whom must unwaveringly serve all commanders from patrol to battle group level. A *culture of service* by the staff, both upwards and especially downwards, is essential and is rarely automatic. This is an old idea. To quote General Sir John Monash: 'The staff officer is the servant of the troops ... this was the ritual pronounced at the initiation of every staff officer'.²⁹ The development of a responsive intelligence cycle and process that serves the soldiers in the field requires disciplined staff processes, close cooperation and dogged, hard work by battle group level staff officers who must be constantly supported by close-command supervision.

The control framework must have at its heart an effective technical network of communications. While there is no substitute for face-to-face orders, a supporting communications network is a key component to enable mission command. At battle group level, secure voice is critical, as command and intent can be forcefully transmitted through language, tone and expression. Email alone is therefore an inadequate method of communication. AMTG1 was equipped with a range of effective systems that enabled mobile, secure communications. Redundancy is important; as are multiple communications means. Communications will break down due to both the threat and the environment, and the control framework must support action when there is no communications.

A strong organic discipline and personal support system is the backbone of any effective mission-command system. Ideally, discipline on operations becomes the business of all ranks that 'self-police' and sustain collective discipline without constant command intervention. Discipline is everyone's business, not just officers or senior non-commissioned officers (SNCOs). The discipline system must be simple, clear, timely, just and operate without favour. A key component, often overlooked, is the design of 'the rules' and their assigned importance. If rules are broken, discipline must be enforced. It is, therefore, vital that the rules are sensible, relevant and linked to mission outcomes. Any rule that commanders are reluctant to enforce should be modified or removed. Like SOPs and the other components of the control framework, the rules governing conduct must be carefully designed and constantly assessed. If the rules are sensible and enforced without fear or favour, they promote credibility and allow trust to develop.

... there is no
substitute for face-
to-face orders ...

The discipline system must be supported by a command-driven welfare network in which everyone supports each other. Key appointments, such as the doctor and padre, are vital as they perform the role of both semi-independent morale (and discipline) ‘thermometers’ and advisers to all. High operational tempo and limited opportunities to rest demand a careful, constant assessment by all deployed personnel. This is the core business of commanders. In AMTG1, the use of enforced rest and short-term job swaps were two simple methods employed to manage discipline and morale. The authority of formal military discipline is the ultimate legal power that holds all to the mission and the required standard of conduct. It must be both credible and strong.

Systemic learning through constant assessment linked to training enables organisational adaptation. Training is the mechanism to formally improve, adapt and codify modified action. The retention of core skills and individual and collective proficiency are critical to confidence and trust. Training, revision and the testing of new and emerging ideas must also be part of the operational cycle. This requires not only familiar training (such as weapons handling and shooting), but a constant focus on tactical decision-making. The use of the tactical quick decision exercise, whether formal or informal, forces a debate on intent and action. Over time, this style of training links approaches and thinking while simultaneously generating critical analysis of current methods and tactics. For example, AMTG1 used deployed tactical low-level simulation and deployed Coalition (and DSTO) operational analysis teams to support assessment, learning and adaptation. Part of a mission-command control framework must be a deliberate, planned training program linked with a culture of formal and informal discussion and learning.

As mission success is the focus of mission command, an organisation needs to understand whether or not it is on the path to success. This requires the careful design of measures of effectiveness and a rigorous performance tracking methodology. This element of a control framework was initially missing for AMTG1 on deployment and answers were not readily found in doctrine. Over a period of time, a system of assessing progress was developed. This modified system allowed for the measuring of progress and the adaptable allocation of a full range of resources and capabilities, (kinetic and non-kinetic) to influence outcomes. This process also demanded that AMTG1 gain an understanding of the complex environment in which it was operating. What action induced what responses? What were the levers of influence in society? How was local consent reinforced or undermined? This tracking and auditing function is vital (for both positive learning and adaptation) in order to achieve the desired result.

The discipline system
must be supported by
a command-driven
welfare network ...

CONCLUSION

In the 21st century, action remains the essential thing. Yet there are tremendous pressures to attempt to centrally control, direct and limit action. There is often a temptation to delay action, or indeed not act at all, given both the intense scrutiny and the potential adverse and unpredictable outcomes. This is not the path to success in complexity and against threats that recognise and exploit the operating environment and constraints in and under which Western forces operate. Effective, focused action at the lowest level remains the key to success. A network of intent that binds all to the mission is the logical and optimal approach to the challenge of complexity and chaos. It also allows a force to seize and exploit fleeting opportunities and to target the vulnerabilities of hard, committed and intelligent adversaries.

**In the 21st century,
action remains the
essential thing.**

The key to effective, focused action is mission command. The philosophy of mission command must be believed and nurtured. To be effective, it must be built on the intellectual components of clear intent, trust and accountability. The central moral component is trust. A physical control framework must also be established to support decision-makers at every level, especially those in the midst of chaos and in close contact with the adversary. While every circumstance is unique, this paper has sought to identify some of the enduring components common to any physical, moral and intellectual framework of mission command. Mission command offers one way to enable effective action and to create a human network that 'ensures ready co-operation in the spirit of the whole'.

ENDNOTES

- 1 General Hans von Seeckt, *Thoughts of a Soldier*, Ernest Benn Limited, London, 1930 pp. 123–30.
- 2 Lieutenant General J.P. Storr, 'Command and Control within the Land Component', *Journal of Battlefield Technology*, Vol. 3, No. 1, March 2000, p. 19.
- 3 From 24 April 2005 until 10 November 2005, the Al Muthanna Task Group (AMTG1) conducted 24-hour combined arms security operations, including 2359 discrete tactical tasks, for a total of 191 days in the high threat, complex operational environment of southern Iraq. This paper will use the AMTG1 experience as one specific case study.

- 4 Mission Command is a philosophy of command and a system for conducting operations in which subordinates are given a clear indication by a superior of his intentions. The result required, the task, the resources and any constraints are clearly enunciated; however, subordinates are allowed the freedom to decide how to achieve the required result. Land Warfare Doctrine 0.0, *Command, Leadership and Management*, Department of Defence (Australian Army), Canberra, 17 November 2003.
- 5 Storr, 'Command and Control within the Land Component', p. 19.
- 6 General Sir R. Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, Allen Lane Penguin Books, London, 2005, p. 269.
- 7 Australian Army, Future Land Operating Concept: *Complex Warfighting*, <http://www.defence.gov.au/army/lwsc/Publications/complex_warfighting.pdf>, p. 4.
- 8 Ibid, p. 6.
- 9 Patrols of the AMTG would encounter these physical environments, and combinations of all three, within five kilometres of the forward operating base. Large infrastructure, such as highways and bridges, combined with significant man-made and natural obstacles, created a complex physical environment where choke points, routes, and observation points combined to create a complicated tactical jigsaw for both friendly and threat forces. It is difficult to imagine a physical environment more different from Australian training areas or one that could provide a greater series of rapid fire tactical challenges to any mobile security force.
- 10 For example, any police response to an incident would begin with an assessment of which tribes were involved in order to ensure the responding police could moderate the situation rather than complicate it through their own tribal identity. After 6000 years, an enduring, unwritten heritage of interaction between tribes, clans and families played a role in all social interactions.
- 11 AMTG1 flanking formations included troops from five nations who spoke four different languages. Liaison took place across three international and four Provincial borders. Two major Coalition routes ran through the AMTG AO, which resulted in a constant transit of almost all the remaining troop contributing nation force elements.
- 12 For example, most male locals owned at least one mobile phone and the network was modern, involved multiple service providers and offered extended local and international coverage. Cable television networks fed directly into the Province and could be found as far afield as the most remote desert police station. Internet services were also widely available.
- 13 'An Army of One: Iraq's Moqtada al-Sadr on his men, his mind-set and when America should go', Interview by Scott Johnson, *Newsweek*, 8 May 2006, pp. 22–3.

- 14 For example, during the 2003 invasion of Iraq, Coalition forces met fierce resistance from irregular forces and only experienced limited direct confrontation with conventional forces. Studies such as COBRA II reveal that this was unexpected and that Coalition forces, especially at the operational level, were slow to adapt to the reality of the threat. M. Gordon and B. Trainor, *COBRA II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, Atlantic Books, London, 2006.
- 15 This was largely due to the efforts of those in the local community who were determined to prevent mass casualty attacks and extremist violence mounted by foreign fighters or Iraqis from other regions—all collectively viewed as ‘outsiders’ by the local majority.
- 16 Threat groups employed a range of highly lethal weapons, such as highly sophisticated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) and improvised indirect fire rocket attacks, in order to maximise their impact and minimise their chances of being decisively engaged. In all actions, threat groups exploited the environment, local support and knowledge in order to cover, assist or allow their actions to take place.
- 17 During the six months of the AMTG1 tour, it is worth noting that, of the seven deliberate threat attacks against Coalition forces in Al Muthanna, only two involved direct fire ambushes. Of these only one was assessed to be a deliberate, planned attack, while the other exploited a fleeting target of opportunity.
- 18 T. E. Lawrence, *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*, Wordsworth’s Classics of World Literature, Ware, Hertfordshire, 1997, p. 182.
- 19 B. H. Liddell Hart, *Strategy*, Meridian, New York, 2nd revised ed., 1991, p. 367. In 1954, Liddell Hart published the last version of his classic book on strategy with an additional chapter devoted to Guerrilla War. In it he describes the classic guerrilla or subversive strategy. It demonstrates that this approach is not new and remains relevant to modern operations in Iraq. He assessed that this approach ‘tends to be most effective if it blends an appeal to national resistance or desire for independence with an appeal to a socially and economically discontent population’. AMTG1, therefore, confronted a ‘classic’, if fragmented, guerrilla or subversive threat strategy.
- 20 *Complex Warfighting*, p. 14.
- 21 Ibid.
- 22 Deployment time from Government announcement in Australia to the commencement of operations in Iraq was 10 weeks. The AMTG1 drew personnel and equipment from across Australia.
- 23 Major J. P. Storr, ‘Alternative Concepts For Battlefield Command And Control Organisations’, United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, paper presented to the 1999 Command and Control Research and Technology Symposium, Command and Control Research Program, US Naval War College, Rhode Island, 1999, downloaded from: <http://www.dodccrp.org/events/1999_CCRTS/pdf_files/track_5/026storr.pdf>.

- 24 AL MUTHANNA TASK GROUP (AMTG-1) Operations Order 02/05 OP CATALYST dated 25 May 2005. (The full document is SECRET)
- 25 The commanding general viewed the 'consent' of the local populace for Coalition action as crucial to mission success. He assessed that 'consent' was heavily dependent on, and intertwined with, 'the legitimacy and responsibility of the Iraqi government'. Commanding General's Directive To Multi-National Division (South-East), March 2005. (The full document is CONFIDENTIAL)
- 26 These characteristics are now included in developing Australian Army cavalry doctrine.
- 27 Daily operations briefs allowed for a continuous update and assessment. Extensive liaison linkages across national and Coalition forces enabled an ongoing assessment of intent.
- 28 DePuy, Balck and von Mellenthin on *Tactics: Implications for NATO Military Doctrine*, Universitaet der Bundeswehr, Munich, December 2004, p. 19.
- 29 General Sir J. Monash, *The Australian Victories in France in 1918*, Hutchinson and Co, London, 1920, p. 295.

THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble graduated from the Australian Defence Force Academy in 1986 and the Royal Military College, Duntroon, in 1987. He was allocated to the Royal Australian Armoured Corps and has seen service with cavalry, tank and armoured personnel carrier units, including Commanding Officer of the 2nd Cavalry Regiment. Lieutenant Colonel Noble served on several operational deployments, including as a member of the United Nations Special Commission in Iraq, S3 Sector West in East Timor, on the staff of the initial Australian national headquarters during the campaign in Afghanistan, and as Commander of the Al Muthanna Task Group in 2005. He has held a number of staff appointments in joint and Army organisations in Canberra, including Adviser to the Joint Standing Committee Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade. He is currently on the Directing Staff at the Australian Command and Staff College, and was the joint winner of the 2005 Chauvel Essay Prize.



CURRENT OPERATIONS

EMBRACING COMPLEXITY

AN ADAPTIVE EFFECTS APPROACH TO THE CONFLICT IN IRAQ

LIEUTENANT COLONEL GAV REYNOLDS

ABSTRACT

This article examines the complexity of the conflict in Iraq as the backdrop for a practical approach to effects-based operations. The author proposes an adaptive approach embracing complexity, the goal being to develop a philosophy for the Australian Army that maintains the edge in complex warfighting.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in Iraq demonstrates the complexity of the modern battlespace. This article examines the complexity of that conflict as the backdrop for a practical approach to effects-based operations (EBO) for the Australian Army. A close study of this conflict enables exploration of the human dimension of the operational environment facing the Australian Army. A methodical calculation of all possible scenarios resulting from military action in Iraq as a means to execute EBO underestimates the chaos of human interaction. As the adversary in Iraq is an

adaptive human system, success in this battlespace requires an adaptive approach. The intent of this paper is not to dissect EBO or the conflict in Iraq, but rather to examine the points of convergence with the concept of ‘adaptive campaigning’.

THE CONFLICT IN IRAQ

It is too simplistic to label the conflict in Iraq as an ‘insurgency’. Describing it as such can lead to misconceptions about the variety of armed groups and their motives and the nature of violence existing in that country. There is little doubt that dismantling Saddam Hussein’s regime dissolved the glue that held the fractious nation together. In addition, the removal of both the Ba’athist bureaucracy and the armed forces engendered a survival instinct within Iraqi society. Tribal and sectarian structures have always been important in Iraq, however this framework became the primary social constant in a country suffering significant upheaval. To complicate matters, the loss of border control and the existence of malleable neighbours enabled the jihadist network to establish an effective base in the country. Yet the jihadis represent only some of the armed groups that are active in Iraq.

Estimates vary regarding the number of groups and their shifting alliances, but 70 groups of varying size and capability is a reasonable assessment. Despite their diversity—in ethnicity, religion, goals or targets—one commonality between them has been the struggle for power in Iraq following Saddam Hussein’s downfall. Sunni extremists linked to the global jihad (such as al-Qaeda in Iraq and Ansar al-Sunnah) are focused on the establishment of a pan-Islamic caliphate and view the destabilisation of the formative Iraqi Government as fundamental to their agenda. They have been bolstered by a small but significant influx of foreign fighters. The Sunni extremists are very active in stoking the flames of self-sustaining sectarian violence by engaging in iconic and mass-casualty attacks and utilising tactics such as multiple suicide vests and vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs). Baghdad has borne the brunt of sectarian attacks because it is the centre of government and a target-rich environment.

Retaliatory attacks by Shi’a militias have been a hallmark of the violence throughout 2006, which increased significantly following the destruction of the ‘Golden Mosque’ in February. Jaysh al Mahdi (JAM) has been particularly active in killing Sunnis throughout Baghdad. It has used kidnapping and death squads to target Sunnis and intimidate their communities, and many of their target lists name members of the now defunct Ba’ath Party. Another Shi’a militia that has been very active in targeting

... jihadis represent
only some of the
armed groups ...
active in Iraq.

the former regime is the Badr Organisation, which has been successful in infiltrating the Iraqi Government. Members of the former Ba'athist regime have now largely dispersed and joined groups termed 'Sunni rejectionists'.

The Sunni rejectionists, such as the 1920s Revolutionary Brigade, have actively targeted the Multi-National Force in Iraq (MNF-I) and the Iraqi Security Forces (ISF). Such groups are an embodiment of the dispossession felt by the Sunni community and joining them has given people a sense of purpose. Moreover, grievances felt by members have led them to support violence. An additional cause for concern is that many Sunni rejectionists have significant military expertise and interact with extremists to further their agenda of establishing a Sunni-dominated government. The Kurdish provinces in the north are reasonably stable due to effective policing by the Peshmerga militia, which acts as a guarantor for Kurdish autonomy. Still, this creates yet another factor in the complex cultural tapestry that is Iraq.

Militias continue to generate a climate of intimidation and disregard for the rule of law. Militia activities in the south are largely characterised by a Shi'a–Shi'a struggle for power and influence, with strong tribal influences. The south of Iraq has the least commonality with Baghdad and other regions as regards the nature of the struggle. However, attacks, particularly by JAM, continue on MNF throughout the southern provinces. Southern Iraq is a non-permissive environment for the staging and conduct of Sunni extremist and rejectionist operations, yet it still experiences the high levels of crime that are prevalent throughout the country.

Crime is a symptom of the economic malaise that has accompanied the instability and lack of security. Moreover, due to the very high levels of unemployment and lack of opportunities, the population has remained vulnerable to recruitment by criminal gangs and extremist groups who have been able to induce people to commit violent acts. In such circumstances, the offer of US\$500 as payment to carry out an improvised explosive device (IED) attack against the MNF is very attractive when you have a family to support. A man may escort his children to school in the morning, conduct an attack and then return to collect them in the afternoon. Such an adversary blends into the local community because he is a member of that community.

Apart from economic deprivation, the dilapidated state of Iraq's infrastructure was only fully understood when Coalition forces conducted assessments that exposed the enormity of the problem. Three examples serve to highlight this. Firstly, limited power generation and distribution grids mean that Baghdad receives about eight hours of electricity per day, and although transmission towers are attacked

Crime is a symptom of
the economic malaise
that has accompanied
the instability ...

occasionally, the greatest danger is from high winds. (In addition, water pipelines and pumping stations also require significant attention, and communications towers have been targeted for destruction). Second is oil—the lifeblood of the Iraqi economy. It pumps along pipelines that regularly fail due to fatigue and the maintenance and repair of these economic arteries is hampered by security and environmental factors. Third, in addition to temperature extremes, the shifting sands reduce cross-country movement options, limiting the mobility corridors. Many rural areas in central Iraq have undulations, berms and canals with large date palm groves that provide suitable terrain from which to mount an ambush. These areas transition to an urban environment, where the traffic and bustle of everyday life provides effective cover for attacks, thereby complicating the Coalition forces' ability to distinguish the enemy.

Difficulties in identifying the adversary can extend beyond local towns, with major cities providing a microcosm of the diversity in the country. These large urban centres also provide points of influence for those nations surrounding Iraq that sponsor and incite violence. Iran is an active sponsor of Shi'a militias. It provides munitions, finance and training to the militias, who remain embroiled in their ongoing conflict with the Kurds. In addition, Turkey maintains a close watch on northern Iraq while Syria facilitates the flow of fighters into Iraq across their permeable border. Iraq therefore represents an extremely diverse and complex warfighting scenario of which human organisations form the core. There are many interdependent variables that influence the effects of human interaction. A cycle of successive adaptations shape the current nature of the conflict. A systems analysis of Iraq would reveal that the country has reached 'critical mass' and is now self-sustaining: the feedback loops (such as economic dislocation, revenge and violence) continue to function without the initial stimulus.¹ Iraq exhibits many of the attributes associated with the Australian Army's Future Land Operating Concept, *Complex Warfighting*, such as threat diversity and lethality, urban environments, and complex physical, human and informational environments.² Given the confused nature of conflict in Iraq, with asymmetric threats that require full spectrum operations, there remains little choice but to implement an EBO approach.

...the traffic and
bustle of everyday
life provides effective
cover for attacks ...

Iraq exhibits many of the
attributes associated with
the Australian Army's
Future Land Operating
Concept, *Complex
Warfighting* ...

EFFECTS-BASED OPERATIONS

‘Effects-based operations’ has become increasingly popular as a description of the way in which military operations need to be conducted in the information age. At its core, EBO involves a whole-of-government approach, influencing the actions of an adversary through effects-seeking activities. The concept of using national power across the spectrum of conflict is not new, but it has rarely been successfully achieved. Indeed, the idea of an effects-based approach to warfare aligns easily with the theories of Sun Tzu, Carl von Clausewitz and B.H. Liddell Hart, all of whom espoused the importance of the cognitive domain and the psychological dimension of war.³ A manoeuvrist approach, in which the aim is a massing of effects rather than the massing of force, has been a fundamental tenet of the Australian Army for many years.

Comprehending how information-age technologies and military force are integrated into the whole-of-government approach to conflict has been at the heart of the theories and discussions surrounding EBO. There has been an expectation that effective planning, using EBO as its base, enables the inclusion of second- and third-order effects in any action. However, warfare is characterised by chaos, and inferring that control can be exerted over a changing array of interdependent variables lacks logic. All actions and resultant effects are interrelated and, although the actions can be modelled, the exact way in which human beings will react to a situation, stimuli or action cannot be foreseen.

Effects cascade from causes or actions, and human decisions influence the flow of physical and psychological effects. One useful insight is the circumstances of, and following the death of Abu Musab al Zarqawi, the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq. Zarqawi was an effective leader who was known as much for his brutality as for his effectiveness in rallying the Sunni extremists to his cause. He was in many respects a cult figure who attracted foreign fighters and funding to the jihadist cause, but he also alienated many Iraqis by kidnapping and murdering their fellow citizens. Zarqawi had a penchant for beheading people (including foreign contractors) and directed a large number of suicide attacks against Shi’a civilians—attacks which resulted in estrangement from those communities. Most importantly for the American-led Coalition, he was a terrorist and their ‘most wanted’ individual in Iraq.

An unedited version of a video produced by Zarqawi in April 2006 was captured by the MNF-I and used effectively by the Strategic Effects Communications Division to lampoon him for his poor weapon handling and artificial staging of events. It also provided clues as to his whereabouts. Information came to hand that Zarqawi was in Diyala Province to the northeast of Baghdad and, due to the lengthy time necessary to deploy forces, the decision was made to undertake precision targeting

of the building in which he was meeting with other members of his group. The attack was successful and Zarqawi was killed by a US air strike on 7 June 2006; however, there remained intense speculation regarding what effect this action would have on al-Qaeda in Iraq.

Killing Zarqawi was an unqualified public relations triumph which reverberated positively around the world, removed a brutal killer and highlighted the continuing success of operations in Iraq. Another excellent outcome was the volume of information gathered from a 'thumb drive', other equipment and documents found with Zarqawi, which enabled the targeting of other al-Qaeda personnel. Speculation continued as to whether this operational success mortally wounded al-Qaeda in Iraq or whether it meant that the group would simply adapt and, if so, in what direction. Eventually a replacement leader—Abu Ayyub al-Masri—emerged to continue the al-Qaeda agenda of fomenting sectarian violence by targeting Shi'a civilians with mass effect attacks. Although al-Masri does not have the cult status of Zarqawi, there have been indications that he is not as divisive and that he has, in some respects, already had a unifying effect on the disparate Sunni extremists. The example of Zarqawi illustrates many of the strengths and weaknesses of EBO, in particular how the direct physical effect has unseen and unknowable second- and third-order physical and psychological consequences.

The physical action of killing Zarqawi removed the leader of al-Qaeda in Iraq, it disrupted the group's operations and exacted a psychological effect on its members. Other effects included the positive influence on the global media—a good news story that provided a perception of success both in the 'war on terror' and the rebuilding of Iraq. In summary, the Iraqi Government was bolstered by the death of this feared and brutal extremist; and it captured documents that enabled the cascading into further physical effects, such as the targeting of other members in the group. In response, al-Qaeda in Iraq proved to be adaptive when a less divisive leader emerged who continued along the stated jihadist path in Iraq. Only time will tell whether these cascading effects can match the successful aftermath immediately following Zarqawi's removal.

It is clear that this action had effects well beyond the battlespace in Iraq that resulted in a chain of unpredictable consequences. As the reaction of an adversary will cause effects, which in turn have their own consequences, it

Killing Zarqawi was
an unqualified public
relations triumph ...

... it is impossible to
predict the second- and
third-order effects.

is impossible to predict the second- and third-order effects. Success, when dealing with complex adaptive systems, is achieved by being able to adapt quickly, and the application of EBO, in embracing the resultant chaos, can lead to a successful completion of the adaption cycle.

ADAPTIVE EFFECTS APPROACH

A military force must understand and learn from the complex war scenario and be able to complete the adaption cycle faster than its adversary. This is understood by the Australian Army, which has articulated a response to *Complex Warfighting* in the concept paper *Adaptive Campaigning*.⁴ An 'adaptive campaign' is defined as 'actions taken by the land force as part of the military contribution to a whole-of-government approach to resolving conflicts'.⁵ The concept absorbs the fundamental tenets of EBO, acknowledges the diffused nature of conflict with regard to a temporal rather than spatial regard for intensity, and accepts that a myriad of (often-unexpected and unforeseeable) tasks must be completed during an operation. A battlegroup may be required to conduct combat, peace support or humanitarian tasks on the same day, so defining a conflict such as the one underway in Iraq via tasks is not useful. A more flexible and realistic approach lies in accepting the complexity of operations and being able to adapt rapidly.

In order for land force action to be successful, a battlegroup must be able to step rapidly through the 'Act-Sense-Decide-Adapt' cycle.⁶ An army must be able to adjust to the actions of the complex adaptive system that is the adversary in an ongoing process, with multiple courses of action developed to deal with new permutations of the threat.⁷ As humans make errors, the information will never provide perfect situational awareness. Given that an adaptive approach acknowledges that these errors occur and accepts that the battlespace is opaque, perfect EBO is never achievable and should not therefore be the aim.

During the past decade, considerable effort has focused on removing humans from the loop—the development of the sensor-shooter paradigm. This was a mistake. It was wrong to believe that the complexity of conflict could be overcome by removing people from the loop. Instead, the effort must concentrate on informing the decision-maker (the commander) so as to enable him to make the most appropriate decision in any complex environment.

An army must be able to adjust to the actions of the complex adaptive system that is the adversary ...

As clearly articulated in *Adaptive Campaigning*, the agility to switch between lines of operation is the key to successful prosecution of the complex fight.⁸ This agility requires flexible force structures, in the form of combined-arms teams, and highly-tuned situational awareness. There also needs to be a flexibility of thinking in the acceptance that switching between lines of operation is a natural evolution in the application of EBO (illustrated at Figure 1). As main effort is applied along a line of operation, the remaining lines do not disappear; rather they support it. When one effect is achieved, any second-order effect may require a switch in that main effort. Thus, the adaptive approach may require a sequence of switching in order to deal with cascading effects or to achieve a desired effect. A strong focus on mission command ensures that subordinate commanders have a clear understanding of purpose, and the initiative and ability to adapt to the second- and third-order effects generated by their actions.

In Iraq, there has been considerable criticism of the United States for failing to empower junior commanders, use options other than force, and nurture popular support.⁹ There is a strong inference that the United States was unable to switch between combat and other lines of operation that supported the population—that their elevated sense of moral righteousness and kinetic solutions, coupled with rigid structures, impeded operational agility. However, criticising the operations in Iraq

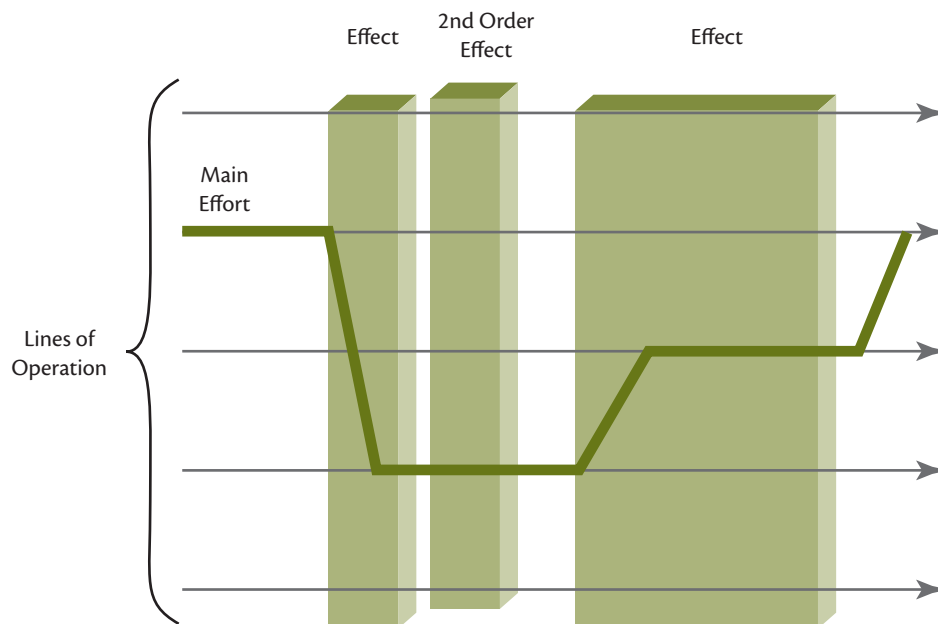


Figure 1: Switching Main Effort between Lines of Operation

ignores the tremendous success of many tactical actions and operations. Important lessons have been learnt and have led to an increased ability to adapt in any given conflict scenario.

The interacting cycles of sectarian violence that peaked in Iraq during 2006, particularly in Baghdad, significantly impacted on MNF-I operational plans. The Baghdad Security Plan was enacted by the Force Commander to disrupt the self-sustaining violence that reflected a vicious feedback loop; however it did not result in the desired effect. Instead, the MNF-I hierarchy showed flexibility in adapting to the situation and modifying their operational planning. It recognised the need to account for adaptive adversaries in the form of Shi'a militias (such as JAM) and Sunni extremists (such as al-Qaeda in Iraq). The second iteration of the Baghdad Security Plan incorporated significant interaction with the community, ranging from rubbish removal to cordon and search activities, thereby demonstrating the flexibility to switch across lines of operation.

...criticising the operations in Iraq ignores the tremendous success of many tactical actions ...

THE AUSTRALIAN BATTLEGROUP IN IRAQ

The Australian Battlegroup also needs to be adaptive in order to be successful in southern Iraq. It is responsible for conducting 'overwatch' activities in the provinces of Al Muthanna and Dhi Qar and is referred to as the Overwatch Battlegroup—West (OBG-W). To be successful in this role, the OBG-W needs to have an effects-based approach to their operations, as well as the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances. A typical operation may require the Battlegroup Commander and a combat team to conduct indigenous capacity-building activities by engaging the Iraqi leadership (for example, in visits to the Governor of Al Muthanna Province or the Brigade Commander of the Iraqi Army brigade responsible for the province). The Australian Army Training Team in Iraq is supporting such activities by building the professionalism and cohesion of the Iraqi Army. In so doing, it is nurturing civilian governance and strengthening the capabilities of the ISF.

These activities are supported in parallel by civil-military cooperation, which provides population support in the form of infrastructure such as bridges. Despite not being the main effort, it remains a supporting line

The Australian Army Training Team in Iraq is ... the professionalism and cohesion of the Iraqi Army.

of operation. Whilst conducting these engagement activities, the OBG-W is required to conduct protected mobility around the provinces. As such, it may need to switch instantly to a combat line of operation.

In late September 2006, probable JAM members, who were actively disrupting civilian governance and harassing the ISF to improve their own position of power, attacked a combat team from OBG-W. The incident occurred as a direct result of the success of OBG-W engagement activities, which had the second-order effect of prompting a violent reaction from this Shi'a militia group.

Figure 2 illustrates the interaction of switching main effort and effects. These effects had been considered as part of the operational planning, inclusive of reliable information available from human intelligence (HUMINT) which provided OBG-W with an awareness of the threat. Appreciating the human dimension of the Iraqi battlespace, by placing a priority on HUMINT rather than technological assets, has been of advantage to OBG-W when dealing with complex adaptive human systems. The Australian Army has an advanced HUMINT capability at work as part of OBG-W, and the intelligence generated primarily via this input, feeding into an effective analysis at Headquarters, has proved vital to the Battlegroup commander's decision-making process and OBG-W's application of force to successfully neutralise the threat.

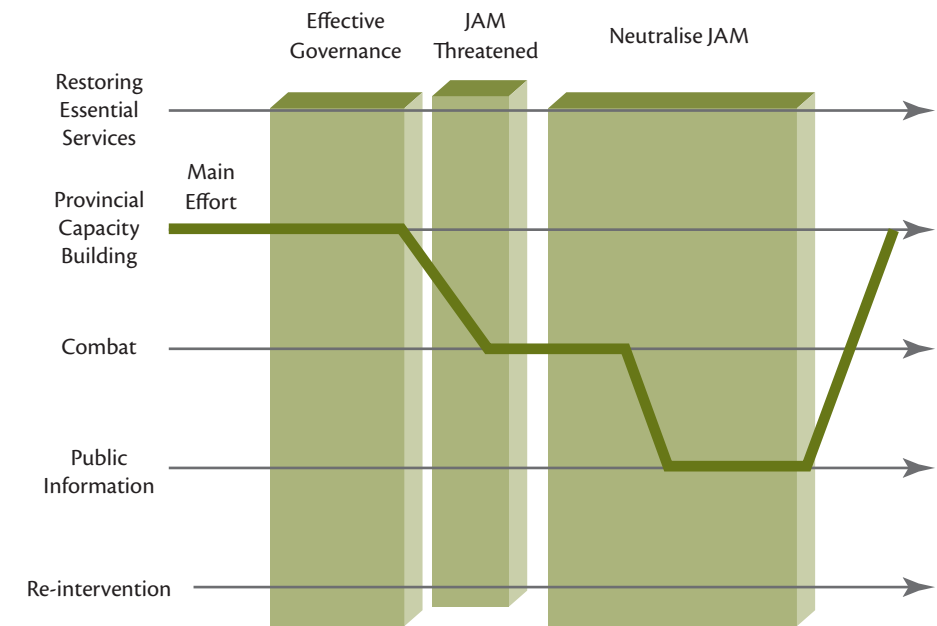


Figure 2: Main effort switching and effects in Iraq

Once the desired effect of neutralising the threat in the Province has been achieved, the main effort can then switch to informing the population about the incident so as to contain any cascading effects that might arise following the deaths or wounding of militia members. This would involve talking to tribal sheikhs, the members of the Provincial Council and community contacts, as well as disseminating information to the population through psychological operations. Once complete, the main effort would then switch back to building the capabilities of the Province so as to ready the Iraqi people to govern themselves. The commander's ability to adapt and switch between the lines of operation is at the heart of the philosophy required by the Australian Army.

PHILOSOPHY OF THE ADAPTIVE EFFECTS APPROACH

To be successful in a complex environment such as Iraq, those within the Australian Army must show flexible thinking, with commanders being required to adapt quickly, based on a firm adherence to mission command and iterative learning through constant operational assessment. Recognition that action is required, and that the effects of these actions probably cannot be predicted, means that all commanders must be able to adapt to the complexity of the situation once given a clearly articulated and understood purpose. The acceptance of chaos in the battlespace, and the flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances, is fundamental in any successful approach to defeating the adversary.

Understanding the adversary as an adaptive human system, and comprehending the threat, relies heavily on advanced HUMINT and an awareness of the cultural terrain within which the force is operating. The cultural knowledge provides the context—a basis for the analysis of the situation. There must also be an ability to translate this information and intelligence into useful inputs for the commander's decision-making. The commander is then well placed to adjust by moving rapidly through the adaption cycle and switching main effort across simultaneous lines of operation. This ability needs to occur from the combat team through to the task force and requires structural flexibility in order to enable the required agility.

CONCLUSION

The conflict in Iraq is a complex scenario with a multitude of situations that bridge the levels of intensity and merge previously partitioned tasks. The multifaceted threat has proven to be adaptive and very human in its mosaic of responses, approaches and agendas, as well as the variety of kinetic and non-kinetic effects it has employed. In many respects, this environment demonstrates the chaos of conflict and the enduring human nature of warfare. Acceptance of the human dimension naturally flows to the

need for an effect as the outcome of operational activity. A bureaucratic, process-driven approach to EBO, where the cascading effects are painstakingly modelled to provide every conceivable option sequel and outcome, ignores the human dimension.

An adaptive effects approach accepts that not everything about the battlespace is known. This approach provides commanders with the agility of mind and structure to switch their main effort between lines of operation. It is fully inclusive of that human domain which is conflict. By embracing the complexity of human activities, a military force can adapt quickly and gain a successful outcome from complex warfighting.

A bureaucratic, process-driven approach to EBO ... ignores the human dimension.

ENDNOTES

- 1 David Kilcullen, *Countering Global Insurgency*, 2004, p. 31, available at <<http://www.smallwarsjournal.com/documents/kilcullen.pdf>>, accessed on 1 November 2006.
- 2 Department of Defence, Australian Army Future Land Operating Concept, *Complex Warfighting*, 2004, pp. 5–9.
- 3 Joshua Ho, 'The Dimensions of Effects-Based Operations: A View from Singapore', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. II, No. 1, Winter 2004, p. 99.
- 4 Department of Defence, Australian Army Concept, *Adaptive Campaigning* (Draft), 2006, p. 3.
- 5 Department of Defence, *Adaptive Campaigning*, p. 4.
- 6 Department of Defence, *Adaptive Campaigning*, p. 7.
- 7 Edward Smith, 'Effects-Based Operations', *Security Challenges*, Vol. 2, No. 1, April 2006, p. 60.
- 8 Department of Defence, *Adaptive Campaigning*, p. 11.
- 9 Nigel Aylwin-Foster, 'Changing the Army for Counterinsurgency Operations', *Military Review*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 6, November–December 2005, p. 6.

THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel Gav Reynolds has held a wide variety of staff, training and intelligence appointments including command of the 1st Intelligence Battalion. His operational service includes Bougainville, Lebanon and aboard HMAS Success during the first Gulf War. He recently returned from Baghdad where he was the J2 on the Australian Headquarters.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

CONTEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT OF INFANTRY IN A COMBINED-ARMS STABILITY AND SUPPORT OPERATIONS

SECDET VIII IN BAGHDAD

LIEUTENANT T. J. M. ROBINSON

ABSTRACT

The role of infantry in contemporary deployments is proving to be in tasks other than combat, such as the Stability and Support Operations underway in Iraq. The author argues that, in addition to close combat skills, infantry soldiers require a range of wider capabilities. These include security of assets and installations, close protection and escorting of diplomatic and civilian personnel, and the softer skills of tact and discretion that help minimise the 'footprint' of deployments.

INTRODUCTION

Based on current operations, the future Australian Army is most likely to be deployed not to defend territorial Australia, but rather to uphold Australian interests overseas.¹ In these types of operations, the threat environments in which future soldiers operate are likely to be characterised by a non-state enemy that is increasingly willing to fight in urban areas.² Within these parameters, asymmetric warfare has emerged as the primary strategy of an enemy unable to gain victory by conventional means, but who conducts operations that are aimed to achieve victory through the erosion of national will.³ Within this setting, modern armies find themselves tasked with the conduct of Stability and Support Operations (SASO) in urban areas.

As part of the Hardened and Networked Army (HNA) concept, infantry will increasingly operate within combined-arms combat teams, creating a hard-hitting, mobile, networked, and better-protected force with increased combat capability and lethality. Furthermore, HNA will see the compilation of *mission specific* combat teams assembled from regiments in Australia.⁴

The Australian Security Detachment (SECDET) in Baghdad, Iraq, is a useful example of such a mission-specific force, comprising a combined-arms combat team mounted in Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAVs). SECDET is tasked with providing the requisite protection to facilitate continued Australian diplomatic function in Baghdad. The purpose of this essay is to generate awareness and discussion of the likely future employment for infantry as part of a combined-arms combat team conducting Stability and Support Operations. The experiences of SECDET VIII provide insight into the tasking and capability of infantry deployed on future ADF operations that may be executed under the HNA framework. Employment of infantry will be discussed in the context experienced by the author, both at the Australian Embassy, Baghdad and the nearby Australian compound also within the International Zone (IZ)—‘The SECDET Cove’.

SECDET is tasked with providing the requisite protection to facilitate continued Australian diplomatic function in Baghdad.

THE AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY, BAGHDAD

VITAL ASSET PROTECTION

As part of the SECDET combat team, the mission of the organisation located at the Australian Embassy was to defend the Embassy from attack. Although infantry-centric, this was achieved in concert with other force elements through a layered defence, incorporating a variety of screening, surveillance, overwatch, and static guard positions, as well as dismounted patrols that gathered information and conducted liaison with Coalition forces and private security elements operating within the battlespace. All of this information was fed through to the Embassy Watchkeeper, who was able to monitor activity within the Embassy and surrounds supported by closed-circuit TV and secure communications, and was able to manoeuvre additional soldiers to surge when required. The protected mobility and firepower of cavalry-enhanced Vital Asset Protection came through the provision of a spatially dislocated but highly responsive and agile combined-arms Quick Reaction Force (QRF) that was able to reinforce defences and move key personnel to and from the Embassy as required.

... dismounted patrols gathered information and conducted liaison with Coalition forces and private security elements ...

PROTECTING DIPLOMATS

From the Australian Embassy, Baghdad, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and other Government agencies conduct diplomatic operations in support of the national interest. Being located at the Australian Embassy brought certain responsibilities and restrictions that would not normally be experienced by young Australian riflemen. For example, it was necessary to develop a rapport and exercise tact when dealing with foreign VIPs and Australian Government officials. The infantry platoon worked with parallel chains of command, reporting threats and significant Anti-Iraq Forces (AIF) activity around the IZ to SECDET HQ as well as to the Australian Consul General, who was designated by DFAT as the Post Security Officer (PSO). The soldiers contributed to battlefield awareness by reporting insurgent activity that had bearing on Embassy security and operations.

... infantry soldiers needed to display confidence as well as tact and discretion ...

Australian riflemen assisted DFAT in providing tailored security for Australian Government VIPs and other dignitaries visiting the Australian Embassy. In maintaining stringent entry criteria, infantry soldiers needed to display confidence as well as tact and discretion when dealing with the visiting Personal Security Details (PSD) of foreign diplomats and high-level Coalition force personnel. The infantry platoon at the Australian Embassy was required to balance its manning of mission-critical defensive positions and visibility of lethal force with the DFAT requirement of maintaining the diplomatic sensitivities of an Embassy. Defensive infrastructure constructed by the platoon had to be visibly discrete and keeping with the character of an Embassy. The Australian rifleman is well suited to this task and consistently showed maturity in dealing with such situations.

WORKING WITH LOCAL NATIONALS

DFAT in Baghdad employs a number of Iraqi civilians as either office workers or as contractors, who assist with ongoing construction and maintenance work within the Embassy. It is not unusual for up to 60 Iraqi nationals to be searched, processed and monitored within a working day by the Embassy Group. Most Iraqis working at the Embassy lived in non-secure areas of Baghdad, which meant that they needed to hold a host of relevant passes for entry to the more secure area where the Australian Embassy is located. The issuing of these passes to Iraqi citizens is a necessarily lengthy process, and it became an additional role for the infantry platoon HQ to support the security screening and pass issue for both ADF- and DFAT-employed workers through the US military. The risks that local nationals take in working for the Coalition forces in Iraq are considerable, both because of daily movement through the Anti-Iraq Forces-targeted IZ checkpoints, as well as reprisals from other Iraqis for working with the Coalition. For staff workers at the Australian Embassy, the perceived danger was considerable. At the request of DFAT, discrete entry procedures for locally employed staff were developed at the Embassy. For the infantry platoon, the challenge was to maintain the mission-critical force protection of the Embassy and ADF personnel whilst alleviating the perceived risks for Iraqi civilians who filled a vital role in the functioning of the Embassy. The flexibility of the defensive solution provided by the Australian Army in this event is noteworthy, as without the locally employed staff, the Embassy's functions are

... the challenge was to maintain the mission-critical force protection of the Embassy and ADF personnel whilst alleviating the perceived risks for Iraqi civilians ...

significantly reduced. By being able to provide a range of security options—due to the unique skills offered by the Army—workable solutions for almost all situations could be secured.

INDIRECT FIRE

The screening of vehicles and pedestrians at International Zone checkpoints meant that the threat within the IZ came predominantly from AIF rocket and mortar indirect fire. The AIF's Technique, Tactic and Procedure (TTP) was to fire only one or two rockets before withdrawing from a fire base in order to escape detection by the Coalition and ISF. The unsustained and random nature of indirect fire in Baghdad meant that the enforced wearing of personal protective equipment, such as helmets, Enhanced Combat Body Armour (ECBA) and ballistic-resistant goggles in exposed areas played a greater role in force protection than traditional 'actions on', which are generally implemented only once the threat has passed. Although the built-up nature of Baghdad was often sufficient to isolate any explosion, thereby reducing the lethal radius of mortar and 122 mm rockets, the necessity of individual protective equipment to mitigate the risks of indirect fire was demonstrated mid-way through the deployment by the death of two locally employed Embassy staff members, who were killed when an AIF mortar hit their car whilst driving home from the IZ. Stray rounds from celebratory fire, Iraqi Police traffic control and random shooting originating from outside the IZ made the wearing of protective equipment mandatory for soldiers working in exposed locations.

MAINTAINING FORCE SUSTAINABILITY

Maintenance of sustainability was identified as a pertinent issue whilst conducting the Mission Rehearsal Exercises (MREs) prior to deployment. The nature of tasks and complexities of defending the Embassy required a level of flexibility that was not produced by the traditional method of rotating sections in defence responsibilities. SECDet VIII used a troops-to-task approach that pooled soldiers from the sections into a central group, who rotated through a variety of individual or paired security tasks on a fixed time interval. This approach worked well and relieved soldiers of routine work by changing their jobs with each rotation. The platoon found this work-rest cycle superior to that used by other Coalition forces where soldiers, as part of a squad, would be tasked with a single job daily for an 8- or 12-hour shift. Rotating jobs regularly not only kept the soldiers alert but broke up work during the quiet hours of the night. Command and control was provided by the platoon's Section Commanders and Headquarters, who along with NCOs from a Military Police Search Team working OPCON to the Infantry Platoon, rotated through a Watchkeeper role.

COMBAT FIRST AIDERS

Being deployed at the Australian Embassy offered some opportunities to infantry soldiers that they would not otherwise experience. The Embassy Group worked closely with Coalition forces, in particular with the nearby 86th then 10th Combat Support Hospital (CSH). Australian soldiers regularly assisted their United States counterparts with the smooth movement of Coalition and local national casualties through the Entrance Check Point (ECP) of the hospital. This prevented access into the hospital of unscreened security contractors and local nationals as they dropped off their wounded and dead for collection by US Army medics. The Combat First Aiders (CFAs) from within the infantry platoon provided regular assistance in the emergency room of the CSH, which was the first point of treatment for seriously injured Coalition personnel in Baghdad. Using their skills, the CFAs were able to cannulate and dress significant trauma wounds. In the instances of large incidents with an influx of wounded, they were given responsibility for stabilising individual patients. Their first aid skills were further developed as they assisted US Army medics and learnt how to apply the latest techniques in the treatment of blast and gunshot wounds.

The Combat First Aiders (CFAs) from within the infantry platoon provided regular assistance in the emergency room ...

THE SECDET COVE

The 'SECDET Cove' was the name for the Australian compound within a US Army Forward Operating Base (FOB) located within the International Zone. Rifle platoons located at the 'Cove' perform a variety of tasks that fell under three main categories; Surveillance, Armed Escort and Red Zone Patrols.

SURVEILLANCE

Australian and US Army units shared the security responsibilities for the FOB. SECDET contributed primarily by manning observation posts that provided situational awareness to the TOC (Tactical Operations Center) of the US FOB and the SECDET Command Post. The SECDET observation posts were incorporated into a network of US-manned observation posts that were positioned to provide overwatch of the FOB, identify suspect vehicles and activities, and report incidents as they occurred within the IZ and adjacent Red Zone. Large explosions and smoke from IDF, vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) and IEDs could

be seen from some distance as they occurred throughout Baghdad. The type of explosion would dictate whether a plume of smoke or dust was visible to the soldiers manning the OP. In these instances laser range finders produced accurate reporting, which was relayed to the Tactical Operations Center and SECDet Command Post via Multi Band Inter/Intra Team Radio (MBITR) and SINGAR radios. When there were no visual cues as to the location of the explosion, soldiers would report the explosion as 'heard not seen' and would estimate bearing and distance. The reporting of incidents provided commanders with access to threat information that was relayed to ADF personnel working throughout the IZ and in the Red Zone. The level of reporting by Australian infantrymen in these tasks was widely recognised as the best in Baghdad, as the information was almost inevitably confirmed by more detailed investigations, but importantly the initial deduction from the soldiers manning the observation post would be accurate, and assisted in the deployment of additional forces to the incident.

The level of reporting [of security incidents] by Australian infantrymen ... was widely recognised as the best in Baghdad ...

ARMED ESCORT

The daily provision of armed escort to unarmed Australian Defence civilians working in the IZ was performed by infantry soldiers based at the 'Cove'. Driving civilian-style Suburban vehicles, they operated in small teams supported by a combined-arms Quick Reaction Force to provide armed escort to their principal. Principals were picked up at a secure location and escorted to their workplaces at Iraqi Government ministries or to other destinations in the IZ for meetings and social events.

The provision of Multi Band Inter/Intra Team Radio (MBITR) and Personal Role Radios (PRRs) to soldiers undertaking armed escort tasks allowed their movements to be 'battle tracked' through the SECDet command post. As they provided security to Defence Civilians, infantry soldiers could communicate internally to the patrol via the PRR or alternatively to higher or supporting sub-units via the MBITR. Following incidents within the IZ, these small teams could be accounted for and request QRF support through the SECDet Watchkeeper. Furthermore, the Watchkeeper was able to immediately direct soldiers to move their principal from locations deemed unsafe following intelligence leads that indicated a threat warning for the Defence civilian's location.

The convergence of Iraqi Security Forces, foreign nationals with plain-clothes PSD, and Coalition forces in Iraqi Government buildings created a highly complex, dynamic and volatile threat environment. Armed escorts for Defence civilians and other ADF personnel were often commanded by senior private soldiers, and provided opportunity for these men to work independently within their small teams. In some circumstances, where a high level of discretion was required to protect the identity of key personnel, infantry soldiers were also tasked in 'follow and support' roles. They did not visibly associate with their principal, but were able to intervene and request an extraction force provided by QRF if required. Armed escort in small teams provides an example of a new employment of infantry through the 'network enabled' operations, made available by HNA. Advances in communications and interoperability facilitate the economy of scale and allows command and control to be maintained as small teams operate across the battlespace.

The provision of armed escorts accounted for a significant amount of the riflemen's tasks. Given the 'Whole of Government' approach to recent ADF deployments, as well as the ongoing necessity of protected mobility for both commanders and embedded ADF personnel, and the increasing capability of small teams, I argue that the skill of 'armed escort' in pairs or small groups be further developed by the Infantry Corps. This skill-set is not SECDET mission-specific; it is relevant anywhere commanders and other ADF personnel are required to transit through or conduct meetings with interest groups in a dynamic threat environment. An increased level of training will allow the Corps to more effectively provide security to ADF and other personnel that are not afforded a dedicated Military Police Close Personal Protection (CPP) team or Special Forces PSD. A small team of subject-matter experts could provide formal training to riflemen deploying on Stability and Support Operations, and once established in the Corps, armed-escort training could take place alongside other security operations lessons, such as vehicle and personnel screening, in which the Corps already has considerable experience.

For soldiers operating from vehicles and in confined areas, the long barrelled weapons and especially the F89 were less effective as primary weapons due to decreased manoeuvrability. The 9 mm pistol, as an alternate weapon, was a necessity, especially whilst in vehicles. An increased emphasis on training scenarios involving the 9 mm pistol, specifically concentrating on firing inside buildings and from vehicles, would benefit future infantry soldiers deploying to Baghdad or similar environments.

Armed escort in
small teams provides
an example of a new
employment of infantry
through the 'network
enabled' operations ...

RED ZONE PATROLS

The 'Red Zone' refers to the Baghdad city area that is outside the relatively secure International Zone. Conducting operations in the Red Zone as part of a combined-arms battle team was another task for infantry soldiers based at the 'Cove'. In the Red Zone, there were two principle tasks for the infantryman. Firstly, to provide dismounted security at either objectives or when halted, and secondly, to provide the 'shooter' capability for the ASLAV Type 2 vehicles. As a 'shooter', the rifleman with his personal weapon was responsible to ensure that the integrity of a security bubble around the convoy was maintained within his arcs of responsibility. He was also required to identify and relay the position of potential threat vehicles to the ASLAV Crew Commander, and relay to the driver the changing positions of ASLAV vehicles to the rear as they conducted blocking drills at crossroads and roundabouts. Through their posture in the ASLAVs, soldiers portray the psychological image of a 'hard target' to the enemy as a strategy to deter a planned or opportune attack. The 'hard target' image is visually demonstrated to the enemy by well-equipped soldiers mounted in the turrets of ASLAVs using their personal weapons to constantly scan rooftops, windows and overpasses for potential sniper hides, as well as employing escalating force in accordance with their Rules of Engagement to maintain an appropriate distance between vehicle traffic and the patrol.

On the streets of Baghdad, the US-preferred 'closed left fist' is the universal signal for 'Stop' and shooters ward off civilian traffic whilst entering roundabouts and crossroads. Generally, civilian traffic, which has become accustomed to obeying instructions from the military, complies with the soldier's signals immediately. One of the challenges in Baghdad is distinguishing between Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) and the AIF. To avoid reprisal attacks from the AIF, the ISF and other personnel working for Coalition forces regularly wear balaclavas or other masks to hide their identity. This masking of identity, combined with the ISF's inconsistent military uniforms and the prolific use of civilian vehicles by armed personnel, creates a chaotic and volatile environment within which soldiers have to ensure security.

To mitigate the risk of concealed Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) upon dismount, Coalition forces in Iraq conduct a searching drill known as the '5 and 25' check. Whenever halted, a visual search is coordinated by the vehicle commander to radius of 5 meters from the vehicle. If halted for greater than 5 minutes, the convoy commander coordinates a thorough physical search to a radius

Through their posture
in the ASLAVs,
soldiers portray the
psychological image of
a 'hard target' ...

of 25 meters of the convoy. It is likely that the senior dismounted commander will be responsible for conducting this dismounted scan. Once dismounted to conduct a task, the infantry commander, usually a brick commander, assigns areas of responsibility to his soldiers, who scan for enemy activity and ensure civilian traffic and pedestrians are kept an appropriate distance from the vehicles. Infantry bricks also provide local protection for snipers placed in overwatch and secure key ground that is unable to be accessed by the ASLAVs. The infantry brick enhances the combined-arms effect of the patrol by providing the capability to clear buildings of enemy, position personnel in overwatch, secure compound entrances, establish cordons, A-Frame damaged vehicles, and extract personnel from hostile locations as ordered by the Patrol Commander. It is this wide range of tasks conducted by the infantry brick that provides significant flexibility to the combined-arms manoeuvre commander in a diverse range of environments.

The infantry brick
enhances the
combined-arms effect
of the patrol ...

ADAPTING TO COMBINED ARMS OPERATIONS

WORKING WITH ASLAVS

The cavalry element of the combined-arms team brought a suite of capabilities to SECDET; offering protected mobility, firepower and improved communication networks that promote tactical tempo. It allows QRFs to move combat capability across the battlespace with speed and security, and the protected mobility of the ASLAVs were instrumental in maintaining force protection whilst in the Red Zone.

For SECDET VIII's Red Zone tasks, the nine-man infantry section was generally too large for the role of dismounted security, especially when the combined-arms patrol had to conduct moves to embassies and ministries that were sensitive to the size of our military footprint. Because of this, the infantry section was normally split into two bricks, one commanded by a corporal, and the other by the section 2IC. A brick was generally sufficient for dismounted security and, in our experience with ASLAVs, a five-man brick was superior to the four-man brick. With a five-man brick, the ASLAV shooter was organic and four soldiers could provide dismounted security on the ground. When the four-man bricks were tasked with Red Zone patrols, the

... the nine-man
infantry section was
generally too large for
the role of dismounted
security ...

shooter had to be sourced from an alternative brick, which is not ideal as it broke the integrity of remaining callsigns, which may be tasked to operate in a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) role.

COMMUNICATION NETWORKS

Operating as part of a combined-arms battle team increased the capability of the communication network and meant that the riflemen had to adapt to a higher tempo environment. Networking the combat team down to small groups added significant complexity to radio nets. To reduce radio traffic, soldiers were required to not 'offer' when sending in reports, and to succinctly relay the Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIRs). To increase tempo, infantry elements moved away from the 'alpha stop...' method of reporting, using instead the At, At, What, What, What format for sending in situation reports. Commanders utilised MBITRs at a brick level, which, when coupled with the Personal Role Radio (PRR), provided a networked brick down to the individual rifleman. With his dual depressor switch on the PRR, the brick commander could direct his soldiers on the ground via PRR whilst receiving orders from the ASLAV Patrol Commander over the MBITR, together with battlefield commentary from snipers positioned in overwatch. The PRR greatly enhanced communication and situational awareness for the riflemen. It allowed the brick commander to discretely pass on information and manoeuvre his men, unaffected by the noise of the battlespace. Soldiers were able to maintain visual on their assigned arcs and immediately report potential threat to commanders, enhancing the tempo and the accuracy of information in the decision-making cycle.

Networking the combat team down to small groups added significant complexity to radio nets.

An understanding of the new tasks for which infantry are likely to be employed is vitally important ...

CONCLUSION

In combined-arms Stability and Support Operations, infantry is multi-rolled and, when not employed in Offensive Operations, the Corps is called to perform a variety of security tasks, often in small teams that are network-enabled and supported by a highly mobile QRF. The high level of communications networking

increases the independence and responsibility of infantry soldiers, who operate across the battlespace in small teams commanded by junior NCOs and controlled by an often spatially dislocated HQ. In the conduct of Stability and Support Operations, the Infantry Corps is a vital component of combined-arms and offers options to commanders through multi-skilled and highly adaptable soldiers who can be employed to achieve a broad range of tasks across the spectrum of conflict. An understanding of the new tasks for which infantry are likely to be employed is vitally important for commanders and trainers, as it is their role to shape the next generation of Australian riflemen through the training they receive and the equipment they are given.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, 'The Army in the Air', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. 1, No. 1, June 2003.
- 2 Alice Hill, *Future War in Cities*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, 2004.
- 3 Lieutenant Colonel Mick Mumford, 'Victory Despite Defeat?: The Pyramid Event Counter-Method, Unconventional Warfare and the use of Dominant Force', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 1, Summer 2005–06
- 4 Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, 'Towards the Hardened and Networked Army', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 1, Winter 2004.

THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Tim Robinson attended the Australian Defence Force Academy from 2000 to 2003 and graduated with a Bachelor of Science. In 2003, he attended the Royal Military College and was allocated to the Infantry Corps. In 2004 he returned to ADFA to complete his honours year. His first Regimental Posting was to the First Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. He deployed as an Infantry Platoon Commander with SECDET VIII between September 2005 and March 2006. Lieutenant Robinson is currently posted to Rifleman Wing, School of Infantry.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

URBAN COMBAT SERVICE SUPPORT OPERATIONS

OBSERVATIONS AND INSIGHTS FROM IRAQ*

COLONEL ANDREW CONDON

ABSTRACT

This article briefly discusses Combat Service Support (CSS) operations in a complex warfighting environment, based on the author's recent experiences while serving in Iraq. The article places an emphasis on urban operations, using operational observations, and shares his insights for developing CSS capability to meet the requirements of current and future land warfare.

This article has been titled 'Urban Combat Service Support (CSS) Operations in a Counterinsurgency Conflict'. It could be titled, using emerging military vernacular, 'CSS operations in complex terrain with a complex threat' or, more simply, 'Complex warfighting CSS operations'. The article is written from the perspective of an Embedded Officer in the Coalition Military Headquarters (HQ) in Iraq during 2004.

* This paper is based on a presentation by the author to the ADF Logistics Conference at Darling Harbour, Sydney, in November 2004.

These observations and insights will, to many readers, seem both obvious and intuitive. However, when there are currently CSS personnel engaged in an environment of mortal combat, readers should reflect on:

- why such observations continue to be discussed as ‘lessons’; and
- from an organisational perspective, why has significant inertia been experienced in addressing these issues.

LINING UP THE WAGONS

In the Al Anbar province of Iraq, at a United States Marine Corps (USMC) base in the town of Ramadi in mid-2004, a USMC officer explained to the author as they observed a CSS convoy, ‘every time you drive out the gates of the camp, you have to treat it like a combat operation.’ They continued to watch as the convoy of CSS vehicles—with a resupply of stores and supplies—went through its battle preparation. The CSS detachment commander gave his orders after earlier being briefed by intelligence and operations staff on the latest route conditions, intelligence data, and activities of friendly forces. Ammunition was issued for the crew-served weapons, weapons were test-fired, and communications checks carried out, followed by a walk through of counter-ambush drills and casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) rehearsals. The base was in an old fort, with a high stone wall for a perimeter and a big elaborate gate at the entrance. The scene was a modern-day version of ‘lining up the wagons’ prior to heading out into ‘Indian Territory’.

‘every time you drive out
the gates of the camp,
you have to treat it like a
combat operation’

PHASE IV: SUPPORT AND STABILITY OPERATIONS

Coalition combat operations in Iraq commenced in March 2003, with major combat operations declared over by the end of the following month. By the start of 2004, the Coalition had established Support and Stability Operations (SASO). In early February 2004, the author deployed to Baghdad as one of 20 Australians embedded in CJTF-7, the Coalition military HQ. CJTF-7 was essentially a corps HQ (based on HQ US Army 3 Corps) that had just completed a Relief In Place (RIP) with HQ US Army V Corps. From a logistic perspective, CJTF-7 focused on the planning and execution of CSS to land-based Coalition forces in the Iraq Area of Operations (AO).

The author was the senior Australian CSS officer in CJTF-7 and was assigned to the C4 branch, headed by a US Army One Star officer. The author was employed in the Coalition Support Cell that had responsibilities for staff actions to integrate the planning and execution of CSS for non-US troop contributing nations. The Coalition Support Cell also managed the US Acquisition and Cross Servicing Agreement (ACSA) program. There were more than 30 countries in the Coalition. Most contingents were part of one of the two multinational divisions—one under command of a UK Divisional HQ and the other under command of a Polish Divisional HQ. A number of other nations with force elements embedded within the US Army and USMC divisions.

Support arrangements for each country varied and were based on government-to-government agreements. The main hub of support for CJTF-7 was Kuwait, and was based on a Theatre Support Command. Logistic support was considered to be a national responsibility, with support being available from other nations, primarily the United States, via the ACSA program, on a cost-reimbursable basis. Support arrangements for the US divisions were based on US doctrinal support structures, using a combination of US CSS units and the US Logistic Contracting Assistance Program (LOGCAP) contract. The UK-led multinational division support arrangements were based on North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) principles, where each nation deployed its own National Support Element (NSE) and, when required, utilised UK support contracts on a cost-reimbursable basis. Support to the Polish-led multinational division was based on support from the US LOGCAP contract and allocated US CSS units, with some contingents having their own NSE.

KEY OBSERVATIONS FROM CSS OPERATIONS IN THE IRAQ AO

OBSERVATION 1: COMPLEX TERRAIN AND A COMPLEX THREAT

Urban terrain is classified as ‘complex terrain’. Key issues are:

- high densities of non-combatants, i.e. crowds, vehicles, and traffic jams;
- buildings and other structures;
- limited line of sight for observation and early warning;
- well-defined routes with limited alternatives;
- minimal ability to establish standoff distance from neutral and/or threat forces;
- often easy surveillance options on own CSS installations by threat forces;
- Ready Reaction Force (RRF) and incident first responders being easily blocked or channelled in their movement; and
- storage (class III and class V) being forced into high-density situations with limited options for dispersion.

A complex threat is often asymmetric in nature and based on irregular forces (including insurgents), who operate using non-conventional military methods. Such forces are characterised by:

- not wearing uniforms or having a clear method of identification;
- a preparedness to operate outside the laws of armed conflict; and
- having asymmetric objectives, including a preparedness to achieve objectives through suicide missions.

However, key to a complex threat environment is the range of threat groups. The threat is not just a single group motivated by a single cause and a single C2 structure with common methods of operation. Each threat group is likely to have its own objectives, moral values, tactics and techniques.

INSIGHT 1: COMPLEX TERRAIN WITH A COMPLEX THREAT

A requirement exists for consideration to be given to:

- Revising doctrine, with supporting Tactics, Techniques and Procedures (TTPs), for CSS operations in complex terrain;
- Formations bidding for the required resources and programming exercises to practise and further refine TTPs and supporting doctrine, rather than being content with playing logistics and CSS operations offline on exercises; and
- Complex warfighting CSS operations being included in exercise objectives.

OBSERVATION 2: CSS IS THE TARGET OF CHOICE—FORCE PROTECTION IN COMPLEX TERRAIN

Logistic convoys and installations do not have the high density of weapons found with concentrations of combat forces, and thus the logistic forces are ‘softer’ targets for threat forces. In Iraq, logistic convoys and installations are the target of choice.

... logistic convoys and installations are the target of choice.

The key force protection issue in urban terrain is the difficulty in creating any significant standoff distance from potential threats. In urban areas, where blue forces are attempting to ‘win the hearts and minds’ of the locals (probably the best form of force protection), putting up concertina wire 300m in front of a base and clearing ground in between in order to provide both a standoff distance and observation for early warning is just not feasible. Mitigating the risk of suicide vehicle-bombs approaching close to the perimeter in an urban environment requires consideration of specific force protection measures.

Given the number and frequency of both Coalition military and contractor vehicles entering and exiting logistic bases, controlling access gains another dimension of complexity if force protection measures are not to be compromised. Vehicles have to be stopped to positively identify drivers and passengers, and searched for explosive devices. This requires the appropriate equipment and obstacles, together with specific TTPs—all to ensure a high level of certainty in preventing any penetration of the perimeter. This action is undertaken while also mitigating the risks of vehicles and personnel being attacked in search areas, and reducing the vulnerability of convoys being attacked while queuing to gain entry to a protected base.

INSIGHT 2: FORCE PROTECTION IN COMPLEX TERRAIN

Consideration is required to refine and document TTPs in the hardening of logistic areas and access control measures for a range of threats includes:

- Developing user requirements for capabilities to be acquired to enhance both hardening and access control of bases in urban areas, including threat alert systems for bases; and
- Ensuring that training regimes and the inclusion of force protection training objectives on exercises are put in place in order to expose more of the ADF to force protection issues in urban areas, and to use the opportunity to refine TTPs.

OBSERVATION 3: CLASS IV

The hardening of HQs, units and logistic installations invariably requires greater quantities (and, in the case of concrete blast barriers, greater tonnages) of class IV (construction materials) than have been previously factored into doctrine and planning guidance for sustaining operations.

INSIGHT 3: CLASS IV

The different types and increased tonnages of class IV are all issues for consideration of design (i.e. user requirements), acquisition/manufacture, movement, handling, storing and accounting.

OBSERVATION 4: CLASS V USAGE IN URBAN OPERATIONS

In urban operations, class V small-arms usage is significant in comparison to other ammunition natures. The ability to suppress an enemy, so as to enable friendly force manoeuvre in complex terrain, is often limited to small-arms fire by those troops in direct contact with the enemy. Indirect fire is often limited by such issues as the Rules of Engagement (ROE), proximity of civilians

... the 'just-in-time' philosophy, based on high levels of demand certainty, came unstuck.

and friendly forces, and the likelihood of collateral damage. Thus, small-group engagements consume large quantities of small arms ammunition. In late March and early April 2004, when insurgent activity peaked in locations such as Ramadi, Fallujah and An Najaf, the ‘just-in-time’ philosophy, based on high levels of demand certainty, came unstuck. In this case, supply had to be increased in the form of a step function to match the surge in demand. The tonnages were huge, and the unit measure with which the C4 staff were dealing in, were ‘ship loads’.

INSIGHT 4: CLASS V USAGE IN URBAN OPERATIONS

An ADF review is required to ensure that there are appropriate class V personnel—handling, storage, and transport assets—with the doctrine, expertise and manning to deal with the expected class V usage rates of operations in complex terrain. Ammunition noted for high usage were 5.56mm, 7.62mm, sniper rounds, and 40mm (High Explosive and Allum). Innovative approaches will be required to mitigate the risks of high-density storage with the inability to provide peace-time safety distances.

OBSERVATION 5: DISTRIBUTION AND CONVOY OPERATIONS

‘What does an RPG gunner call the two ASLAVs providing close front and rear escort to a Unimog loaded with supplies? The left and right of arc!’

Distribution operations in the Iraq AO were initially established as a high-velocity system with a just-in-time approach. This was an attempt to reduce the Coalition footprint in Iraq, thereby minimising the impact on the local population and, in particular, reducing the number of US forces required to manage large stockpiles of supplies. However, a high-velocity sustainment system required convoys to move up and down the main supply routes along lengthy land lines of communication on a daily basis. Therefore, regardless of the threat, sustainment convoys were required to push through every day with very limited available options to vary routes and timings. It was no wonder in early 2004 that the line of communication forces (transport units and their Military Police escorts) were being awarded more Purple Hearts than combat arms unit personnel.

... the line of
communication forces ...
were being awarded more
Purple Hearts than combat
arms unit personnel.

INSIGHT 5A: CSS VEHICLE CONVOYS—CONVOY LIVE FIRE TRAINING RANGES

The US forces learned that having convoy counter-ambush drills (practised as dry-firing activities or with blanks) was not always sufficient preparation for optimising the execution of such drills. Providing effective suppressive fire from a moving truck takes some practice. Combat Arms units conduct live fire and movement shoots regularly in order to develop skills and enhance the effectiveness of their fire, and their vehicles are specifically designed to be fired from—this is not necessarily the case for most CSS vehicles. As a result, the United States was beginning to build convoy live-fire ranges in the continental United States. The Australian Defence Force needs to do something similar in Australia for all the same reasons.

INSIGHT 5B: NIGHT DRIVING

Night driving will often be a safer option for CSS convoys and thus the Basis of Provisioning (BOP) of night-driving goggles should take this requirement into account, as should training regimes. Being a part of convoy operations in blackout conditions using Night Vision Goggles (NVGs) is both an individual and collective skill that needs to be acquired and maintained. Pilots consider night operations using NVGs a perishable skill; so should truck drivers and their escorts.

INSIGHT 5C: VEHICLE COMMUNICATIONS

Every vehicle moving through urban areas requires a communications capability. In built-up areas, vehicles are easily isolated by traffic or crowds. Once a vehicle is isolated, reliable communications is an essential lifeline. All future communications capability projects and associated radio acquisitions need to include in their Basis of Provisioning plans for all CSS vehicles to be fitted with a communications capability.

INSIGHT 5D: HARDENING OF CSS VEHICLES

When travelling through urban areas, heavily armed and protected escort vehicles at the front and back of a convoy cannot guarantee protection for soft-skinned CSS vehicles. The United States has already hardened its escort vehicles, and the ADF needs to look at up-armouring its CSS vehicles. As there is certainly the demand, a number of options should soon be available on the commercial market.

... the ADF needs
to look at up-
armouring its CSS
vehicles.

OBSERVATION 6: CONTRACTORS IN THE AO

When the United States deployed their second rotation of forces at the beginning of 2004, they maintained essentially the same level of combat units, but were able to reduce the CSS force by 37 per cent. This reduction was achieved by augmenting the CSS force with contractor support, primarily through the US worldwide LOGCAP contract with Kellogg, Brown and Root (KBR). The basis of the decision to use significant contractor effort was that the operation had been deemed to have moved from the combat operations phase to the support and stabilisation phase. There were not significant levels of contractors operating in the Iraq AO during the combat operations phase of the operation. The two key observations were that:

- As the threat activity increased in late March and early April 2004, contractors refused to drive along the line of communications unless they were given adequate military security, including an armed soldier who travelled as a passenger in the cab of the contractor's truck. Unlike military CSS force elements, that provide most of their own security, the contractor force protection requirements reduced the available combat power for operations as combat units were re-tasked to provide security for the contractors.
- Contracting officers and the funds for the support contractors were allocated under command of the deployed Commander. This worked well in achieving unity of effort through unity of command.

... contractors refused to drive along the line of communications unless they were given adequate military security ...

INSIGHT 6: CONTRACTORS IN THE AO

To separate operational responsibility from administrative responsibility is to breach a rule that I have never seen violated without someone paying a heavy penalty.¹

Field Marshall William Slim

Command and control of contracting staff and funds to the JTF commander ensured unity of effort. Contractor support is not always the solution to CSS force-structure issues. Staff in force structure development debates should be wary of the argument that CSS forces are not required in sufficient numbers to provide second and subsequent rotations based on the assumption they can be replaced with contractor support.

OBSERVATION 7: MOVEMENT CONTROL

The United States has a strong movement control system with well-established procedures enabling the movement of troops, vehicles, equipment and stores from the continental United States and within the AO. A movement control battalion (MCB) was allocated to the Iraq AO. The key to the success of the movement control system was the high level of synchronisation of CSS planners and CSS operations staffs with the movement control staff. This was achieved by the MCB being placed under command of the 3rd line (force level) CSS organisation, the Corps Support Command (COSCOM). The COSCOM commander located the HQ of the MCB within his own HQ, thereby enabling unity of effort (again through unity of command)—a strong theme in warfighting situations. Such unity of effort was not only critical for deliberate planning, but was also vital for contingency management when supply routes and bridges were interdicted. Contingency management involved 2000 3rd line CSS vehicles on the road each day being re-routed in accordance with threat assessments, CSS priorities and route availability.

INSIGHT 7: MOVEMENT CONTROL

Recent practice by the Australian Defence Force has not been to place deployed movement control force elements under the command of the deployed force commander, let alone under the command of the CSS commander. This has been the case for both exercises and operations. On operations, the Australian force commander is responsible for the Australian forces and equipment moving in the AO. However, if the force commander is not allocated the movement control resources, the commander cannot therefore be reasonably held accountable for the movement of Australian troops and equipment in the AO.

CONCLUSION

A short list of personnel observations and insights has been provided based on the author's time deployed in Iraq. Space has prevented comment on a much longer list of observations, including container management, Logistic Information Management Systems (LIMS), convoy support centres, remotely controlled aerial delivery, and logistic liaison officers to name just a few.

Given the emerging requirement for complex warfighting CSS capability, there are many insights to be gained from recent warfighting operations in

The logistic and CSS community in the ADF does not engage sufficiently in philosophical and academic debate ...

Afghanistan and Iraq. These and further insights should be used to inform how the ADF prepares for and conducts future CSS operations in a complex warfighting environment. The author hopes readers will be challenged to identify and discuss additional insights. The logistic and CSS community in the ADF does not engage sufficiently in philosophical and academic debate, particularly in published military literature. Readers are encouraged to contribute to complex warfighting CSS literary discussion and debate, thereby facilitating organisational learning and achieving effective change. If the ADF as an organisational group does not affect such change, history will judge the organisation as culpable for future failures and lives lost.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, Cassell and Co., London, 1956.

THE AUTHOR

Colonel Andrew Condon graduated from the Royal Military College, Duntroon in 1985. He is a career Combat Service Support Army officer who has held CSS command appointments ranging from unit level (1 Fd Regt, RAA and 5th/7th RAR(Mech)) to force level as Commanding Officer 9th Force Support Battalion. His staff appointments include Staff Officer Grade One Operations at HQ Logistic Support Force and Chief of Staff of the Force Support Group. He is a graduate of the Royal Military College at Shrivenham in the United Kingdom (Masters in Military Operations Research) and a graduate of the US Army Command and General Staff College at Leavenworth. In February 2004 he deployed to Iraq as an embedded staff officer in the Logistics branch of the Coalition Military HQ known as CJTF-7. In July 2006 he deployed on OPERATION RAMP as the Commander of the JTF tasked to conduct the evacuation of Australians from Lebanon. Colonel Condon is currently posted as the Commander Force Support Group within 17 CSS Brigade.

CURRENT OPERATIONS

NEW ZEALAND CIVIL-MILITARY AFFAIRS EXPERIENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

BRYAN DORN

ABSTRACT

The New Zealand Army has not had experience in high-intensity urban warfighting for over sixty years. However, as Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate, stability and support operations (SASO) in a complex human environment can be just as daunting as the actual warfighting stage. It is within this environment that the New Zealand Army has been repeatedly successful.

Analysis of the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team (NZPRT) in the province of Bamyan Central, Afghanistan, reveals the New Zealand approach to SASO has enjoyed notable success in ensuring local stability. The analysis examines the composition of the NZPRT and its development, then considers its reconstruction tasks, interagency coordination and coordination of security and reconstruction activities. Additionally, the review will examine the NZPRT Five Pillar strategy and the implications of the New Zealand experience in Afghanistan. It will also be argued that work is still required to ensure New Zealand government agencies are well-represented to truly achieve a 'whole of government' approach to future conflicts.

INTRODUCTION

Events in Afghanistan and Iraq have illustrated that stability operations can be more challenging than the combat phase. Recent experiences in both countries have sparked international debate about how best to prepare for stability and support operations (SASO). It is within these two blocks of the ‘3 block war’—peace support and humanitarian missions—that the New Zealand Army has enjoyed great success. A broad analysis of the New Zealand Army’s SASO experience is beyond the scope of this paper. Primary attention will be focused on the performance of the New Zealand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, which performed a security and reconstruction/de facto civil-military affairs (CMA) role.

For the purposes of this paper the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF) adheres to the doctrinal definition of CMA as stipulated in ADDP 3.11. CMA is defined as:

the coordination and cooperation, in support of the mission, between the commander and civil actors, including the national population and local authorities, as well as international, national and non-government organisations and agencies.¹

COMPOSITION OF BAMYAN

The area of operations (AO) within which the NZPRT operates has a significant impact on performance and effectiveness. Bamyan Central, where the NZPRT is located, lies in the central highland region. The province includes six districts, each surrounded by mountains and easily isolated during the winter months.

The majority of the population are Hazara with a number of Tajiks and Pashtun in the region. The Hazara (Shia) suffered significant atrocities under the Taliban and were hence very receptive to the New Zealanders presence. As a result, the Bamyan province, when compared to other parts of Afghanistan, was considerably more accepting of Western military forces. Whilst the benign security environment of Bamyan allows for more rapid implementation of development programmes, the widespread physical destruction, deterioration of the province and loss of skilled people, has complicated reconstruction and development efforts.²

... the widespread physical
destruction, deterioration
of the province and loss
of skilled people has
complicated reconstruction
and development efforts.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE NZPRT

The PRTs in Afghanistan were initiated by the United States in November 2002, as coalition commanders prepared for the transition from predominantly war-fighting operations to stabilisation and reconstruction. The idea was to use small civil-military teams to expand the legitimacy of the central government to the regions and enhance security by supporting security sector reform and facilitating the reconstruction process.

The PRT is a relatively new concept, with the American Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) experiment in Vietnam providing the only real historical experience. The concept of operation for PRT's throughout Afghanistan was not clear during the planning process. This constraint was not surprising in view of PRT doctrine and the concept's infancy within Afghanistan.

The New Zealand team arrived in September 2003 with the aim of promoting security within the Bamyan Province. The operational concept used to achieve the mission was to marginalise the cause of instability and enable the key Afghan institutions to establish self-sustaining governance. In doing so, the PRT is working in support of the Provincial Government, the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) and the international aid community, to assist in security sector reform and enable good governance, key infrastructure, reconstruction, education and development of the economy.³ These objectives were imperative to strengthen security and stability within Bamyan to prevent the re-emergence and export of terrorism.

The NZPRT included an amalgamation of Army, Navy and Air Force personnel. Although a pre-existing CMA force did not exist, the diverse nature of the NZPRT was not significantly detrimental to its performance.

Functional specialists from Headquarters, such as engineers, were designated to coordinate aid efforts, while other specialists were sent to the PRT HQ in Kabul to coordinate efforts with other PRTs and civilian organisations. Non-NZ elements embedded in the NZPRT included American and Afghan government representatives, interpreters, security personnel, and other foreign aid development representatives.

Although the NZDF's pre-deployment training is of only a short duration, it involves numerous actors performing the role of enemy forces, contractors, or local civilians, recreating the full spectrum of potential scenarios. Primary emphasis was placed on weapons training, with some time also devoted to cultural and language

The operational concept used ... was to marginalise the cause of instability and enable the key Afghan institutions ...

training. This included an understanding of local customs and a number of key phrases, which were improved with successive deployments. Training focused on how the NZPRT would conduct operations to support elections, humanitarian distributions and local meetings. These utilised Afghan role-players and previously deployed personnel.⁴ A representative from NZAID also outlined the goals and aims of their organisation. A robust lesson-learned apparatus also allowed for the exchange of tactics, techniques and procedures for operating in Bamyan. After each rotation, key lessons and observations were passed on to the next deployment to ensure important developments were not undermined. Previous deployments to East Timor, Solomon Islands, Nuie and Iraq also meant most New Zealanders had a good appraisal of CMA/reconstruction tasks.

... key lessons and
observations were
passed on to the next
deployment ...

RECONSTRUCTION TASKS

Despite popular perception, the PRTs were not established for the sole task of nationbuilding. Undertaking reconstruction in Afghanistan, a nation with limited infrastructure, after two-and-a-half decades of civil war is a daunting and difficult task.⁵ As a result, the PRTs were to achieve a broader objective, namely the extension of central Afghan government authority and the provision of a secure environment to undertake reconstruction by PRT or local Afghan elements.

Like other PRTs, the NZPRT was designed to improve civil-military coordination and enhance the quality of the military 'hearts and minds' campaign. This was achieved by drawing on civilian expertise and facilitating the distribution of government funds for relief and reconstruction projects and security sector reform. When elements of the NZPRT were not occupied with other tasks, such as base security, the engineers would undertake short-duration but high-value reconstruction projects to establish rapport with the local population. For reconstruction tasks, the US Civil Affairs team supplied the financial assistance while the US Political Advisor provided the political weight to ensure the project was completed. Afghan locals were also employed to undertake reconstruction projects; however, the quality of work was sometimes unreliable and required close supervision.

The NZPRT, in conjunction with the Afghani Director of Rural Reconstruction Development (RRD), has also facilitated the Aga Khan Foundation in establishing well and irrigation projects. The NZPRT has assisted the RRD in determining important future projects. Other projects include the Bamyan Boys School

construction, snow clearance of three major passes, construction of five district police stations, provision of vehicles and maintenance training to police, and the conduct of a literacy training course for police.⁶

The extreme climatic conditions in Afghanistan meant some deployments were limited in what development projects could be implemented. Attention was therefore focused on consolidating what had been done, developing project management systems, accounting for the current state of projects and then preparing other deployments for the warmer season. Other complications to reconstruction tasks included the absence of an NZAID representative. Although this did eliminate the possibility of duplication of effort, it did place significant pressures upon the New Zealand Engineer Officer to coordinate NZAID and other reconstruction projects. During the seventh NZPRT deployment it was calculated that the Bamyan Province was missing out on 50 per cent of US Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funding that other provinces received.⁷ This was attributed to the fact the New Zealand Engineer Officer was too preoccupied with NZIAD projects to devote time to CERP initiatives. The rate at which reconstruction tasks could be undertaken was therefore vulnerable to numerous factors.

The relatively permissive environment in Bamyan has allowed for a far smoother transition between security and reconstruction operations. The secure environment within which the NZPRT has been operating should not detract from the success thus far achieved.

The focus of some foreign PRT teams on quick-impact projects has soured relations with the humanitarian organisations.

INTERAGENCY COORDINATION

The relationship between humanitarian organisations and the NZPRT has been significantly better than that experienced by other PRTs. The focus of some foreign PRT teams on quick-impact projects has soured relations with the humanitarian organisations. The humanitarian organisations object to this practice, arguing that it overlaps with their own activities, creating unnecessary duplication. The NZPRT was able to alleviate many tensions with humanitarian organisations through personal relationship building and active participation in Provincial Coordination Forums. This coordination was further enhanced by a local Government Provincial Strategic Plan, the development of which was sponsored by the PRT.

INTERNAL COORDINATION

Internal coordination was aided by a Memorandum of Understanding between Defence and NZAID, which was useful in outlining guidance and cooperation before the NZPRTs deployment. However, conflict between the NZPRT and NZAID was not totally eliminated. Disagreements have emerged over projects constructed and excessive focus on 'quick impact' reconstruction tasks without sufficient attention devoted to how these short-term projects would be incorporated into the long-term development and sustainability of the region.⁸ Whilst this is a valid concern, these 'quick impact' projects are also important to establish rapport with the local people, establish trust and goodwill, without which the possibility of establishing long-term stability and hence strategic development are remote. All 'quick impact' projects are carefully planned by the NZPRT to ensure they don't provide a foundation for future discontent.

Numerous NGOs have also compiled a significant database of the social composition and core requirements of numerous villages. Information sharing between the NGOs and NZPRT meant the New Zealanders had a good understanding of where CMA efforts should be focused. Furthermore, no PRT reconstruction initiative was undertaken in isolation but integrated to form a part of the 'reconstruction system' to ensure projects reinforced one another.⁹

PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT COORDINATION

The NZPRT did not want to be seen as a separate agency or administration and went to great pains to promote local governance. This was achieved by ensuring local officials were involved in the decision-making process, serving as liaison officers for central government, and by employing local contractors. The New Zealand PRT was part of what was known as a Provincial Task Force. This body included non-government organisations, local Afghans, and was chaired by the Governor, and the Provincial Task Force outlined the strategic direction for development in Bamyan. Any request for development assistance had to be passed through the local shura [community consultative group], District Sub Governor and Provincial Government for endorsement/approval in accordance with the Provincial Plan, involving the local capacity building as much as possible.

DISTRICT COORDINATION

Out in the field, the New Zealand patrols conducted regular meetings with local government shura. These were not necessarily elected officials, but local elders of prestige. Meetings covered the provision of water, the reconstruction of schools, and criminal activity. The New Zealand PRT also sought to consolidate good governance through regular meetings with government institutions. This included

district sub-governors, judges, prosecutors, mayors, village elders, community councils, chiefs of police, education department officials and health authorities. NZPRT experiences with local officials and Afghan government agencies were positive; however, due to a lack of education and training most government officials were in need of constant mentoring.

Local government officials and security services were often reported to be corrupt, incompetent, or both. Corrupt officials could not be summarily removed as they were often important political icons at the local level. The NZPRT conducted meetings with key figures, corrupt or not, gaining greater situational awareness and establishing relations with the key people of the region. This did not significantly undermine the local's perception of the New Zealand forces. Having been involved in war and instability for decades, the local Afghans were more than aware of corruption, which is endemic throughout many institutions, and the necessity to work within the limitations it imposed.

Another unique trait of the NZPRT is that it did not have the same military-civilian divide to that experienced in the American and British PRTs. For example, the British PRT military commander makes all the decisions related to security issues, while the civilian components run their programmes with minimal military involvement and report back to their respective organisations. The American area of operations (AO) also included a manoeuvre battalion responsible for security and three PRTs trying to synchronise their efforts. This division of labour was different to the 'fully integrated' NZPRT approach.¹⁰

Corrupt officials could not be summarily removed as they were often important political icons at the local level.

REGIONAL/SECTOR COORDINATION

To minimise operational differences, the PRT Executive Steering Committee sought to coordinate PRT strategies. The committee, which meet once a month, was made up of Afghan government officials, United Nations and NATO representatives, as well as ambassadors of PRT contributing countries. The committee also formulated joint terms of reference for all PRTs operating in Afghanistan to minimise the differences in operational styles between coalition and ISAF PRTs. The New Zealand contingent had representatives at these meetings, which provided useful information and a means to resolve outstanding issues with other agencies.

THE COORDINATION OF SECURITY & CMA OPERATIONS

Success required the consent of local parties and hence the quality of the New Zealander's negotiating skills was of utmost importance. The New Zealand soldier possesses an outstanding ability to establish good relations relatively easy. Although no specific attention was devoted to extensive language training before deployment, local Afghans were employed as interpreters and provided a crucial insight into Afghan livelihood. Simple measures, such as basic language skills, respecting cultural values, waving, removing sunglasses and body armour, or basic manners were important to establish rapport. The NZPRT also lived in small villages, despite the risks to personal health, or forward patrol bases in their respective districts. The cultural diversity of the New Zealand Army and presence of females are significant advantages when establishing good relations with the local people.¹¹ Another useful example is playing football with local children while PRT commanders held discussions with local elders. This aided significantly in easing tensions and provided the security climate for attaining local support and intelligence.¹² As one retired American colonel stated, 'the Kiwis had cracked the code' when it came to establishing effective relations with the local populace.¹³

Reconstruction projects required a high degree of security to ensure the construction, repair and utilisation of infrastructure, ranging from roads to irrigation systems. Well-functioning infrastructure and an inclusive political system also provided an indirect means of force protection. The NZPRT, like our other coalition partners, believed security patrols and CMA activities were mutually reinforcing. Significant efforts were made to ensure NZPRT civil-military integration was effective, with attention devoted to ensuring security/presence patrols were coordinated with the humanitarian assistance or reconstruction work of the Development Group.¹⁴ The Development Group met regularly to coordinate and align their activities with security operations, to keep the Commander's intent in line with the pillar strategy (see below), and their individual donor/agency guidance.¹⁵

Improvements in the security situation are reinforced by a functioning, representative, and inclusive political system. Economic growth in Afghanistan will only occur if security is improved and the political situation becomes more stable, but increased economic growth is itself the foundation upon which a sustainable political and security outcome can be built over the longer term.¹⁶ Poor security can render it more difficult to construct, repair, and utilise infrastructure, ranging from roads to

... basic language skills,
respecting cultural values,
waving, removing sunglasses
and body armour, or basic
manners were important ...

irrigation systems. A well-functioning infrastructure can further reinforce political stability. The diversity of the security challenges in Afghanistan means only an integrated approach can achieve long-term success. Uncoordinated progress in one area of development will contribute little to the overall security environment.¹⁷

Whilst the development of the Afghan National Police (ANP) is not the core focus of this paper, it illustrates another complication prevalent when trying to revive a collapsed state. The poor status of the police force is not due to the failings of the New Zealand police advisors embedded in the PRT, but indicates the difficulty in establishing a professional force in a nation that has been undermined by corruption and bloodshed for years. Any efforts to focus on counterinsurgency or counter-narcotics efforts are fruitless, particularly when the ANP do not have the foundation for a professional police force—morals, values, ethics, or basic writing skills.¹⁸

THE FIVE PILLAR STRATEGY TO SUCCESS

The Five Pillar Strategy was initially devised by the fourth deployment to Afghanistan referred to as Task Group Crib 4. The New Zealand PRT in Afghanistan from February–July 2005, Task Group Crib 5, continued to implement this strategy that focused on security sector reform, governance, infrastructure, education and the economy.

The pillars are arranged in priority from left to right with all aid agencies contributed across all core areas, whilst one agency has the lead for each pillar. The NZPRT patrols had the task of providing the security environment to allow reconstruction and development to proceed.

The following outlines key areas of success for the NZPRT for each of the five pillars from February–July 2005.

SECURITY

The PRT has:

- Written the strategic plan for the Bamiyan Afghan National Police.
- Facilitated training for and wrote the National Directorate of Security (NDS) strategic plan.
- Provided an ANP security checkpoint station building.
- Provided transportation resources and uniforms for the ANP.
- Provided basic para-military training for ANP in all districts.
- Provided legal training for judges, police and public prosecutors.
- Provided HR training for police, NDS and prison staff.
- Constructed 12 police check point huts and drop-arm barriers.

GOVERNANCE

The PRT has:

- Sponsored the Provincial Planning Conference.
- Written the Provincial Strategic Plan.
- Assisted the Provincial governance and co-ordination meeting structure.
- Provision of essential equipment for Ministries.

INFRASTRUCTURE

The PRT has:

- Sponsored three district road projects.
- Provided fuel, maintenance, training and labour to grade local roads.
- Expanded the Radio Bamyan capabilities to better cover the Province.
- Sponsored construction of District Government Buildings in Kahmard, Panjaw and Waras.
- Sponsored ongoing construction of various Bailey type bridges.

EDUCATION

The PRT has:

- Established various vocational training courses in Wara, Panjab, Shahidan and Bamyan Centre—approximately 400 students.
- Provided computer and literacy courses in Bamyan Centre.
- Provided support to Bamyan University including the provision of a security fence, furniture, equipment and staff salaries
- Undertaken construction of several of small schools.
- Provision of utilities to established schools.

HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

The PRT deployment has distributed (as a result of the NZPRT/US Civil Affairs representative assistance):

- Approximately three tonnes of food to Bamyan Hospital (delivered weekly), Yakawlang Hospital and other medical clinics.
- Approx 400 stoves.
- Approx 600 bags of coal.
- Benches, desks and teacher chairs and desks to two schools.
- Over 200 school kits (sufficient for 15 000 children).
- Over 50 teacher kits.
- Over 50 tool kits throughout Bamyan Province, including via work for tools programmes.
- Over 200 radios to teachers in various schools.

- Over 5000 sandbags to flooded areas.
- Over 350 tarpaulins throughout Bamyan Province.
- Over 2500 blankets.
- Over 1000 winter jackets.
- Over 10 MT of miscellaneous foodstuffs.
- Conducted personal hygiene classes and distributed over 5000 personal hygiene kits.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE NEW ZEALAND EXPERIENCE IN BAMYAN

The ability of the New Zealand soldier to establish good relations with the local population and mitigate many issues has brought the NZPRT significant praise. For example, Political Advisor to COMCJTF-76 stated that, 'the NZPRT is a model for other PRT's to follow'.¹⁹ Although the environment within which the New Zealanders operated was permissive in comparison to South East Afghanistan, from all accounts it is believed the New Zealanders would have been equally successful when operating in a more hostile environment, albeit with a higher risk of casualties and demanding a larger security force contribution.²⁰

Afghanistan and Iraq have illustrated the complexity of stability and support operations (SASO). It is predicted that these types of operations will be a common theme in future deployments. As a result, the Future Land Operating Concept (FLOC), which outlines how the New Zealand Army will operate beyond 2015, has incorporated important lessons from the Army's experience in Afghanistan and other stability type operations.²¹ The objective of SASO is to shape the environment in order to set conditions for political aims to be achieved. A key milestone is winning support from the local population to assist security and development, and hence provide the foundation for the expansion of indigenous institutions.

Innate New Zealand characteristics of neutrality and an ability to work in an honest and collaborative manner with all parties have been proven to greatly improve cooperation and appreciation of the situation. The NZPRT experience has also reinforced the need for junior commanders and soldiers to have appropriate cultural and linguistic skills available to them to assist in dealing with the complex environment.

Experiences in Bamyan have vindicated the need for a 'human-centric' approach to future conflicts, especially those conducted, as General Sir Rupert Smith observes, 'amongst the people'²². Whilst advances in technology have great

Experiences in Bamyan
have vindicated the
need for a 'human-
centric' approach to
future conflicts ...

potential to enhance situational awareness, it does not diminish the primacy of human interactions to decipher the confusing complex battlespace. Furthermore, the ability to put high-quality individuals and teams into an area of operations, in close proximity to the enemy and the population, is critical. In complex stability and support operations, human intelligence gathering is a critical capability, without which New Zealand land forces will fail to capitalise on our national strengths and struggle to detect those opponents that operate below the detection threshold of sophisticated surveillance systems.

Future requirements also testify the need for a joint, interagency and multi-national approach to future operations. In addition to a continuing emphasis on multi-national and coalition operations, there will also be an increasing emphasis on whole-of-government approaches to operations carried out by joint and interagency means.

Successful nation-building programs require a broad and unified approach from a number of governmental departments. In many cases, like Afghanistan, not all representation will come from a single contributing nation. Yet they must work in unison to effect balanced long-term change. As the New Zealand experience in Bamyán illustrates, representation from other New Zealand governmental agencies is still lacking. In the future, the land force will more often find itself operating alongside government agencies from New Zealand, coalition partners, and the United Nations in pursuit of the overall objective.

The challenging mountainous terrain, climatic extremes and small but irregular layout of local villages reinforces the requirement for the NZ Army to train for operations in complex terrain. Initiatives are underway within Army to provide an improved framework to achieve this and in particular address the Army's ability to operate effectively in the urban environment.

Underpinning the way in which the NZ Army contributes to stability and support operations is the effectiveness of the individual soldier and small team. The Army's soldier modernisation vision is for a soldier system that has a good level of interoperability with our allies, and that enables soldiers and small teams to operate effectively across the spectrum of operations. We seek to equip the soldier with capabilities that give them a significant advantage over threat forces by day and night, regardless of season, weather or terrain. There is recognition that the quality of the force is not just reflected by the equipment they use, but is an end product of a recruitment, education and training regime.

... the quality of
the force is ... an
end product of a
recruitment, education
and training regime.

CONCLUSION

This paper has illustrated that at the tactical level the NZPRT has been successful. There are many tangible results, such as the number of projects completed, aid distributed, or training conducted. However, many of the real successes are intangible, such as the continued relative stability in the Bamyān region without incident, that the Afghan National Police are able to seize over 1700kg of opium without assistance, or the increase in the size of the bazaar and shop owners expressing confidence in the situation. The establishment of village markets and commerce is a positive sign of growing stability.²³ Greater economic strength will eventually allow the local Afghan people to support themselves rather than rely upon the New Zealanders. Progress is still required to ensure the central government exercises effective control. Firstly, the construction of facilities does not necessarily indicate strategic success. Having adequate buildings is one thing, ensuring the locals can maintain such facilities and not become overly reliant on external assistance is another issue. Whether the NZPRT has achieved this level of success is contentious. Overly successful CMA efforts can create a 'cult of dependence' or 'cargo cult'. When the international assistance forces withdraw, the incoming government often fails to maintain these high standards. As illustrated by recent events in East Timor, this can lead to internal instability. The question therefore must be raised as to whether Bamyān will deteriorate after New Zealand withdraws. This question cannot yet be answered; one must only hope that involving local Afghans in the decision-making process will provide the experience to continue progress in the region after the New Zealand withdrawal. The international community should be well aware however, that to expect an infant democracy to work after five years of 'development' is a very ambitious objective.

Coordinating the amalgamation of local Afghans, NGOs, and other government agencies into a clear strategic plan has been a difficult process. For a nation that is one of the poorest countries in the world, plagued by a drug culture, poor health and education facilities, as well as ongoing tribal frictions, border security difficulties and geo-political complications, nation-building at the strategic level will continue to be exceptionally difficult. The Five-Pillar strategy has sought to provide this strategic development guidance, and at the very least introduce local Afghans to the policy-making process.

... to expect an infant
democracy to work
after five years of
'development' is a very
ambitious objective.

The situation in Bamyan is still dominated by the New Zealand military and Afghan military forces, with scarce representation of New Zealand government agencies. NZPRT commanders, like those from other nations, are required to operate in provinces with minimal expertise in the formulation of local government policies. While military training may provide the decision-making skills and maturity to deal with the majority of 'government formulation' development this is a short-term solution until indigenous policy-making experts can fill the void, only then can true long-term success be achieved.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Department of Defence, Australian Defence Doctrine Publication ADDP 3.11 – *Operations Series: Civil–Military Cooperation*, August 2004, p. 1-1.
- 2 Dylan Hendrikson, Michael Bhatia, Mark Knight, Annabel Taylor, 'A Review of DFID Involvement in Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan', International Policy Institute, London, July 2005.
- 3 *Provincial Reconstruction Team: Bamyan*, June 19 2005.
- 4 Discussion with officer, 14 June 2006.
- 5 Major Andrew M. Roe, 'To Create a Stable Afghanistan: Provisional Reconstruction Teams, Good Governance, and a Splash of History', *Military Review*, Vol. LXXXV, No. 6, November/December 2006, pp. 20–6.
- 6 Captain Neville Mosley, 'Who's involved in reconstructing Bamyan?', *New Zealand Army News*, Issue 353, 2 May 2006, pp. 5.
- 7 Discussion with officer, 29 June 2006.
- 8 Discussion with NZAID officials, 7 July 2006.
- 9 Discussion with officer, 29 June 2006.
- 10 Discussion with officer, 26 May 2006.
- 11 Discussion with officer, 29 June 2006.
- 12 Discussion with officer (retd), 16 May 2006.
- 13 Discussion with officer, 5 May 2006.
- 14 Discussion with officer, 29 June 2006.
- 15 Discussion with officer, 31 July 2006.
- 16 Discussion with officer, 14 June 2006.
- 17 Ali A Jalali, 'The Future of Afghanistan', *Parameters*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 1, Spring 2006, pp. 4–19.
- 18 Discussion with Police Inspector, 20 July 2006.
- 19 *Provincial Reconstruction Team: Bamyan*, 19 June 2005.
- 20 Discussion with officer, 1 May 2006.
- 21 For additional information see: New Zealand Army, *The Future Land Operating Concept*, v. 4.0, July 2006.

- 22 General Sir Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: the Art of Warfare in the Modern World*, Allen Lane, Camberwell, VIC, 2005.
- 23 *Provincial Reconstruction Team: Bamyan*, 19 June 2005.

THE AUTHOR

Bryan Dorn has completed a Master of Arts in International Relations at Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand and is working for Army General Staff, Force Development, New Zealand Defence Force. Bryan has recently completed an array of Capability Concept Papers to support the New Zealand Army of 2015 and contributed to NZDF Force Development. He has also published a number of articles in the *New Zealand International Review* on North-East Asian issues.



REVIEW ESSAY

GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES AND OTHER MARKETING MYTHS

DAVID SCHMIDTCHEN

ABSTRACT

The author argues that the hype surrounding the supposedly unique characteristics and workplace demands of 'Generation Y' deserves closer critical analysis. He questions those within the Army and the Australian Defence Force who use the simplifications of 'generationalism' as the basis for making long-term strategic workforce management decisions. He concludes by outlining five common workforce needs that might be expressed differently in each generation but which remain at the foundation of military workforce management and development.

Social analysis and commentary has many shortcomings, but few of its chapters are as persistently wrong-headed as those of the generations and generational change. This literature abounds with hyperbole and unsubstantiated leaps from the available data.

Everett Carll Ladd, Political Scientist¹

ABOUT THIS PAPER

This paper began life as an appraisal of the Spring 2006 *Griffith Review* titled ‘The Next Big Thing’, which presents a range of views on ‘generationalism’ in the form of essays, reflections, stories and poetry. Generationalism is the term used to describe patterns of behaviour on the basis ‘of the block of fifteen to twenty years in which you were born.’² In particular, I was attracted to Creed O’Hanlon’s observation that the Baby Boomers ‘were never big on originality’. He asserts that much of the foundation for the substantial social and technological change of the 1960’s and 1970’s—including the Internet—was laid by members of the ‘Silent Generation.’³ For me, this simple insight exposes the hyperbole that has become part of the national discourse about generational differences. The Army and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is entering a period when the resources will be available to implement long-standing recruiting and retention initiatives. This will be a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make fundamental structural changes to strategic human resource management in the Services. This is not a time for our leaders to become captive of marketing fads and fleeting social effects.

After reading the Griffith Review, I chose to review the subject of generationalism rather than persist with an evaluation of the most recent publication on the subject. I felt that a better understanding of the topic was more important than a review of the latest literature. Consequently, this essay contains my views and reflections on generational differences and the implications for the management and development of the military workforce. My aim is to stimulate critical thinking, conversation and informed debate about workforce management and development in the Army and the Australian Defence Force (ADF). As I leave the Army, this essay is a mix of observations, contemplations and growing concerns about our fascination with generationalism as a justification for strategic workforce management practices. I have taken the personal approach to examining the topic because the area seems to rely heavily on the speculation and opinion of self-styled ‘experts’. I’m adopting the same approach but I hope to be a voice for balance, caution and true strategic change.

... a once-in-a-generation
opportunity to make
fundamental structural
changes to strategic human
resource management ...

PRAGMATISM AND CAUTION

I am often drawn to Bruce Grant's observation that Australians and Australian society are 'not especially profound or thoughtful, but marked by applied energy, at its best coupled with intelligence and ingenuity'.⁴

The socialisation, training and education provided to the ADF sharpens Grant's national characteristic to a fine edge. The outcome, I think, is that the key intellectual strength of the ADF is the ability to mobilise, coordinate, refine and repackage the mass of existing military knowledge. Our history shows that we have responded well to the challenges that have confronted the institution. However, in these more uncertain times, when Australian society and the global strategic environment seem to be in flux, the ADF's leaders are confronting complex social problems to which there are no readily available solutions. Nor does the existing body of knowledge seem complete. Indeed, finding a way to understand the dimensions of the problem can prove to be as difficult as identifying an appropriate solution.

For sound institutional reasons, the ADF workforce's pragmatic approach often means that the institution appears resistant to 'new' ideas that threaten established practice. The military is suspicious of scholars, intellectuals and fringe groups advocating new methods and ideas. In particular, the workforce is apprehensive about those who advocate for change from the inside. For me, the surprising feature of the ADF's pragmatic intellectual tradition is that our ostensibly innate scepticism about anything 'new' does not extend to ideas advocated by supposed experts from the business community. With naive enthusiasm, we seem all too ready to 'surf' the latest business fad. This is not an altogether bad trait. However, in our enthusiasm we also suspend critical judgement and adopt a demeanour of wide-eyed and innocent acceptance that seems incompatible with our usual behaviour.

After close observation, I believe that the ADF's repeatedly artless approach to the offerings of self-styled business experts is a symptom of an over-developed sense of pragmatism. This is in keeping with the broader adage that our most positive characteristic taken to extreme is our greatest weakness. The ADF workforce, and its leadership, is comfortable with 'doing things'—a 'can-do' attitude is prized above all else. However, the cultural cost is that we no longer trust ourselves to think deeply about the complex problems our institution faces. The US Army's Colonel Lloyd Matthews made a similar observation of the US Services: 'In thus hiring outsiders to

... the ADF's leaders are confronting complex social problems to which there are no readily available solutions.

do its thinking, the services risk selling their intellectual souls to the devil of deprofessionalisation.⁵ We seem to have lost some professional confidence in our capacity to think clearly about leadership and management. We need to be reminded that many of today's leadership, management and organisational design truisms—that are presented to us as startling revelations from the business community—originated from military studies of military organisations adapting to the conditions of war. I wonder whether, subtly and over time, we have not progressively outsourced to academics and business schools our professional responsibility to think deeply about these matters.

I believe our cultural weakness is most apparent in the management and development of the ADF workforce. Workforce change is the most complex and intractable problem facing the ADF as it struggles to transform into the network-enabled force of 2020. Workforce management and development is the pivot point where complex problems, business 'experts' and the ADF leadership's desire for 'can-do' action all converge. The result is a potent mix of 'paralysis by analysis' and 'fad surfing'. Conservatively, I estimate that the government, the Audit Office, the Department and the Services have conducted at least twelve major studies of the 'personnel function' since the Glenn Review in 1995.⁶ Many have covered the same ground and made similar recommendations. Indeed, in my view, labelling an ADF activity 'The Human Dimension of...' ensures that a review will be conducted, 'experts' will be engaged, and the institution will be subjected to a raft of 'just so' stories.⁷ 'Just so' stories refer to unnecessarily elaborate and speculative explanations for phenomena that are widely accepted as fact despite the lack of empirical evidence to support their contention.

A persistent 'just so' story of recent times is the supposed attitudinal and behavioural differences between generations. In 2000, I published a paper in the *Australian Defence Force Journal* that speculated on the implications of demographic and generational trends in the Army workforce.⁸ The last time I wrote on generational issues I began the article with the same quote from political scientist Everett Carl Ladd that opens this paper. I hoped that it would sound an appropriate note of caution about the type of speculative analysis in which I was engaging. I still believe that Ladd's observation should be re-stated prior to launching into any discussion on generational differences.

As the interest in generational trends in Australian society and the ADF has continued unabated with little criticism in the intervening years, I feel that a renewed voice of caution is required. Indeed, my main concern about this debate, both within the military and the broader community, is that criticism or alternative explanations

The result is a potent mix of 'paralysis by analysis' and 'fad surfing'.

are rarely voiced. Since I last wrote on this topic, the focus has shifted from how to accommodate the supposed needs of ‘Generation X’ to the optimising of the organisation to match the growing workplace demands of ‘Generation Y’.⁹ I still feel that we need to be mindful that, institutionally, we are not drawn into developing workforce management strategies based on speculative generational trends for which the evidence remains at best sketchy. Indeed, I believe that the quality of research in this area has declined markedly, while the hyperbole of generational differences has escalated dramatically.¹⁰ If there was ever a time for the ADF leadership to critically interrogate the information it receives on these issues, it is now.

... the quality of research in this area has declined markedly, while the hyperbole ... has escalated ...

MARKETING FAD OR BODY OF KNOWLEDGE

Much of the heat and noise about generational differences is fed by marketers who have an interest in putting themselves forward as experts on the attitudes and behaviour of a particular generational group or groups. These experts have an interest in positioning themselves to offer professional services that seek to build the capacity of business to sell a product to a particular market segment. In the case of the ADF, we are ‘selling’ the benefits of a military career and lifestyle in a competitive labour marketplace. For me, there is considerable doubt about whether the research and analysis conducted to support generational differences is independent or objective. So, our responsibility is to question the motivation of the researcher, critically examine the findings of each study, and remain alert to techniques that arrange subjective speculation to appear as if it were an immutable and generalised fact.

Today, marketing focuses on understanding the consumer population in order to identify segments whose behaviour can be influenced to create demand for a product. For example, Defence Force Recruiting spends considerable time and effort understanding the ADF’s target market and develops advertising campaigns to create demand for an ADF career. The ADF recruiting campaign is based on specific research into the attitudes of an age-defined population against a specific product—an ADF career. Within the personnel function, both recruiting and retention are tactical activities that require specific market intelligence to be effective. My concern is

... recruiting and retention are tactical activities that require specific market intelligence ...

not with the tactical methods adopted in the process of recruiting. I am concerned when sweeping statements are made about particular ‘generational’ groups that are generalised beyond the context within which the research was conducted. For example, recent research makes the following statements:¹¹

- ‘42 per cent [of Generation Y] placed “relationship with peers” as one of the top three reasons for getting or keeping their job’, or how about:
- ‘90 per cent [of Generation Y] would stay longer in their job given the right training and development.’

So what? When did it become ‘news’ that people find jobs through friends, that people like working with people whose company they enjoy and whose professional skills they respect? When did this become a burning question that required generational research? Do we truly believe that this has been different for any generation at this age (12–26 years)? Was there a time when people disdained professional development?

This type of research finding does not answer the profound generational questions of our time, nor does it provide leaders with ‘new’ information that might be used to improve recruitment practices or workplace productivity. These are well-known workforce management axioms that have been repackaged to appear ‘new’. Again, we need to be more critical of the research conducted into ‘generational differences’ and the motives of those who package and sell the information.

It is interesting to note that in 2003 a respected research organisation, the Center for Creative Leadership, conducted a study that sought to help leaders to understand the similarities and differences between generational groups in the workplace. The study compared groups across market segments in the workplace, including the Silent Generation (born 1925–45), Early (Baby) Boomers (born 1946–54), Late (Baby) Boomers (born 1955–63), Early (Generation) Xers (born 1964–76), and Late (Generation) Xers (born 1977–82). They found few substantive differences in attitude, aspiration or behaviour. These researchers recommended that business leaders consider generational differences ‘very, very carefully, and without relying on stereotypes’.¹²

Marketers seek to generate seductive myths about the products they are trying to sell. These myths, often dressed in the robes of objective social research, are used to actively shape the context of business operations. Despite what they might have us believe, marketers are not just intermediaries between the consumer and product, merely reconciling the two in the marketplace. Generational marketers are deliberately attempting to shape the marketplace to suit their product. For me, the blanket generalisations based

Marketers seek to
generate seductive myths
about the products they
are trying to sell.

on shallow research that are accompanied by rampant self-promotion by self-styled experts are all symptoms of the problem with discussions of generational differences. At present, generational research has more in common with a marketing fad than a domain of knowledge that leaders can use to enhance organisational capability.

COHORT EFFECTS

Marketers have a profound interest in differentiating between generations. Usually, this is achieved by drawing a direct comparison between the older and younger groups. Packaging these observations can be light-hearted. For example, the generations preceding Generation Y are reminded that, for today's youth, 'bottle caps have always been plastic and screw off', or that the expression 'You sound like a broken record' does not make sense. As interesting as these observations might be, they are also meaningless.

Such observations usually originate from a superficial approach to trend analysis that involves scanning for shifts in behaviour by monitoring popular culture: for example, the 'top ten' of television programs, books or fashion. The marketer then identifies a theme that describes the behaviour, applies a label that captures the media's imagination, and then markets it relentlessly. For example, 'sea change' is a descriptive label for a trend whereby the Baby Boomer generation supposedly accepted less income in exchange for an enhanced quality of life—preferably by the sea. Unfortunately, the 'sea change' label is applied indiscriminately. In general use, the term seems to imply that *all* Baby Boomers are fleeing the cities for the coast. While it might be that some affluent Baby Boomers—who the marketing community has a real interest in segmenting out of the general consumer population—were able to have a 'sea change', many Baby Boomers—to whom the marketing community would like to sell the aspiration of a 'sea change'—like the generations preceding and succeeding them, will almost certainly work until they die; probably in the same geographic location. Conveniently, a new term has emerged to describe the flow of Baby Boomers in the opposite direction—the 'green change'.¹³ Apparently, these Boomers are re-populating regional Australia. What unsettles me about these descriptive labels is that the behaviour is always described in attitudinal and aspirational terms. The rarely canvassed alternative argument is that people are making an economic decision based on a combination of individual means and a cost-benefit analysis that results in the 'country' or the 'coast' emerging as more attractive than the city. Would another generation of similar age and circumstances behave differently to the Baby Boomers? I suspect they would not. Is this a lasting and widespread effect among today's Baby Boomers? It depends on the prevailing economic conditions, but again I suspect not. Are these types of generational observations important to the ADF? Yes, but only in a limited and specific sense.

We should not be reconsidering our personnel strategy, workforce management, or approach to leadership based on this type of trend analysis. It has some limited application for those attempting to have an immediate tactical effect; however, these tactical activities occur within a broader, more stable, and principles-based human resource management strategy. Adjusting the principles of this strategy on the basis of a transient social trend would be imprudent.

Economist John Quiggan is also a generational sceptic. Writing in the *Australian Financial Review* in 2000, he highlighted the fact that demographers differentiate between ‘cohort effects’ and ‘age effects’.¹⁴ In the remainder of the paper, I intend to explore and add to the points Quiggan raised within the structure of cohort and age effects.

Cohort effects refer to the fact that people born in a given period form a cohort that shares a set of common contextual experiences. For instance, shortly after Generation X began to enter the Australian workforce, the public and private sector moved into a prolonged period of instability marked by massive downsizing. The ‘job for life’ mentality, once a defining feature of the Australian workplace, began to disappear. Broadly, those described as Generation X were faced with a very different workplace to their parents. Generation X was required to adapt to a new work environment. This trend has accelerated to the extent that the ‘half-generation’ following (Generation Y) is accustomed to workplace uncertainty and this shapes the attitudes of that particular cohort. However, I part ways with the purveyors of generational marketing who argue that the underlying values of Generation Y are markedly different from the generations preceding them.¹⁵ Nor do I agree that the long-standing principles of good leadership should be abandoned to accommodate Generation Y.

In my view, comparing generations based on cohort effects is meaningless. A cohort effect speculates from general events in the environment to specific attitudes and behaviours of a generational cohort. This requires a significant leap of faith. This leap is made more difficult when the attitudes and behaviours of a particular generation are assumed to apply equally to all members of the cohort. This form of analysis carries with it a set of normative and linear planning assumptions that generally lead to simplistic conclusions such as: ‘Managers need to recognise and acknowledge the effort and performance of Gen Y employees on a regular basis.’¹⁶

... comparing
generations based
on cohort effects is
meaningless.

ADF leaders should be far more critical of this form of research and the assumptions on which it is based. This is particularly relevant at a time when these same leaders have endorsed doctrinal concepts that describe a strategic environment in which the ADF's 'network-enabled' workforce will need to be agile and diverse to solve increasingly complex military, social and political problems.

THE RHYTHM OF HISTORY

Marketers seek to segment the marketplace so as to ensure efficient use of resources to achieve the maximum return. Generational marketers accentuate differences by making direct comparisons between generations based on supposed attitudinal differences that are derived from cohort effects. For example, they describe Generation Y as growing up in an environment in which market and social volatility is a given, technology and the media are pervasive, and social role models are celebrities rather than community leaders. The behavioural projection from this context is that Generation Y make 'more responsible for life choices', yearn for 'recognition', seek roles that offer 'variety and flexibility', and are 'collaborative learners'. I suggest that these are socially desirable statements that would appeal to the entire population. Consequently, I don't believe they are peculiar to a generation. As an aside, it is interesting to note that negative statements about a cohort rarely arise from the analytical efforts or speculation of generational marketers or 'social researchers'. Instead, the generation's negative characteristics are presented as the jealousies of the 'other' generations. For instance, Generation Y see the Baby Boomers as 'technophobes' and 'rule-makers', while Generation X are said to see the same group as 'having no work-life balance' or 'set in their ways'. For reasons that I will discuss in detail later, I suggest that circumstances have always been this way. The difference is that today we have indulged in some analysis to understand the distinctions and developed specific labels to explain the phenomenon. This does not constitute a 'new' discovery, nor does it automatically mean the observation is relevant or useful.

While we are on the subject of generational uniqueness, I should point out that I find the claims made for Generation X and Y (which I don't see as two distinct generations) particularly annoying. According to the 'experts', globalisation—driven by advances in computing, communications, and transportation technology—is creating a unique set of conditions that is having a profound impact on the attitudes and behaviours of today's youth. These marketing myths sell the idea that

These marketing
myths sell the idea that
a prodigal generation
is emerging as society's
saviours.

a prodigal generation is emerging as society's saviours.¹⁷ Only Generation Y, we are led to believe (usually by Generation Y), have the mix of skills required to lead us towards a better tomorrow. You may sense that I have my reservations. There is no doubt that this generation will lead us into the future; however, it will not be due to the attitudinal and behavioural characteristics they developed in response to their environment. Rather, it will be because this generation will move, as the generations preceding it have, into positions of power as a result of the preceding generation's exit.

In addition, today's environmental conditions are not unique, and therefore neither is Generation X nor Y. The technological conditions leading up to the Great War look remarkably similar to those we face today. Advances in computing and communications technology—information-processing technologies—shaped the character of industrial operations in the period leading up to the First World War. The challenges faced by that generation in the late 19th and early 20th century are similar to those facing us at the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. This recalls Mark Twain's observation that 'history doesn't repeat, but it rhymes'. The key features of 'globalisation' from approximately 1875 to 1914 included:

- *Communication*: Advances in communication technology moved rapidly from the time Alexander Graham Bell patented the telephone in 1876 and Guglielmo Marconi demonstrated long-wave telegraphy in 1895. The people of this time saw the benefits of long-wave telegraphy with trans-Atlantic wireless communication established by 1901 and public radio broadcasting by 1906.
- *Computing*: The 'punch card' system designed to automate the Jacquard loom in 1801 had evolved by 1890 into a sophisticated information processing technology that the US government used to tabulate census data. This innovation gave life to International Business Machines (IBM) and the possibility of computer-automated information processing and analysis.
- *Transportation*: Parallel developments in telegraphy and railway engineering continued to advance through to the turn of the 20th century and the prospect for almost instantaneous communication became a distinct possibility, while the railroad increased the speed and decreased the cost of long-distance travel.

The impact of this transformation was not lost on French sociologist Emile Durkheim. In his book *The Division of Labour in Society* (1893), Durkheim noted that industrialisation broke down the barriers to transportation and communication, leaving previously isolated markets open to wider national and international market forces. The result was that the producer could no longer 'embrace the market at a glance, not even in thought'.¹⁸ Potentially, the market was now limitless. Durkheim was witnessing the

The era leading up to the Great War was an innovative, complex and challenging time ...

growing interdependence and integration of society and this was demanding a new approach to social control, communication and information management. The effect described is not dissimilar to today's generic descriptions of globalisation that stress the 'death of distance' and the 'faster movement of ideas, of technologies, of cultures and economies among nations and individuals'. Today's globalisation is often coupled with a strong sense that the intensity of 'interaction' and 'interconnectedness' between states and societies is increasing.¹⁹ Accordingly, those living through this period were experiencing similar effects to those described for Generations X and Y. The era leading up to the Great War was an innovative, complex and challenging time; an era filled with technology-driven change as profound as that encountered by today's generations.

It is a long-standing and well-known fact that *context shapes behaviour*. So, I have no argument with the assertion that there is a cohort effect. However, I do have concerns about the weight accorded to this effect in the generational literature.

Phil Ruthven, Chairman of the Australian business information provider IBISWorld and a well-regarded social researcher, describes four types of generations that repeat in a continual cycle which reflects social history. Ruthven labels the four generations:²⁰

- *Adaptives*, who are raised in a period of social fragmentation. This generally silent group is an obedient but socially aware generation that focuses on adapting wealth-building to advance social needs.
- *Idealists*, who are raised in a period of social emergence and liberation. These generations are often the social visionaries, humanists or social re-engineers.
- *Reactives*, who are raised in a period of high social stability or conservatism. These generations are the reactive and conciliatory generations who consolidate change and repair the damage of the idealists who preceded them.
- *Civics*, who are raised in a period of crisis. These generations are the wealth creators and nation-builders. They have a pragmatic and rationalist approach to problem-solving.

While this represents yet another approach to generational market segmentation, the addition of an historical and cyclical perspective does introduce a sense of time and history that takes some of the hubris out of today's discussion of generational differences. A superficial observer of today's dialogue could easily form the opinion that the observed generational differences are a new phenomenon that has only emerged with the rise of the demographic bubble labelled 'Baby Boomers'. Indeed, until Douglas Copeland popularised the term 'Generation X' in the title of his 1991 novel *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Society*, generational differences were not an issue of concern for public or private sector leaders.²¹ There has always been a 'generation gap', but it was not a significant leadership, management or strategic personnel issue. I would like to know what has changed to make it such a volatile and immediate issue for today's leaders.

AGE EFFECTS

A remark generally attributed to Plato in the 4th Century BC demonstrates that older generations denouncing younger generations as slack and idle is not a new phenomenon. Apparently, Plato despaired: 'What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders, they disobey their parents. They ignore the law. They riot in the streets inflamed with wild notions. Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?'

The often-observed 'problem' with young adults is an 'age effect' common to all generations. In part, it stems from the 'it wouldn't have happened in my day' reminiscences of the preceding generation, which is another age effect. Age effects take account of the fact that, at any given point, every generational cohort passes through a particular age where they share something in common with the generations that preceded them. In sharing an age, each generation also shares passage through a life-cycle stage—the 'classic' shared age effect is the mid-life crisis. Age effects are more stable, and therefore more predictable, than cohort effects. Rebellion against authority is a consistent feature of a maturing adult—it is an age effect. While the character of the rebellion may suit the times and the individual's circumstances, the underlying phenomenon remains relatively stable. In every generation early adulthood is broadly characterised by anti-authoritarian and anti-social behaviour. However, even this attempt at extrapolation leads to problems. For instance, the young Baby Boomers of the 1960s are characterised as anti-authoritarian hippies who pushed the boundaries of social norms, although even a cursory examination of this generalisation would reveal that soldiers serving in Vietnam at the time, or those quietly working in government and business, probably did not fall into the extreme category of 'hippie'. While I consider age effects as more important than cohort effects, it is the interaction between the two that defines a generation.

Army Officer Corps demographics share both cohort and age effects and provide a clearer example of practicalities of the cohort and age effect interaction. The Directorate of Officer Career Management manages and develops this part of the Army workforce in rank cohorts. However, each cohort also passes through recognisable career stages that are closely aligned to age and life-stage. The challenge for career managers is to balance the occasionally competing demands of transitory cohort effects against the more lasting age effects. In 1999, the then Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, established the Officer Professional Effectiveness

Plato despaired: 'What is happening to our young people? ... Their morals are decaying. What is to become of them?'

Review—Army (Project OPERA) to, in part, ‘examine the professional effectiveness of officers and to establish the factors constraining their performance and influencing their motivation to remain in the Service ... and develop a strategy for developing the Army officers of the future.’²² Not surprisingly, Project OPERA found that retaining officers has less to do with their cohort and more to do with their life and career stage. This finding was reinforced by the fact that, some twenty years earlier, a team investigating similar workforce development issues, the Regimental Officers Development Committee, made similar observations about the behaviour and attitudes of officers who were transitioning from one life or career stage to the next. Project OPERA’s resultant personnel strategy attempted to provide the flexibility to account for cohort effects but focused predominately on catering for the more enduring age effects such as life and career stage.

My point is that understanding workforce management and development is among the most critical and complex operations undertaken in administering the ADF. Simplistic market segmentation based on dubious research without any reference to a strategic framework that is relevant to, in the case of the Army, generating land power, adds little value. Organisationally and professionally, we need to be more focused and critical in our thinking on these issues. That does not mean rejecting the information out of hand; however, it does mean applying some critical professional judgement.

Organisationally and professionally, we need to be more focused and critical in our thinking on these issues.

THE DISCUSSION HAS THE WRONG SHAPE

I believe that our discussion of generational differences has the wrong shape. We are focusing on tactical issues without reference to the foundations of our institution or the more enduring principles of people and work. In the remainder of this paper I will outline my view on the important components of workforce strategy. It is not my intention to argue that the personnel system is broken—it isn’t. My focus is on sketching those features of workforce strategy that we all acknowledge as important but rarely discuss directly. These interdependent forces are vital to generating workforce capability and are enduring.

Context shapes behaviour, military culture shapes military people. Military culture is both a professional norm and a national tradition that fundamentally affects the attitudes and behaviours of the military workforce. It guides the workforce’s perceptions of who they are and how they should behave. It influences the structure of the organisation, and it determines the strategies selected to

overcome the challenges the institution faces. Military culture provides individuals with a common sense of *purpose*, *identity*, *belonging* and *security* that is necessary to fulfil the institution's role in society. It is a stable feature of the institution that is central to workforce management and development.

Similarly, people have an enduring set of needs that is reflected in that culture. In the past I have categorised these under the headings of *meaning*, *leadership*, *cohesion*, *security* and *engagement*. These are common workforce needs that might be expressed differently in each generation but which remain at the foundation of workforce management and development.

- *Meaning*. People seek meaning in their lives. They seek to make sense of their surroundings and their place in them. A clear sense of purpose and a sound ethical framework is the source of personal and collective meaning. Military culture provides the conceptual and social framework that endows members with a sense of purpose and belonging. This 'psychological contract' is voluntary, subjective, dynamic and informal.²³ The dynamic character of the contract means that individual and organisational expectations influence one another. The ADF's people take steps to fulfil their obligations and look to their leaders to fulfil their obligations within the perceived terms of the contract. The psychological contract has changed markedly over the past twenty years and ensuring that we understand institutional and individual expectations remains an important strategic personnel activity.
- *Leadership*. People want to be led, but they exercise choice in who will lead and for how long. The ADF relies on experienced leaders who have the flexibility to meet the challenges of unfamiliar problems presented in unfamiliar contexts. To complement these leaders, all ADF members must be flexible, adaptive, skilled and informed so as to provide the leaders with more options to seize and retain the initiative in achieving the ADF's goals. Supporting leaders is an enduring feature of the Defence Department's and the ADF's human resource management strategy.
- *Cohesion*. People experience a sense of satisfaction when they feel they *belong* to a valued or worthwhile social entity with a shared sense of purpose and identity. The military is often referred to as a *family* and it is satisfying to share the 'tribal spirit' that characterises each service and unit. The ADF has long recognised that 'morale' is an expression of social cohesion. Morale is the group expression of the satisfaction that comes from a sense of purpose, belonging and identity. Social cohesion is a strategic military asset that derives from the central purpose of the institution.

... all ADF members
must be flexible,
adaptive, skilled and
informed ...

- *Security.* There are three main elements of security in the service career: security of employment; security of employability; and security of lifestyle. Security of employment relates to the need to feel that you will continue to 'have a job': that the organisation will not dispense with you as long as you are fit for duty. Security of employability relates to the need to feel that you are developing skills that have external value. It is about maintaining the currency of individual professional skills. Security of lifestyle relates to the need to feel that your quality of family life is, at the least, not degraded by service life. Security, stability and predictability are central features of the psychological contract between the ADF and its people. There is no evidence to suggest that security is no longer a sought-after feature of a military career, only that its characteristics have changed. For example, the coming generations may not value security of employment to the same extent as security of employability and lifestyle. Regardless, security remains an important facet of service life.
- *Engagement.* Job satisfaction is a key driver in the decision to stay in the service and leadership is the most influential variable affecting job satisfaction. Individual and collective success is the most important factor in shaping satisfaction. A successful career is important to an individual because the career role defines his or her identity. Feelings of social worth are reinforced by successful operational performance and eroded by adverse publicity. Similarly, work that uses and enhances professional skills reinforces the person's sense of identity. Consequently, engagement through effective career management and professional development systems is central to sustaining the Defence workforce.

Many of the supposed 'generational differences' would return to the margins of our discussions about the future workforce if the ADF was, through an effective personnel strategy, able to manage these five principles.

... we begin by
developing a personnel
strategy that taps the
enduring features of
the military culture ...

STRATEGY OVER TACTICS

Many of the investigations into the ADF's workforce management and development carry the recommendation that those responsible will need to 'develop good human resource strategies to attract new staff'. In itself this is a relatively empty statement. The aim should be to develop a human resource strategy to attract and retain ADF members that is attentive to the link between capability requirements and future demographics. A corollary to this aim is that the ADF attracts a certain type of

person; in general, it attracts people who are by nature conservative and adhere to a sense of community service. It is reasonable to assume that the general population has many people with these basic characteristics, and that they are not limited to particular generational groupings. We should therefore be mindful that, by catering too strongly for cohort effects related to a particular generation, be they Boomers, Generation X or Y expectations, we may, in the process, alienate those who are truly attracted to serving in the ADF. I would suggest that we begin by developing a personnel strategy that taps the enduring features of the military culture and work, and includes the ability to be flexible in applying the tactics that we use to *retain*, *reshape* and *recruit* the workforce.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Everett Carll Ladd, 'The Twentysomethings: 'Generation Myths' Revisited', *The Public Perspective*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1994, p. 14.
- 2 Julianne Schultz, 'Introduction: Searching for the next big thing', *Griffith Review*, Spring 2006, p. 7.
- 3 Creed O'Hanlon, 'My generation', *Griffith Review*, Spring 2006, p. 25.
- 4 Bruce Grant, *What kind of country? Australia and the twenty-first century*, Penguin, Melbourne, 1988, p. 28.
- 5 Colonel Lloyd J. Matthews, 'The uniformed intellectual and his place in American arms: Part I', *Army Magazine*, July 2002, p. 24.
- 6 Commonwealth of Australia, *Serving Australia: The Australian Defence Force in the Twenty-first Century*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1995. The latest and ongoing review is the 'Ministerial Review into Recruitment and Retention' initiated in 2005 and due to report in 2006.
- 7 Rudyard Kipling first published the *Just So Stories for Little Children* in 1902. They are extravagant accounts of how natural phenomena came about, for instance 'how the tiger got his stripes'. Later the phrase 'just so story' acquired meaning in evolutionary biology as an unnecessarily elaborate and speculative evolutionary explanation that was widely accepted as fact despite the lack of empirical evidence to support the contention. Stephen Jay Gould referred to Robin Wright's claims in his book *The Moral Animal* that the Stone Age adaptation of a sweet tooth leads to today's unhealthy obesity as a classic 'just so story'. Wright reasoned that, 'The classic example of an adaptation that has outlived its logic is the sweet tooth. Our fondness for sweetness was designed for an environment in which fruit existed but candy didn't.' For Stephen Jay Gould, this is a just so story that has been accepted as fact but for which there is absolutely no evidence.

- 8 David Schmidtchen, 'Australian population and workforce trends: The strategic human resource challenges and opportunities facing Army', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, January/February, 2000, pp. 17–24.
- 9 Erin Maulday, 'Generational Evolution in the Australian Army', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter 2006.
- 10 Three recent books seem to be the source of renewed discussion about Generation Y 'issues'. Peter Sheahan, *Generation Y*, Hardie Grant Publishing, Melbourne, 2005; Ryan Heath, *Please Just F**k Off it's Our turn Now*, Pluto Press, Melbourne, 2006; Rebecca Huntley, *The World According to Y*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2006.
- 11 Collaborative research by 'social researcher' and emerging 'generational expert' Mark McCrindle and Drake International reported by Stephanie Dinnell, 'The Y Front', *HR Monthly*, May, 2006, pp. 24–6. This research was apparently based on a survey of 3000 Generation Y employees and 'in-depth' focus groups with 32 people. Stephanie Dinnell is an organisational psychologist employed at Drake International. The research is available by e-mail from: <marketing@au.drakeintl.com>.
- 12 Ross DePinto, Emerging Leaders Research Survey Summary Report, Center for Creative Leadership, <www.ccl.org.leadership/pdf/research/elsummary.pdf>.
- 13 Reflecting the constant battle over labelling, the 'green change' is also known as the 'tree change'.
- 14 John Quiggan, 'The end of the generation game', *Australian Financial Review*, Review Section, 27 October 2000.
- 15 Comments by KPMG's 'demographer' Bernard Salt reported by Roberta Mancuso 'Today's youth "a different life form" from parents', *Canberra Times*, 27 May 2006. Salt is reported to have said that 'They [Generation Y] hold different values to baby boomers at the equivalent stage of the life cycle'.
- 16 Stephanie Dinnell, 'The Y Front', *HR Monthly*, May, 2006, p. 26.
- 17 The title of Ryan Heath's book '*Please Just F**k Off it's Our turn Now*' captures the sentiment.
- 18 Emile Durkheim, *The Division of Labour in Society*, trans. George Simpson, Free Press, New York, 1937 (1893), p. 370.
- 19 See John Micklethwait and Adrian Woolridge, *A Future perfect: a Challenge and Hidden promise of globalisation*, London, Random House, 2000 and Thomas Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*, Harper Collins, London, 2000; B.M. Jain, 'Globalisation and Regionalisation in International Relations and Foreign Policy: a Critique of Existing Paradigms', *Journal of Diplomacy and Foreign Relations*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2001, pp. 1–25.
- 20 Phil Ruthven, 'The changing workforce of the 21st century', Work Life Balance Conference, Hyatt Regency Perth, February 22–3, 2006. The presentation is available at: <docep.wa.gov.au/lr/WorkLife/Media/Phil_Ruthven.pdf>.

- 21 Douglas Copeland, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Society*, St Martin's Press, New York, 1991.
- 22 Australian Army, Officer Professional Effectiveness Review–Army (Project OPERA), 1999.
- 23 The psychological contract is a set of mutual, unwritten beliefs or expectations about the obligations between the ADF and its people. See David Schmidtchen, 'Rethinking the psychological contract between Army and its people', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, July/August, 1999, pp. 5–8.

THE AUTHOR

Lieutenant Colonel David Schmidtchen, PhD, was a Senior Military Research Fellow with the Land Warfare Studies Centre. His forthcoming book, *The Rise of the Strategic Private: Technology, Control and Change in a Network Enabled Military*, examines the profound social impacts that Network Centric Warfare will have on the Department of Defence. With Dr Nick Jans he co-authored *The Real C-Cubed: Culture, Careers and Climate and How They Affect Capability*. Other works include *Preparing Capable Australian Defence Force Peacekeepers: Principles and Foundations*, a study of human resource implications of preparing soldiers to participate in peace operations. In 2004, Lieutenant Colonel Schmidtchen was the Chief of the Defence Force Fellow at the Australian Defence Force Academy. Dr Schmidtchen left the permanent Army in August 2006 to lead strategic research at Jacobs Australia, Canberra.

RETROSPECT



In this edition of Retrospect, we feature two articles published in the *Army Journal* of March 1970, which take opposing views of the relevance of the Main Battle Tank (MBT). The first article, by Major W Lennon of the Royal Australian Engineers, provocatively asserted ‘The Tank is Dead’. While conceding that, even at that time of writing, the Centurion Tank was still performing effectively on operations in South Vietnam, the author argued that the increased lethality of individual shoulder-fired weapons, especially rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs), would ultimately ensure the extinction of the tank.

This view appeared to be vindicated soon thereafter during the Arab–Israeli War of 1973, when both sides incurred staggering losses among their tank forces. As Huba Wass de Czege has observed in his article in this edition of the *Australian Army Journal*, this represented a revolution in the physics of the battlefield. The emergence of the man-portable guided missile represented a dire threat to the tank. In the immediate aftermath of this war, tanks were often likened to horse cavalry, or even dinosaurs—too ponderous to adapt to a dangerously altered environment.

RETROSPECT

However, predictions of the demise of the tank proved to be premature. By the mid-1990s, the tank was again being acclaimed as invincible after the impressive performance of the Abrams MBT in the 1991 Gulf War. Yet it is possible to reject the crude dialectic whereby either the tank or its technological nemesis is portrayed as a panacea for battlefield success.

Rather, issues of force employment, especially doctrine and training, are usually more important factors in military performance than particular technologies. In his highly persuasive and painstaking study of military performance in the 20th century, the American scholar, Stephen Biddle, identified mastery of what he termed the 'modern system' of force employment as the single most important contribution to battlefield success.

In the introduction to his work, *Military Power: Explaining Victory and Defeat in Modern Battles*, Biddle argues that, since the First World War, the battlefield has come to resemble a 'storm of steel.' Unprotected humans simply cannot survive amid this maelstrom, much less achieve military effects.

As he explained: 'The modern system is a tightly interrelated complex of cover, concealment, dispersion, small unit independent maneuver, and combined arms at the tactical level and depth, reserves, and differential concentration at the operational level of war. Taken together, these techniques sharply reduce vulnerability to even twenty-first century weapons and sensors. Where fully implemented, the modern system dampens the effects of technological change and insulates its users from the full lethality of their opponents' weapons.'

Since the carnage of the Western Front in 1916–17, the Australian Army has relentlessly pursued professional mastery of combined arms warfare to conduct close combat. Despite significant technological progress since Battle of Hamel, at which Australian mastery of the 'modern system' was first demonstrated, no conventional army has found a viable solution to the problem of close combat that does not entail employment of combined-arms teams. Essentially the sum of technological changes has been to increase the range and impact of weapons without negating the principles governing their effective employment.

Implementation of the 'modern system' entails the professional mastery of close combat through the synchronised employment of combined-arms teams of infantry, armour, engineers, aviation and signals supported by indirect fires from artillery. This requires what Sir John Monash referred to as 'orchestration.' Each element of the combined-arms team contributes to the harmonious operation of the whole, compensating for the limitations of the remainder. Dismounted infantry protect tanks against concealed troops with lethal missiles, while tanks can destroy hardened defensive positions and provide sustained fire support. In this way, the whole exceeds the sum of the parts.

For these reasons it is fatuous and irresponsible to maintain, as some newspaper columnists have done in recent times, that the Army needs more light infantry at the expense of armoured protection. The truth is we need both. It is not an either or proposition.

Indeed, one must question the judgement of any commentator who concludes that the complex contemporary battle space is too dangerous for the tank but invites the more widespread employment of light infantry. Most military professionals will find themselves in agreement with the views expressed by David Kilcullen in the current edition of this journal, to the effect that tanks save lives when employed correctly within the combined-arms team.

Recent operations in Iraq have amply demonstrated this. Tanks have been indispensable to success in complex urban terrain. Not only do they deliver powerful direct fire against point targets and bunkers, they are able to respond with discrimination. This is vital in war amongst the people.

A tank such as the M1A1 Abrams, because it can survive an initial hit in most circumstances, permits its crew to react with discretion by not having to strike pre-emptively. More vulnerable vehicles must eliminate threats by firing first. In complex human and physical terrains, this is not always desirable.

Nor should invoking the example of Iraq be deemed to offer succour to the facile and specious contentions of some commentators that the purchase of the Abrams tank demonstrates that the Army assumes that it will be operating in the Middle East for the foreseeable future. As the second article from the 1970 *AAJ*, by Major B Ranking, argues conclusively, tanks were widely employed in the close terrain of our immediate region during the Second World War and Vietnam.

The Japanese used tanks in the allegedly impenetrable jungles of Malaya and New Guinea in the early 1940s. At Buna and Gona, countless Australian lives were saved by the employment of tanks in direct support of the infantry. The same can be said of Vietnam. Moreover, the emerging phenomenon of war amongst the people—an inevitable concomitant of urbanisation—means that our soldiers will increasingly be required to conduct operations in urban terrain.

Our region is not immune to the demographic shift of population to littoral cities. It is interesting that the most hysterical assertions about the inability of tanks to operate within our region have emanated from civilians who pride themselves on their grasp of our strategic geography.

These articles traverse the same arguments that have been deployed to support or condemn the acquisition of the Abrams tank. Hindsight permits us to conclude that technological change has not had the effects that Major Lennon predicted. Most significantly, despite enhancements to their firepower and protection, attack helicopters cannot deliver the same effects as a tank. They simply lack the ability to loiter, thus depriving the infantry of sufficient intimacy of support.

RETROSPECT

Moreover, they are more vulnerable to the effects of RPGs than tanks—a lesson emphatically taught during the Battle of Mogadishu in 1993 and at Karbala in Iraq during March 2003. These arguments from the 1970 *Journal* presciently frame the extremes of the contemporary debate about the relevance of the tank to modern operations. The *Australian Army Journal* commends both of these articles to readers.

THE TANK IS DEAD

MAJOR W. W. LENNON, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS

INTRODUCTION

No doubt this title will provoke some violent objections. The passing of the horse-drawn and horse-borne era did not occur in quiescent silence either. The demise of the tank does not imply any degradation in strength or status of armoured units; but rather a need to adapt to the products of technology. Just as the introduction of the tank to modern warfare had great impact on tactical philosophy, so will its passing. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that changes in tactics have led to the technological advances which have killed the tank as we know it.

The history of tank development is characterized by continuing conflict between armour and armament and between weight and speed. Ever since the tank was first introduced to warfare, designers have been torn between the need for a light fast tank, and a heavy invulnerable machine capable of resisting and destroying enemy tanks. Many nations have resolved the conflict by employing tanks of different sizes. Others have attempted to satisfy all needs in the one vehicle by achieving compromise on the various requirements. The disadvantages of each approach have often been dramatically demonstrated in military history.

... changes in
tactics have led to
the technological
advances which have
killed the tank ...

RETROSPECT

Since World War II, a wide range of tanks have been produced, indicating that the conflicts still exist. As 'general purpose' tanks have been given better armour and better guns, so they have become larger and heavier. The evolution of special tank-killing tanks has generally been abandoned in recent years since it has been necessary to sacrifice too much mobility to enable them to fulfil their main purpose. Recent development and exploitation of other military equipments have given cause for some rethinking on the role and characteristics of the tank. The major characteristics of tanks and tank units in the past have been:

- Firepower.
- Protection.
- Mobility.

Other characteristics are often quoted, but are not essential to the nature of tanks. Alternative methods of achieving these main characteristics should be considered.

FIREPOWER

The value of direct-fire, hard-hitting main armament is evident. The firepower of American and Australian tanks is being used to great benefit in support of infantry operations in Vietnam—in a type of war where many pundits said tanks would be useless. Despite the fact that the enemy have no armoured vehicles and virtually no soft-skinned vehicles, and despite the difficulty of coming to grips with enemy concentrations, the weapons of the tank have been useful. The main guns can deal effectively with enemy bunkers and their accuracy allows a commander to quickly and effectively neutralize any suspected enemy position which he can pinpoint and indicate to the tanks. Even the heavy machine-guns which are carried on most tanks provide the infantryman with a source of sustained heavy calibre firepower which is not otherwise readily available to him.

Probably one of the greatest advantages of tanks over both artillery and air support is that the tanks are usually physically close to the mobile supported unit and consequently target indication is facilitated and communications simplified. In addition, with tanks in support of infantry, response time of their fire support may be as short or shorter than that of the infantry sub-units themselves. Against an enemy with light armoured tanks or personnel carriers, or even soft-skinned vehicles, the main tank armament finds many worthwhile targets which cannot always be dealt with quickly by other means.

The enemy have shown how effectively various sized rockets can be used in both direct and indirect modes.

On the other hand, whilst the Vietnam war has illustrated some of the advantages of tanks in a situation where there was some doubt about their value, it has also demonstrated the effectiveness of other forms of direct firepower. The enemy have shown how effectively various sized rockets can be used in both direct and indirect modes. Most of these weapons are man-carried and their accuracy has been proven in combat and in tests of captured weapons. They have been used against vehicles, personnel carriers, strongposts and even tanks with devastating results. They appear to offer many of the advantages of the tank main gun with few of the disadvantages. Allied use and exploitation of similar weapons has been inhibited by the ready availability of other sources of firepower. While a commander can obtain heavy suppressive or destructive artillery or air fire support, or call on tank support for direct fire missions, the absence of other direct-fire weapons is not critical. An American weapon which has partly filled the gap created by the absence of suitable man-carried rocket-launchers is the M79 grenade launcher. This weapon has proven to be useful in a direct-fire short range role, to supplement infantry small arms weapons.

Helicopters have proven to be a valuable source of firepower to the infantryman. Until recently, the accuracy of the fire from gunships was limited by the need for the aircraft to be moving forward rather than hovering. Since the introduction of the Hueycobra [sic] and the Cheyenne, the variety and accuracy of helicopter fire support have both increased enormously. Notwithstanding the limitations on endurance and weather capability, helicopter fire support will often be used rather than tanks.

Such modern innovations as gyroscopically stabilized sight systems and laser range finders have made it possible for lightweight missiles to be used effectively from different types of platforms. Such weapons as Swingfire and Dragon offer lethal tank-killing capability with accuracy and range in the same order as tank main weapons. The lightweight AS 12 wire-guided missile can be helicopter launched, and has the explosive effect of a 155-mm shell. The French ACRA wire-guided missile travels at supersonic speed, covering three kilometres in less than seven seconds. Investigation of the use of lasers as weapons indicates that prototypes will be available in the near future. Such developments are rapidly leading to the time when an accurate, quickly deployed, dynamic weapon system will satisfactorily be carried and operated on smaller and faster vehicles than the tank as it is known today.

... helicopter fire
support will often be
used rather than tanks.

PROTECTION

The value of the protection afforded by modern tanks has been subject to question for some time. Operations in Vietnam have shown that even without the presence of enemy tanks and aircraft, allied tanks can be destroyed and disabled.

As soon as a tank is immobilised, it loses most of its advantage. Despite development of superior armour plating materials over recent years and new hull designs, it requires only one broken track for a tank to lose its mobility, limit its firepower, and compromise its protection. This is being achieved by the use of rockets and crude landmines in Vietnam. Development of modern 'high-kill' mines will lead to much more efficient and effective anti-tank mine warfare techniques. Though the tracks of the tank resist small-arms fire better than pneumatic tyres, the machine can be completely immobilized if the track is cut—whereas a multi-wheeled vehicle might be able to continue to operate with one wheel missing.

Despite the heavy protection afforded by tanks, the two areas most vulnerable to disabling damage are the running gear and the main armament—that is, the tank's mobility and its firepower. The rather lavish protection of the crew of the modern tank is to no avail if mobility and/or firepower are lost.

The development of anti-tank missiles and guns, and even artillery and airborne weapons, has advanced so far that any hope of providing effective conventional armoured protection to a useful tank should be discarded. Protection from such weapons must be sought in evasion or deception, or in some new method or technique which is not yet employed. The bigger and slower the tank, the more difficult will evasion be. Concealment of a large tank from visual, infra-red or electronic surveillance is difficult. Deception is awkward and expensive with large machines—even dummy tanks being bulky and costly. These factors have led to recent consideration of light-weight tanks with high speed and manoeuvrability, where physical shielding has been sacrificed to a certain extent for increased evasive capability. The Sheridan tank for instance weighs only 16 tons and has a maximum speed of 40 mph. One of the fastest tanks in the world today is the French AMX13 which achieves a speed of 43 mph. It is

... it requires only one broken track for a tank to lose its mobility, limit its firepower, and compromise its protection.

... scientists of the near future will develop an anti-metallic protective shield based on magnetic or electric fields.

conceivable that scientists of the near future will develop an anti-metallic protective shield based on magnetic or electric fields. Alternatively, a system of tactical anti-ballistic missiles might be developed for operation from land vehicles. Only a breakthrough of this magnitude would appear to offer a suitable solution to the problem of protection from modern missiles, guns, and other tank destroying ordnance. CBR protection can be provided by many materials other than armour plating and need not impose the enormous weight penalty which exists at present.

Reasonable protection against small arms weapons and shrapnel can now be achieved by use of relatively light-weight materials, which can be carried by other means apart from tanks. This type of protection is only incidental to the other characteristics of the tank, in any case.

MOBILITY

Tanks achieve their mobility by virtue of low ground pressure, the resistance of tracks to damage by small arms fire, adequate horse-power and suitable suspension. Restrictions on mobility are imposed by:

- Densely timbered country.
- Excessively rocky terrain.
- Wet and marshy ground.
- Ravines, steps and excessively steep gradients.
- Damage to tracks.
- Artificial obstacles.

Because of lower ground pressures and invulnerability to shrapnel and small arms fire, tracked machines have generally offered better mobility than wheels. However, tracks are useless if broken; they are very prone to damage in rocky terrain, and they add to the all-up weight of a tank. The sheer size of modern tanks has contributed to limiting their mobility—particularly on highways. Although weight distribution may be kept low, most modern tanks have a bridge classification far higher than other military vehicles and this restricts their movement on highways. Highway movement of tanks can badly damage road surfaces. In some countries, railways cannot accept the weight and dimensions of tanks.

In some countries,
railways cannot
accept the weight and
dimensions of tanks.

Recent work with new wheeled vehicles has indicated that far greater mobility might be practicable than was apparent a few years ago. Two of the more outstanding recent examples of such machines are the Caterpillar 'Goer', and Lockheed's 'Twister'. The former vehicle is in service in Vietnam at present in various cargo carrying

RETROSPECT

configurations, and is demonstrating cross-country performance equal to that of M113 personnel carriers in swampy going. The vehicle has an articulated body with 'wagon steering' and four large, low-pressure tyres. There is no suspension system but the four-wheel drive will allow 30 mph movement carrying an eight-ton load. The vehicles were originally designed as logistic support vehicles for armoured and mechanized units—and as such they were required to have comparable mobility. The Goer evolved from wheeled earthmoving equipment and speed was not the main aim. Though not armour-protected at all in its present configurations, the Goer has such a respectable load carrying capacity that it could be lightly armoured with a relatively small restriction in its cargo carrying capacity. In the foreseeable future, the vehicle could probably be fitted with heavy machine-guns, rocket or missile launchers, or even cannon, to give it firepower as effective as the armament on current main battle tanks.

Twister offers even more potential for high speed mobility over rough terrain. This vehicle has a fully articulated double body, with eight driving wheels and independent suspension, and a separate engine in each part of the body. The manufacturers claim a top speed of 65 mph, a twenty-foot turning radius, and ability to traverse extremely rugged broken ground without upsetting the passengers. It has a 400-mile range, is air-transportable, and can be adapted to a wide range of configurations. Although it is not yet in military service, the United States have commissioned Lockheed to build three military prototypes for evaluation.

Ground effect machines, or hovercraft, have made a significant impact on vehicle mobility, particularly in extremely soft going. Their limitations are such that they will probably have little influence on the replacement for the tank. A combination of wheels (for control) and air-cushion (for load distribution) has been found to be a satisfactory solution to the movement of heavy loads over soft ground. However, the combat vehicle of the future will probably rely on light-weight and manoeuvrability for its mobility and speed, and will not require air-cushion for normal cross-country travel.

One of the most significant technological advances which will affect the design of future cross-country vehicles is the invention of cellular rubber tyres. These are non-inflatable tyres, of coarse grain closed-cell synthetic rubber, with inert gas filling the cells. Experiments have indicated that tyres made of this material perform satisfactorily, though they are rather more rigid than conventional tyres. At high speeds there have been some problems with overheating, but this difficulty is probably only a temporary one. Puncture tests have shown that the tyres are virtually unaffected by

Ground effect
machines ... have
made a significant
impact on vehicle
mobility ...

complete penetration by nails, spikes, and bullets. The small number of cells which are ruptured by the projectile do not affect the overall resilience or stability of the tyre. This could mean that the main objection to wheeled combat vehicles is about to be overcome.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

If the tank is indeed dead, what remains? There will probably continue to be a need for vehicles which can carry heavy firepower wherever it may be needed. There will still be a need for highly mobile weapon systems to move in close ground support of vehicle transported infantry. There will still be a requirement for a fast cross-country vehicle to strike at the enemy from the flank where he least expects it; to pursue the withdrawing force; and to provide concentrated but mobile firepower in the counter-attack. Even in counter-revolutionary and limited war, these needs will continue to exist. The combat vehicle of the future will not be stereotyped. It will probably be essentially an articulated vehicle with probably more than eight driving wheels fitted with cellular/solid tyres, capable of high speed performance in most types of terrain. It could have multi-fuel engines with an operating range in the order of 500 miles rather than the typical current tank range of 200 miles. The basic machine will have a low profile, and will be adaptable for use as troop carrier, cargo carrier, recovery vehicle, mortar, howitzer or field-gun platform, anti-aircraft weapon carrier, or as a direct-fire weapon carrier. In this latter role, the vehicle may be fitted with rockets or guided missiles, heavy machine-guns, grenade launchers and other novelties. Combat vehicles will be armoured against small arms fire and shrapnel, probably using light-weight alloy or plastic plates or flexible sheets. At some time in the future these vehicles may be equipped with invisible electronic or electro-magnetic anti-missile shields. Some may be equipped with electronic remote explosive initiators which will destroy enemy mines or incoming missiles or rockets at a safe distance. Science may produce a practical, self-protection, anti-ballistic missile for launching from the vehicle to deal with offensive enemy ordnance. These combat vehicles will demonstrate many of the traditional characteristics of cavalry units—even more than tanks ever did.

The tank of today is as anachronistic as mediaeval suits of armour. Though it has many obvious advantages, it has evolved to the stage of imminent extinction, because it has become increasingly inefficient in an age which demands more of machines than ever before. It has become the Juggernaut of modern military technology,

**The tank of today is
as anachronistic as
mediaeval suits of
armour.**

RETROSPECT

demanding high capital outlay and enormous logistical support, in return for fire support not much more effective than that of the lone enemy guerilla who destroys the tank with a well-placed rocket.

THE AUTHOR (AS AT MARCH 1970)

After graduating from the Royal Military College in 1956 Major Lennon attended the University of Queensland for a degree of Bachelor of Mechanical Engineering. Service with 17 Construction Squadron followed until 1962 when he was attached to the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority. Posted to 7 Field Squadron in 1963 he became, in 1964, an Interchange Officer with the 25th U.S. Infantry Division (Hawaii). In 1965 he was OC of 20 Field Park Squadron which was redesignated 20 Engineer Support Squadron.

As OC of 1 Field Squadron he served with 1 ATF in Vietnam in 1966 after which he returned to 17 Construction Squadron as OC. In May 1967 he was appointed SORE 2 in the office of E in C, AHQ Canberra, a position he occupied until August last year when he left to attend Staff College, Camberley.

A MODERN ARMoured FORCE IS VITAL TO AUSTRALIA'S DEFENCE

MAJOR B. G. RANKING, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARMoured CORPS

The ability to concentrate superior forces at the critical time and place has been a hallmark of successful commanders throughout history. Since warfare emerged from the inter-tribal squabbles when a few dozen men endeavoured to cut each other's throats, to the stage when state and national armies were formed, man has been constantly striving to develop more powerful weapons and improved means of mobility. During the 15th Century B.C., Ethiopia fell to the empire-building Egyptians, not because of any lack of courage on the part of the defenders, but because, to a man, the invaders were equipped with copper weapons and armour against which the stone axes and hide armour of the Ethiopians were of little avail. In contrast, the battle of Kadesh in 1286 B.C. saw a powerful Egyptian army decisively defeated by a similarly equipped Hittite force. The Hittites employed their 2500 chariots in mass and thereby achieved shock action with consequent disastrous results for the Egyptians, who had deployed their chariot force in 'penny packets'. Operation 'Crusader' and the battle at Gazala during World War II provided an interesting comparison and demonstrated the failure of some modern commanders to learn from past lessons.

[by 500 BC] the
highly manoeuvrable
cavalry had become
the decisive arm on
the battlefield.

RETROSPECT

The comparatively poor cross-country mobility of the chariot led to its eventual replacement by the more flexible horseman. By about 500 B.C. the highly manoeuvrable cavalry had become the decisive arm on the battlefield. This position of supremacy was maintained until mediaeval times when the increasing weight of personal armour resulted in the horseman becoming a ponderous shock weapon with little ability for rapid manoeuvre. With the invention of gunpowder and the subsequent ability of the foot soldier to penetrate armour at relatively long ranges, the employment of cavalry in wild charges to break the enemy line began to go out of fashion: by the time of World War I defensive weapons had achieved complete supremacy. Apart from isolated actions in the Middle East, the cavalry found little to do.

The dismal battles of attrition in France during the first three years of World War I must represent the nadir of military art. The interminable attempts to force a breach by the ponderous advance of massed manpower over a ‘moonscape’—every square inch of which was registered by artillery of all calibres and lashed by the cross-fire of countless machine-guns—were foredoomed to failure. The need to develop some device or tactic to break the stalemate should have been obvious to all who were involved in the conduct of the war, but unfortunately this was not the case. Winston Churchill, then First Lord of the Admiralty, had the vision to see the potential of a tracked armoured vehicle, but received little support from his contemporaries who referred to the new machine as ‘Winston’s Folly’.¹ Indeed, one of Churchill’s principal subordinates, the Fourth Sea Lord, stated:

Winston Churchill ...
had the vision to see the
potential of a tracked
armoured vehicle ...

Caterpillar landships are idiotic and useless. Nobody has asked for them and nobody wants them. The officers and men working with the Landships Committee are wasting their time and not pulling their weight in the war. If I had my way I would disband the lot of them. Anyhow, I am going to do my best to see that it is done and stop this ... caterpillar landship nonsense.²

This resistance to new ideas is not unusual; however, in spite of all opposition, development went ahead and by the end of the war the tank had more than adequately demonstrated its ability to penetrate fixed defences.

Between the wars, development of armoured vehicles and the techniques to use them effectively were continued by Germany and, as was later discovered, Russia. Britain, on the other hand, failed to realize the potential of the weapon she had created and apart from the efforts of a few dedicated enthusiasts interest in tank design and employment stagnated. The Germans maintained their lead throughout the war; a lesson which should not be forgotten. It was not possible, even with

the enormous industrial capacity of the United States, for the Allies to make up the leeway in six years of war. The knowledge of design, industrial capacity and the training of commanders in the employment of armour, are skills and abilities which result from progressive development. They cannot be quickly created to fill a sudden need.

Armour was engaged in all theatres during World War II, and was often the decisive arm. In the Far East, tanks were used in lesser numbers but proved their worth in many battles. During the invasion of Malaya, tanks were used by the Japanese in terrain which the British planners had regarded as impassable. At the Slim River, Japanese tanks punched a gap to a depth of nineteen miles in a night attack. This success was achieved without the night vision aids available today. The campaign in Burma provides many instances where tanks were employed effectively in unfavourable terrain. Field Marshal Lord Slim described one such action during the battle for the fortress of Razabil:

This was the first time we had assaulted an elaborate, carefully prepared position that the Japanese meant to hold to the last, and we expected it to be tough. It was ... The guns suddenly paused and the Lee-Grant tanks roared forward, the infantry, bayonets fixed, yelling their Indian war cries, following on their tails. The Dismal Jimmies who had prophesied, one, that the tanks would never get to the line, two, that they would never climb the hills and, three, that if they did the trees would so slow them up that the Japanese anti-tank guns would bump them off as sitting targets were confounded. The tanks, lots of them—the more you use the fewer you lose—crashed up the slopes and ground over the anti-tank guns ... the old problem ... how to get the infantryman onto his enemy without a pause in the covering fire that kept his enemy's head down ... was solved in the Arakan ... by tanks firing, first, surface burst high explosive to clear the jungle, then delay-action high explosive to break up the faces of the bunkers thus exposed, and lastly solid armour-piercing shot as the infantry closed in.³

... tanks were used [in Malaya] by the Japanese in terrain which the British planners had regarded as impassable.

These lessons, learned in 1943, should have great significance for the Australian Army when considering the characteristics of its current and likely future enemies. The ability of the enemy soldier to construct complex and deep fortifications is well known. Past experience has proved that the employment of tanks in support of infantry, when assaulting prepared defensive positions, will save the infantry a high proportion of the casualties they would otherwise suffer. '... [A]ny power fighting in the jungle against an enemy with unlimited manpower used to a low standard of living must have some equalizer if it hopes to win.'⁴ This quote from an article

RETROSPECT

published shortly after the end of the wars in Korea and Indo-China remains valid. The present conflict in Vietnam has seen air power employed in support of ground forces on a scale never before envisaged, and yet the enemy retains his offensive capability. Figures are not available to the writer on the scale of the air interdiction over North Vietnam or along the supply routes to the south, but, although there can be no doubt that the enemy is being hurt, there appears to be no significant reduction to his ability to continue with his war of aggression. Douhet's theory on the use of massive air power to bring an enemy to his knees has once again been proven invalid. Air power, even in a situation of absolute air superiority, is not the complete 'equalizer'. We must maintain the ability to defeat the enemy on the ground with air power as an adjunct to that ability. Future conflicts involving Australian forces will almost certainly be against an Asian power possessing vast manpower resources. The balance can only be restored by firepower. For the direct, intimate support of infantry, armour will continue to provide the best source of this firepower.

Britain's withdrawal from the Far East will place demands upon Australia to play a more important role in the security of this region. To do so in the military sphere we must be militarily significant. As we do not possess the manpower resources to maintain a large standing army, our military significance must rely upon quality, not quantity. We must make maximum use of our technological advantages and gain superiority in firepower and flexibility to redress the imbalance in manpower. This requirement, of course, affects all three Services; however, this paper deals only with factors which involve the Army.

Since World War II the Australian Army has continued to develop as a basically infantry force with armour in a limited, supporting role. No emphasis has been placed on the need for an integrated armoured/infantry force, and only token attempts have been made to train the two arms in the techniques necessary for successful co-operation on the battlefield. The armies of all the major powers recognize the need for balanced forces containing armoured, infantry and artillery elements, together with other supporting arms and services. These forces have compatible flexibility, protection and manoeuvre potential, and are trained together as a combat team. The aim of this article is to show that such a modern armoured force is vital to Australia's defence.

... employment of
tanks in support of
infantry ... [will save]
a high proportion of
the casualties ...

It is not the purpose of this article to discuss the circumstances whereby Australian forces might be deployed in the future, or the time frames in which such deployments might occur. There do, however, appear to be three possible areas in which we may be committed: mainland Australia, New Guinea and mainland Asia.

Australia is a vast continent with a very low population density—three per square mile—and those areas which are the most vulnerable to external attack are those which are the most sparsely populated. The necessary limitations upon the size of the Australian Army and the vast distances involved make it quite impractical to pre-position forces in the hope of preventing an enemy landing on the mainland. The requirement is for a force which is capable of rapid deployment once the main enemy threat has been established. This need for a mobile force possessing heavy combat power was recognized during World War II when, by 1943, the Armoured Corps reached a strength of three divisions, plus an independent armoured brigade and two tank battalion groups. Admittedly, the problems associated with the redeployment of forces have been eased by the increased capacity of air transport to move large bodies of troops and their equipment rapidly over long distances. Unfortunately, Australia's capability in this field is very limited and is likely to remain so. In addition, only relatively lightly equipped forces may be moved by this means; the heavy paraphernalia necessary for the conduct of deliberate, long-term operations against a well-equipped enemy must follow by other means. The threat to the security of mainland Australia is not one of insurgency; such a situation does not exist in this country and is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future. If a direct threat to our security arises, then it will involve the overt invasion of our shores by an army equipped and trained for conventional or nuclear war.

The main problems facing a potential aggressor are the difficulties of transporting an invasion force of sufficient strength and the build-up of that force to the stage where it is capable of carrying out its mission of taking over the country. We cannot, from within our own resources, hope to defeat an aggressor once he has been permitted to develop his full potential. Apart from interdiction of his force before it reaches our shores, the answer to this threat lies in our ability to contain and destroy an enemy bridgehead before it can be built up to the stage where the breakout can

We must make
maximum use of our
... flexibility to redress
the imbalance in
manpower.

...Australia's capability
[for strategic air lift]
is very limited and is
likely to remain so.

RETROSPECT

take place. To achieve this we must have a mobile force, possessing superior combat power, capable of decisive offensive action against an enemy bridgehead. That is, an armoured force. Provided we possess this ability, then the invasion of this country by conventional forces is unlikely to occur.

The future of New Guinea is far from clear; however, present indications are that Australia will carry the main burden for the defence of the Territory for many years. The indigenous army in New Guinea is trained for specialist tasks such as keeping the peace and border patrolling; it is not capable of countering an overt attack by conventional forces. In the event of such an attack intervention by forces from the Australian mainland would be essential.

There can be no doubt that most of the terrain in New Guinea is unfavourable for the use of armour; however, there are reasonably large areas, particularly near the main centres of population, where armour can be used to good effect. The road system into the Central Highlands is also being developed and, once completed, further areas will be opened up where armour may be usefully employed. These centres of population and production are the areas which an invader must capture if he is to achieve his aims; thus any struggle for New Guinea will be mainly concerned with the defence or capture of these areas. Experiences during World War II graphically illustrate the difficulties in defeating an enemy who has had time to prepare his defences.

In his comments on the operations at Buna-Gona, Colonel Keogh refers to the inadvisability and folly of 'sending inadequately supported infantry against undamaged fortifications manned by a determined garrison plentifully supplied with automatic weapons.'⁵ He was referring, in the main, to the paucity of artillery support; however, the comments, quoted earlier, of Field Marshal Lord Slim indicate the results which were obtained with tanks against the same enemy in similarly difficult terrain. M3 light tanks (General Stuarts) were used by the Australians during the campaign, but were unsuitable for the task. That they did achieve some success is remarkable, as a maximum of only eleven tanks was available at any one time, and as these were used in twos and threes there was little chance of them having a significant effect upon the battle. The Lethbridge

... we must have
a mobile force,
possessing superior
combat power ...

One of the lessons from the
campaign showed the need
for a heavy tank, mounting
a big gun, capable of taking
punishment and forcing
its way through thick
undergrowth.

Mission to the South-West Pacific Area reported: 'With relatively small losses to themselves and to the infantry they were supporting, the tanks enabled positions to be won which would otherwise have imposed long delays and very heavy casualties.'⁶ One of the lessons from the campaign showed the need for a heavy tank, mounting a big gun, capable of taking punishment and forcing its way through thick undergrowth. However, these lessons tended to be forgotten by the Australian Army, which persisted in the belief that tanks could not be used effectively in jungle or difficult terrain.

Fortunately, this archaic attitude seems to be changing. Main battle tanks are now deployed with the Australian Task Force in South Vietnam. As the After Action Reports are still classified, their contents cannot be quoted in this paper; however, it can be stated that the wet season, which many predicted would bring the tanks to a standstill, does not appear to have significantly restricted their freedom of movement. The cannister round has proved a most effective weapon in repulsing regiment sized attacks on fire support bases. These discoveries are not surprising to the armoured soldier, and it is heartening to see that the message may now be getting across to those who have the most to gain from the correct employment of armour. During the battle of Long Tan in 1966, reinforcements were carried to the scene in armoured personnel carriers, driving rain precluding the use of air support. This force inflicted heavy casualties upon a Viet Cong unit which was attempting to assault D Coy 6 RAR from a flank. It in no way detracts from the performance of the units involved to conjecture upon the results which might have been obtained had tanks been employed in this situation where a large enemy force had been located and fixed. The Americans have used armour in Vietnam with considerable success since 1965. One typical example of the results armour can obtain occurred in 1966 when the Viet Cong attempted to ambush a column which was escorted by tanks. When the ambush was sprung the tanks moved into echelon formation and advanced into the ambush firing cannister; the result—complete failure of the ambush and some 270 enemy dead left on the battlefield.

There are many areas in Vietnam where the use of armour would be impracticable due to the difficulty of the terrain; however, as was proved in Malaya, provided the enemy can be separated from the population and driven into the back country, his ability to achieve his aim is greatly reduced. The relative speed with which armoured forces may be deployed, and the inhibiting effect their presence has upon an enemy who lacks armoured support, makes them a potent

The factors influencing the employment of armour in South Vietnam will apply generally to most of South-East Asia.

RETROSPECT

weapon in a situation such as that existing in South Vietnam. The inherent flexibility of armoured forces is aided by the use of air transport for replenishment of the echelon. In a counter-insurgency setting, the availability of air transport support may eliminate the necessity to hold open a long overland supply route for operations of short duration. It also facilitates the replenishment of armoured sub-units which may be operating at a distance from the main supply route or forward operational base. Armour should therefore be more readily able to co-operate with infantry in operations in depth. The factors influencing the employment of armour in South Vietnam will apply generally to most of South-East Asia. In a limited war setting the possession of armour confers great advantages upon the Free World Forces when dealing with an enemy who does not have an effective counter. Should the situation in South-East Asia ever erupt into general war, then the need for effective armoured forces to oppose the considerable armoured strength of Communist China is self-evident.

A great many articles have been written in recent years propounding the theory that the day of the tank is over. The more rational of these articles have based their arguments upon the improvements to infantry anti-tank weapons, the use of guided weapons and the employment of aircraft in ground support roles. The concept of an infantry soldier with a one hundred dollar rocket being able to knock out a two hundred thousand dollar tank is most attractive. The ability of the infantry to do this, provided they can get close enough, is not questioned. Unsophisticated weapons of the Molotov cocktail variety will effectively immobilize a tank if placed in the right position. The keys to the question are placement and lethality. It must not be forgotten that the tank forms only part of a combat team, and, provided the team is well trained and its actions co-ordinated, then the task of getting close enough to obtain a strike in a vital area can be made very difficult. In addition, the infantry weapon must, because of its weight limitations, be of the shaped charge type. These weapons are of doubtful lethality, and in fact, Australian tanks in South Vietnam have taken numerous hits from this type of weapon without suffering any serious damage to the vehicle or casualties to the crew. This ability to absorb punishment and remain in action is a characteristic of the main battle tank; the same cannot be said for the more lightly protected armoured personnel carrier or light cavalry tank, which provide only limited protection.

The guided weapon has come into great prominence in recent years and has many advantages, in particular those of relatively light weight and a high hit probability in good conditions. There are, however, many disadvantages associated with guided weapons. Once again they rely upon a shaped charge warhead for their effect and do

**It must not be
forgotten that the
tank forms only part
of a combat team ...**

not compare in lethality with the kinetic energy projectile. They have a relatively long time of flight, which is a considerable disadvantage when trying to hit a tank which is being manoeuvred tactically. The guided weapon relies upon some system of homing onto the target or is guided during flight by the operator. Both of these systems are open to counter-measures and do not compare with the kinetic energy projectile which, once fired, cannot be diverted from its pre-determined course. In addition, were the kinetic energy projectile to disappear from the battlefield, then it would be well within the capabilities of current technology to design armoured protection to defeat a shaped charge warhead. For these reasons there would appear to be a sound requirement to retain the kinetic energy gun, which has the advantages of reliability, accuracy even under poor conditions, and unsurpassed lethality.

Prior to World War II critics stated that aircraft would drive the tank from the battlefield, but this was not the case. In the closing stages of the war the Allies possessed almost complete control of the air and employed large numbers of ground attack aircraft in tank-hunting roles.

These aircraft achieved considerable success, but were unable to prevent German armour from playing a significant part in battles right up until the war ended. It is interesting to note that the Russians have been developing anti-aircraft tanks for some years, and now the Americans are developing this type of vehicle. The chance of an anti-aircraft tank shooting down a fast-flying jet are probably not very high; however, the effect of heavy ground fire upon a pilot who is endeavouring to hit a pinpoint target may be quite significant. It has been stated that the helicopter, hovering a few feet off the ground, can provide the infantry with the accurate, intimate fire support normally provided by tanks. The mind boggles at the thought of helicopters being employed in this way on a conventional battlefield. In view of the amount of assorted ironmongery being thrown into a fairly restricted area by both sides, grave doubts must arise as to how long a helicopter would survive. The anti-aircraft tank would become extremely effective in combatting helicopters used in this way. In addition, it is difficult to visualize a helicopter being able to provide intimate fire support beneath the canopy in wooded terrain; nor can it remain with the infantry to provide close protection by day and night. Helicopters have a role to play; they cannot, however, replace the tank upon the battlefield.

Prior to World War II critics stated that aircraft would drive the tank from the battlefield, but this was not the case.

Helicopters have a role to play; they cannot, however, replace the tank upon the battlefield.

RETROSPECT

What then are the requirements for a modern armoured force? First, it must be centred around the main battle tank. There is no escape from this precept. To be effective the armoured fighting vehicle must be able to survive on the battlefield with the infantry. It must be capable of providing the infantry with a variety of effective fire support: high explosive, cannister, machine-gun, and have a bunker-cracking ability. It must be capable of engaging and defeating enemy armour at long ranges. No interim, lightweight, air-portable, multi-purpose armoured fighting vehicle can effectively carry out all these roles. Current main battle tanks are far from satisfactory in a number of aspects. Their weight precludes them from movement by air, and many bridges, especially in South-East Asia, will not support them. The repair and maintenance bills are too high at present, but with improvements in design these bills should reduce in the future. Limited endurance has been a problem in the past, but this situation is improving. It should be possible, within a few years, to produce a tank which will not require replenishment, except for ammunition, for at least three days. The Centurion is proving the value of a main battle tank in South Vietnam but this tank, which was designed during World War II, has seen eighteen years' service in the Australian Army. It is, undoubtedly, good for a few years yet, but in ever decreasing numbers as spares cease to become available. The lead times involved in the development of major equipments mean that the main battle tanks for the period 1975 to 1990 are probably either on the drawing boards or under development at this time. Australia must remain abreast of these developments to ensure that orders are placed in time for a new tank to be available to us when Centurion is eventually phased out.

What are the broad economics of this proposition? The critics of armour are fond of quoting the high capital cost of armoured equipments as a prime reason for Australia relying upon a basically infantry army. That an armoured force is expensive, both to purchase and to maintain, cannot be denied but cost must be coupled with effectiveness if one is to obtain a true picture. One tank regiment possesses the gun power of slightly less than three artillery regiments, plus one hundred and eighty machine-guns, at least forty-five of which are 50-mm calibre. This roughly approximates the General Purpose Machine Gun capacity of three or four infantry battalions. These weapons are carried on vehicles which offer protection to the crews, have excellent mobility and flexibility, and give to a commander the capacity for decisive, offensive shock action. All of this an armoured regiment achieves with only four hundred and five men as against some four thousand in the infantry and

... the main battle
tanks for the period
1975 to 1990 are
probably either on
the drawing boards or
under development ...

artillery units. Australia is an affluent country in all aspects except that of manpower. Our high rate of national growth should allow us to spend considerable sums of money to ensure our security; however, to divert large numbers of men into such a non-productive field as defence would be quite unacceptable. The foregoing is not intended as an argument for the abolition of infantry or artillery; such a premise would be ridiculous. It is hoped, however, that it will indicate that the armoured regiment does give value for money.

Secondly, a modern armoured force requires an integral infantry element, mounted in armoured personnel carriers and highly trained in the techniques of infantry/tank co-operation. These skills are not developed in a ten-day exercise on the Puckapunyal range. The restricted size of the Australian Army and its many commitments probably does not allow permanent affiliations of armoured and infantry units and, in any event, this may be undesirable. The need is for infantry and armoured units to conduct integrated training at suitable stages during the annual training cycle. This training should be progressive and be aimed at producing efficient combat teams. To achieve this aim it would be desirable to co-locate infantry and armoured units, but logistic problems probably rule this out. The main difficulty lies in moving the armour and therefore the best solution is for 'Mahomet to come to the mountain'. Puckapunyal does not provide the ideal venue for infantry to conduct their large-scale exercises prior to deployment in South Vietnam. There is, therefore, a good case for siting an armoured force at Shoalwater Bay in order that units of all arms may be trained together before moving to an operational theatre.

... the techniques of infantry/tank co-operation ... are not developed in a ten-day exercise on the Puckapunyal range.

Thirdly, there is a requirement for artillery which is capable of keeping up with the mobile battle. Certainly artillery can be rapidly deployed by air but, unfortunately, air is subject to the vagaries of weather with the result that, under the very circumstances when it may be most advantageous to move armour, the air lift may not be available. There is a need for self-propelled artillery with armoured protection for the crews.

Fourthly, there is a need for an anti-tank capability. The best anti-tank weapon is a main battle tank, and in the presence of enemy armour this will remain an important role. It is quite wrong, however, to employ tanks as armoured anti-tank pillboxes within the infantry forward localities. If used in this way they will not be available to support infantry in the attack, counter-attack, counter-penetration, etc. roles. Current weapons available to the infantry give a reasonable anti-tank capability at ranges out to about one thousand metres; it is at ranges in excess of this that the

RETROSPECT

problem lies. Armoured vehicles of the General Sheridan type have a good performance in the long range anti-tank field; however, the lightness of their armoured protection leaves them vulnerable to both tank and artillery fire. There is a case for an improved Entac type weapon which can be ground-mounted and fired by a controller who is dug in with overhead cover. This capability to conduct its own long range anti-tank defence should be given to the infantry battalion. Tanks should be employed to break up enemy armoured attacks in mobile operations, not as static anti-tank weapons.

With the development of increasingly effective surveillance and detection devices, air has become a most efficient means for conducting long and medium range reconnaissance. There is still, however, a need for medium range reconnaissance by ground forces to obtain more precise information about the enemy. There is also a requirement for mobile forces to provide flank protection, covering forces for the advance or withdrawal, and escorts for road columns in areas where there is guerilla activity against the lines of communication. The Australian concept envisages the initial deployment of our forces by air, with the heavier elements necessary to support long term operations following by sea at a later date. For these reasons there remains a need for air-portable armoured units possessing long endurance, good reliability, and capable of producing a large volume of accurate firepower. The cavalry regiment possesses these characteristics and should be retained in a modern armoured force; however, the temptation to regard the light cavalry tank as a main battle tank must be resisted.

The current organization of the Tropical Warfare Division provides one cavalry regiment as the only integral armoured unit within the division. One tank squadron and one armoured personnel carrier squadron are available from Army Troops. This allocation is quite unrealistic. Current operations in South Vietnam prove the value of a task force commander having the capability to deploy tanks and armoured personnel carriers in support of his operations. The organization should therefore be increased to provide, in addition to the cavalry regiment, one tank regiment and one armoured personnel carrier regiment within each division. This divisional structure would be adequate to meet our foreseeable commitments outside Australia. If, however, the emphasis does turn to a 'Fortress Australia' concept then a complete revision of

**This capability to
conduct its own long
range anti-tank defence
should be given to the
infantry battalion.**

**... the temptation to
regard the light cavalry
tank as a main battle
tank must be resisted.**

current policy is required. There will then be a need to create armoured formations up to divisional size—each with its integral mechanized infantry and self-propelled artillery—if we are to take the task of defending this vast continent seriously.

This article has illustrated the value of armoured forces to the Australian Army in all its likely theatres of operations. It has tried to remain within the bounds of practicability and not enter into the field of science fiction. The writer firmly believes that the Australian Army has failed to realize that armour, skilfully employed, can win battles and save the infantry a large proportion of the casualties they would otherwise suffer. There is a need for all arms to co-operate in realistic exercises during training. Learning basic lessons on the battlefield is costly and may be disastrous. It is appreciated that the type of force required for operations in mainland South-East Asia and New Guinea would not suffice for the defence of mainland Australia. It has been indicated that the present divisional organization does not possess sufficient armoured support to conduct successful operations outside Australia and that the armoured strength of the current division should be increased. So long as the present forward defence concept continues then these increases will provide Australia with a viable force for deployment overseas. They will also provide a reasonable base upon which to build, when necessary, the modern armoured force which would be vital to the defence of Australia.

It is appreciated that the type of force required for operations in mainland South-East Asia and New Guinea would not suffice for the defence of mainland Australia.

ENDNOTES

- 1 B. H. Liddell Hart, *The Tanks*, Vol. 1, 1914–1939, p. 20.
- 2 Liddell Hart, p. 25.
- 3 Field Marshal Sir William Slim, *Defeat into Victory*, p. 228.
- 4 Lieutenant-Colonel S. C. Graham, 'Tanks Against Japan', *Australian Army Journal*, June, 1955, p. 2.
- 5 Colonel E. G. Keogh, *The South-West Pacific 1941-45*, p. 227.
- 6 Graham, 'Tanks Against Japan', p. 5.

RETROSPECT

THE AUTHOR (AS AT MARCH 1970)

Major Ranking joined the CMF in 1949 and in 1963 was appointed to command 2/14 QMI. On joining the ARA in 1964 he was posted to 1 Armd Regt, where in 1966 he commanded C Sqn and in 1967 was appointed regimental second-in-command. He attended Staff College in 1968 and in 1969 was assigned to 69 GL Sect as GSO2. He is currently serving in Vietnam as GSO2 67 GL Sect.

BOOK REVIEW

David L. Phillips, *Losing Iraq: Inside the Postwar Reconstruction Fiasco*, Basic Books, New York, 2005, ix + 292pp.

Reviewed by Major Lynda Liddy, Research Fellow, Land Warfare Studies Centre.

In the aftermath of civil wars, international actors often worry about sectarianism, tribalism and ethnic division in war torn states. In Iraq, however, it is evident that forced regime change is also fraught with similar challenges. Religious and ethnic divisions, political rivalries, and the fragmentation of authority have constituted enormous obstacles to post-war recovery. In the face of these obstacles, Iraq's political transition has been marred by confusion and repeated course correction. This has created the impression that the Bush Administration did not have a definite plan for restoring sovereignty in Iraq.

In this book, David Phillips argues that the problem was not the absence of a plan, but rather that Iraq was thrown into crisis when Bush Administration officials, and, especially Pentagon political appointees, decided to ignore the planning that was already underway. The book not only outlines the context in which the United States decided upon military action in Iraq but also analyses the extent of planning to facilitate the reconstruction of Iraq—what went wrong and why.

The author is well qualified to present what, by his own admission, is a selective work based on 'insider information' and 'knowledgeable observation'. Not only was he the head of the United States Congressional Human Rights Foundation from 1988–95, he was also a former senior policy adviser to the State Department. As Head of the Congressional Human Rights Foundation, the author had frequent contact with Iraqi Kurds, making numerous visits to Iraqi Kurdistan during his tenure.

The book ... outlines
the context in which
the United States
decided upon military
action in Iraq ...

Due to this hands-on experience, the author was invited by the State Department to facilitate the Democratic Principles Working Group as part of the Future of Iraq Project, developing recommendations for Iraqi reconstruction.

The Future of Iraq Project, sponsored by the State Department, was launched in 2002 to begin practical planning for the immediate aftermath of a transition when the Iraqis would face the huge task of reconstruction. The project developed recommendations on a range of issues ranging from education, health, sanitation, agriculture, security, governance, the rule of law, and traditional justice.

Phillips resigned as senior adviser from the State Department in September 2003 due to his perception that the work and recommendations of the Future of Iraq Project were being 'ignored' by the Bush Administration. The book addresses many themes; however, the most important is that of nation-building. The work includes a thirteen-page addendum on 'Lessons in Nation Building' in which the author outlines what should be included in an effective nation-building and reconstruction plan.

... the author outlines what should be included in an effective nation-building and reconstruction plan.

Building a nation-state requires creating a sovereign centre of political accountability. A newly formed national government also requires legitimacy, especially if it has emerged as the result of an externally imposed political transition. In the past, political legitimacy has usually derived from a combination of international legislation and United Nations' Resolutions, sponsorship or direction. The intervention in Afghanistan enjoyed such international legitimacy; the intervention in Iraq did not. Afghans saw international intervention not so much as destroying sovereignty as restoring it after years of turmoil. In Iraq, however, successive delays in handing over sovereignty fuelled the insurgency and embittered Iraqis.

... the politics of establishing a legitimate central government with sufficient authority to ensure security and prosperity for all Iraqis.

The author is highly critical of President Bush's 'antipathy towards internationalism' and 'his willingness to go it alone'. This resulted in his Administration limiting the UN's post-war role in the reconstruction of Iraq. This was a mistake because 'burden-sharing and unity of command are the twin pillars of successful nation-building' and the UN is 'typically the vehicle through which the international community organises collective action'.

There were in fact four ‘political’ conflicts evident in post-war reconstruction efforts: the politics of Iraqi factionalism, the politics of US interagency friction, the politics of ideological divisions within the Bush administration, and the politics of establishing a legitimate central government with sufficient authority to ensure security and prosperity for all Iraqis. In the book, the author navigates these political conflicts in detail, outlining where the Bush Administration failed to win and why, and is critical of the fact that the Bush Administration has clung to an illusion of Iraqi unity, ignoring the factionalism evident not only in government and the civil administration but also the security forces and the police.

Furthermore, Phillips is also critical of the poor government interagency relations within the US Administration. There developed acrimonious relations between the Office of the Secretary of Defense and the State Department as US officials vied for control over the Iraq policy; the author provides examples where ‘Pentagon political appointees ran roughshod’ over the State Department’.

Indeed, he provides detailed analysis of the ideological conflict within the Bush Administration which, in his opinion, hampered reconstruction efforts. He identified three ideological ‘camps’: the hegemonists, led by Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld, who believed in aggressive unilateral action to protect US interests; the neo-conservatives, who wanted to ‘reshape’ the world in America’s image and, in the process, ensure future access to Middle Eastern oil; and the pragmatic internationalists, led by Colin Powell, who believed that global threats could best be met through international cooperation.

As to the war being based on questionable intelligence, the author contends that, again and again, the Bush Administration either ignored the advice of Iraqis or only listened to Iraqis who told them what they wanted to hear. The White House and Pentagon political appointees thought they could ‘liberate a country without talking to those they were liberating’.

Finally, without a credible, speedy political process to restore self rule, many Iraqis became embittered. The failure to implement rapidly an effective post-war plan brought unnecessary hardship to the Iraqi people, and delays in handing over sovereignty impaired both the legitimacy of the Coalition Provisional Authority, the subsequent Interim Government and, finally, the political process leading up

[The author] provides detailed analysis of the ideological conflict within the Bush Administration which, in his opinion, hampered reconstruction efforts.

to the Iraqi elections in 2005. Furthermore, when an Iraqi government was finally elected on 30 January 2005, the worsening security situation further undermined the legitimacy of this new administration

The author contends that these problems could have been averted, or at least minimised if the recommendations of 'The Future of Iraq Project' were adopted at the outset and quickly implemented. He concludes that, whilst the Bush Administration had tangible goals for Iraq, there was no coherent strategy for accomplishing them. Policy was based on a combination of naiveté, misjudgement and wishful thinking.

Some suggest the solution to end the violence is the partition of Iraq. The author argues that Federalism, by preserving a meaningful role for the central authority in Baghdad, has the potential to fulfil the various democratic aspirations of rival factions as well as strengthening territorial integrity.

David Phillips is exhaustive in his analysis in 'what went wrong in Iraq'. He gives an extremely detailed account of State Department planning for post-war reconstruction, the politics of the Iraqi opposition factions who participated in much of this early planning, as well as the Bush Administration's difficulties in developing its own strategy for reconstruction. In so doing, he cites both formal and informal discussions, office memoranda, letters and interviews. His main conclusions are that future military action must be conducted in concert with allies, in accordance with international law and accompanied by a detailed plan to win the peace.

[The author] concludes that, whilst the Bush Administration had tangible goals for Iraq, there was no coherent strategy for accomplishing them.

BOOK REVIEW

Noam Chomsky, *Failed States: The abuse of power and the assault on democracy*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2006, 328pp.

Reviewed by Hugh Smith, Visiting Fellow, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of New South Wales at the Australian Defence Force Academy

The main title of Chomsky's latest book is somewhat misleading. It is not an examination of the misery experienced by the many Third World states riven by civil strife, criminality, corruption and chaos—states that have not so much failed as never succeeded. It is rather another of Chomsky's sustained polemics against United States foreign policy towards the rest of the world.

The list of charges against the United States will be familiar—as Chomsky would claim, they have been valid for so long. There is America's failure to take nuclear disarmament seriously as the Non-Proliferation Treaty requires. There is US readiness to use force unilaterally, evidenced by numerous military interventions and the doctrine of preventive war. There is America's disregard for international law, as witnessed, for example, by rejection of the International Criminal Court, willingness to countenance torture, and disregard for the Geneva Conventions—not to mention ill-disguised contempt for the United Nations except when it suits US interests. Underlying US policy, Chomsky argues, is an exceptionalism that assumes that, unlike every other state, what is good for America is good for the world.

Chomsky also turns his attention to America's internal politics where the sources of this kind of thinking are to be found. He denounces the failure to protect US citizens from violence, the acceptance of gross inequality in access to medical care

... US public opinion favours internationalist measures such as the International Criminal Court and Kyoto, while opposing the idea of preventive war.

and education, the high rates of imprisonment and use of the death penalty, the readiness to ignore the rule of law, and the democratic deficit—that discrepancy between rhetoric about democracy and the ugly reality which can be ascribed in part to the power of business and special interest lobbies. The book thus argues—not altogether convincingly—that US public opinion favours internationalist measures such as the International Criminal Court and Kyoto, while opposing the idea of preventive war. A faulty democratic system, however, means majority views can be ignored. This condition Chomsky sees as reason to deem the US itself a failed state.

Chomsky's style of argument is relentless and bruising. Nothing politicians say can be believed—Reagan, Bush 41, Clinton and Bush 43, for example, are therefore no more credible than Stalin or Mao Ze Dong. No profession of concern for human rights by the US Administration can ever be taken at face value. The claim to promote democracy abroad is a mere sham—the United States thus supports dictators such as Saddam Hussein in the 1980s or President Suharto in Indonesia and works against popular governments, overtly or covertly, in countries such as Chile and Nicaragua. America's blind obsession with Cuba and its uncritical support for Israel permanently undermine prospects of peace. And so the argument goes on.

The central problem with Chomsky, however, is that his position lacks all semblance of complexity. There is no place for mixed motives, for genuine misjudgements, for real fears about the Soviet Union in its heyday, for anxiety (soundly-based or not) about terrorism. If there is a choice between conspiracy and cock-up as explanations, always choose the former. Nor is there any tolerance for the nasty compromises that political leaders often have to settle for both at home and abroad. In Chomsky's world, there exists a sustained and systemic evil in US domestic politics and foreign policy that seems beyond redemption.

Much that Chomsky has to say is valid and many of his arguments are telling. Yet his unwillingness to address the real dilemmas of politics—the inevitability of compromise and the need to balance promotion of national interests against regard for international rules—will win few supporters other than those already committed to his worldview. This is a pity. US domestic and foreign policies deserve to be criticised (as do those of probably every country). Thus, the war in Iraq is, at best, a reckless venture, and the Bush Administration's lack of concern for the rule of law at home and abroad is even more worrying for its friends than for its enemies. The case, however, needs to be made with more subtlety and understanding than is evident in *Failed States*.

In Chomsky's world,
there exists a sustained
and systemic evil in US
domestic politics and
foreign policy ...

BOOK REVIEW

Greg Sheridan, *The Partnership: The Inside Story of the US–Australian Alliance Under Bush and Howard*, University of New South Wales Press, 2006, 260pp.

Reviewed by Bree Larkham, Researcher, Land Warfare Studies Centre

From its inception in 1951, the debate in Australia about ANZUS has been conducted broadly between two forces. There are those who oppose the alliance on the grounds that it is a manifestation of an ingrained Australian cringe to a distant imperial power, reminiscent of the early years of Federation when Australian foreign policy was subservient to Britain's. On the other hand, others argue that forging an alliance with a like-minded hegemon is essential to Australia's national interests. In the eyes of the former, the history of Australian foreign policy is a litany of subservience to successive great powers—Great Britain and then the United States—with the parlous result that thousands of young Australians have been wantonly sacrificed in 'other peoples wars.' This debate has since intensified. In 2001, Prime Minister John Howard invoked ANZUS following the 11 September terrorist attacks on the United States mainland. Subsequently, Australia committed itself to the US-led invasions of Afghanistan in 2002 and Iraq in 2003. As a result, the traditional polarity that divided Australian politics over Australia's alliance with the United Kingdom in the first half of the twentieth century and then the United States thereafter has been deeply reinforced.

Greg Sheridan challenges these assertions by arguing that John Howard has transformed the US–Australian alliance by taking the initiative in the relationship. Unlike previous Australian Prime Ministers, Howard runs the alliance and maintains the upper hand over George W. Bush and his Administration. Essentially, while America has been busy with the preoccupations

... John Howard
has transformed the
US–Australian alliance by
taking the upper hand ...

of a superpower, Howard has made the most of this opportunity to extract what he wanted from the relationship at very little cost to him personally or the country at large.¹ *The Partnership* is dynamic in that Sheridan has composed a body of evidence to support this proposition. It is written in an easily comprehensible style with insightful glances into key military and political personalities instrumental to the development of the alliance.

People are the focus of this book. It is not a political analysis of either the ANZUS alliance or the relationship between Bush and Howard. Rather, Sheridan wants to demonstrate that ANZUS has evolved into a more dynamic, multifaceted 'partnership' that extends beyond the influence of its national leaders, which has made it more beneficial to Australia's national interests. In his effort to do so, he addresses both sides of the divide by using the diversity of his interviews to demonstrate—at least in the political and security realms—that the alliance is functioning at many different levels. Therefore, he argues, this illustrates an important truth: 'the precise wording of a security treaty doesn't really matter very much so long as the broad intent, for the allies to help each other, is clear.'

How has the alliance evolved? What did Howard want from it? The answers Sheridan provides are: enhanced intelligence access and deeper co-operation between relative defence and security organisations; more influence in US decision-making processes; a free-trade agreement; increased US involvement in Asia, especially Indonesia; and the prestige that comes from international recognition of Canberra's direct access and influence in Washington. Plus, of course, the political pay-off at home. It is safe to say that Howard has achieved most of these objectives; however, how much say Canberra has in Washington is another matter for another time.

In 1996, after his electoral victory, Prime Minister Howard immediately sought to intensify Australia's relationship with the United States. Even though he enjoyed civil relations with former US President Bill Clinton, it was not until Bush came to office in January 2001, and then the 11 September terrorist attacks that same year, that greater opportunities emerged for Howard to develop deeper bilateral relations. Since, Sheridan argues, they have changed what was for the most part a regional affair into a 'truly global partnership', which is evidenced by the revolution in Australia's defence doctrine and philosophy.

In 2005, Howard said: "I am always wary of grand pronouncements of doctrines as I think they can sort of create a false and wasteful argument."² This is the 'true Howard doctrine'. No grand rhetoric or sweeping gestures; simply justify 'each step

... ANZUS has
evolved into a more
dynamic, multifaceted
'partnership' ...

to the electorate on its merits.’ The Howard Government began its term by cautiously accepting Labor’s continental defence of Australia (DOA) policy, which was the legacy of former defence minister Kim Beazley. After their experience in East Timor, the Howard Government abandoned this paradigm because they realised it had distorted the ADF’s force structure through two decades of under-investment in land forces. This meant that the Government lacked options to deal with regional instability. As a result, the narrow conception of DOA has been largely abandoned, and today Canberra is developing doctrine and structuring its forces for the defence of Australia and its national interests. This fundamental strategic shift reflects the slow, quiet revolution instigated by the Howard Government. The fact that it was implemented incrementally shows that Howard wanted to ensure that its principles became institutionalised.

... the ‘true Howard doctrine’ [is] No grand rhetoric or sweeping gestures ...

However, Sheridan inadvertently weakens his own argument. Although the majority of the Australian public support the alliance, even if they don’t like the current US President, he does not adequately (or perhaps deliberately) tackle the over-arching concern: how much is Australia paying for this partnership?

Robert Garran, an Australian journalist and author of *True Believer: John Howard, George Bush and the American Alliance*, agrees that yes, Howard—more than any other previous Australian Prime Minister—is a ‘true believer’ in both the benefits of the alliance and the values espoused by the Bush Administration, but argues that Australia is paying too high a price. Howard’s commitment to the alliance is explained by his realist understanding of international politics, as well as his belief that Australia and the United States are bound by democratic values and a shared history and culture. By joining the US-led wars in Afghanistan and, in particular, Iraq, the costs of the alliance have significantly risen. Specifically, by supporting the use of force in international politics at the expense of multilateralism, Australia has overestimated its value.

... the narrow conception of DOA has been largely abandoned ...

Nevertheless, Sheridan’s contribution to what has become a rather unproductive debate in Australian politics is noteworthy and insightful. The book delivers what it promises: a rare perspective on the inner-workings of a close, multifaceted partnership at a particular time in history when ANZUS was at its strongest ever.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See Greg Sheridan, 'Canberra push reaps rich rewards,' *The Australian*, 3 August 2006, <<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,20876,19997745-25377,00.html>> [first accessed 8 November 2006].
- 2 Sheridan, *The Partnership*, p. 129.

BOOK REVIEW

General Peter Cosgrove, *My Story*, HarperCollins Publishers, NSW, 2006, 468pp.

Reviewed by Dr Albert Palazzo, Research Fellow,
Land Warfare Studies Centre

The writing of autobiography is a problematic endeavour. The author's closeness to his subject makes attaining objectivity almost impossible and can thus call into question the work's value and viewpoint. This is especially true when public records will remain closed for many years, preventing other authors from offering well-researched interpretations of their own. Autobiographers can also bring an agenda to their book—a need to set the record straight or to seize the high ground in a future struggle over the facts and their interpretation.

Cosgrove does himself have an agenda in *My Story*, but he seeks neither to promote nor to pre-empt the opinions of others. Instead, his focus is personal, on the things that have brought meaning and pleasure to his life—duty to nation, pride in the Australian Army, and love for wife and family. *My Story* is the simple tale of a commander who just happened to rise to the top of his profession. Readers who desire an insider's account of controversial topics or revelations of secret government decision-making will be disappointed. Instead, Cosgrove takes a more measured, personal and self-effacing approach to his biography.

The book readily divides into three sections: the early years leading to the brink of high command; INTERFET, the Australian-led intervention in East Timor; and the command of the Army and the ADF. While INTERFET was the high point of Cosgrove's career, readers should avoid the temptation to skip ahead because *My Story*'s early chapters are essential and riveting reading. It is in these pages that we see how the character of Cosgrove the man is

*My Story is the simple
tale of a commander who
just happened to rise to
the top of his profession.*

formed, a character that he retains for his entire career. The term larrikin is often applied to Australian soldiers, and in this case it fits easily. In the best of the Boy's Own tradition, Cosgrove accepts the challenge of a good prank, whether it be the donning of priest's garb at St. Francis to hand out absolution at altar boy practice, or the ordering of a load of wet cement for delivery to the Waverly College quadrangle during an assembly. Young Cosgrove, it appears, would have had no difficulty joining Kipling's Starky and Company on their adventures.

It is to INTERFET, however, that many readers will naturally turn. Australia was the lead nation in an international coalition that oversaw East Timor's transition to independence from Indonesia. It was also Australia's largest military deployment since the Vietnam War. Cosgrove found himself in command only by chance. Just a year earlier he had resigned himself to retirement when his term as Commandant of the Royal Military College, Duntroon ended. Unexpectedly, he received promotion to Major General and command of the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters, the Headquarters formation that would oversee INTERFET. As a hands-on commander, Cosgrove was in his element in Dili, but it was on the diplomatic level that he revealed new talent. East Timor's peaceful transition to independence relied on Indonesia's cooperative withdrawal. While several confrontations took place, for example the fire-fight at Motaain, it was Cosgrove's ability to diffuse situations at the highest level that most contributed to the operation's success.

The final third of the book is destined to be its most controversial. In his roles as commander of first the Army and then the ADF, Cosgrove walked the corridors of power in Canberra. The lad from Paddington now served on the national stage and was in a position to influence and implement security policy. Readers who expect illumination of events that captured the nation's passion during this time will be disappointed. The 'children overboard affair', the decision to join in the invasion of Iraq, and the Abu Ghraib prison scandal are covered, but Cosgrove does not provide much more than what is already known. Instead, he remains loyal to the Western tradition that military officers not comment on affairs of state. Cosgrove limits himself to explanations within the realm of military responsibility and does not speculate on issues of political consideration. For Cosgrove such matters are the subject of a different book by a different author.

Cosgrove found
himself in command
[of INTERFET] only
by chance.

The lad from
Paddington now
served on the
national stage ...

While *My Story*'s target audience is not necessarily a military one, Cosgrove can not avoid including in his book lessons for current and future commanders. Over the course of his career he held 12 command appointments, commencing as a platoon commander in Vietnam and finishing as the Chief of the Defence Force. In between he led 1 RAR, was in charge of the Infantry Centre, and commanded 6th Brigade. He also attended the Marine Corps Staff College at Quantico and the National Defence College in New Delhi. While Cosgrove's service is rich in experience, he identifies no explicit leadership principles. In keeping with the work's self-effacing style, Cosgrove forces the reader to distil leadership lessons from his actions. It was in Vietnam that Cosgrove first learned the need for leaders to take action, to be decisive and to trust in the training of their subordinates. Cosgrove also makes it clear that effective leadership is hard work. It must be cultivated, it must be learned, and it cannot be faked. These lessons, and others, are timeless, applicable to all levels of command, and they helped to shape Cosgrove's decisions and actions over the course of his service.

Cosgrove's affection for the Army runs deep and this is evident throughout *My Story*. He takes immense pride in the capabilities and judgements of the soldiers and officers he led, and in their ability to assume responsibilities far greater than their peers in other walks of life could ever expect to face. Cosgrove recalls the story of a young lieutenant in East Timor who, when confronted by an openly hostile body of withdrawing Indonesian troops, maintained his calm and diffused a potentially explosive situation that could have risked INTERFET's mission. Cosgrove knows that a mission's success is determined by the decisions made by individuals. If *My Story* has a plea for the future it is that Australia must continue to invest in the Army's human capital.

My Story does have weaknesses. Perhaps Cosgrove, now retired, should have spoken more openly about his role in the controversial events that occurred when he was CDF. To have done so, however, would have gone against the book's tone and have undoubtedly ruined a story that is worth reading. *My Story* is the celebration of a man's life in service to his country, and in his devotion to family. From this perspective it delivers.

Cosgrove also
makes it clear that
effective leadership
is hard work.



BOOK REVIEW

Colin S. Gray, *Strategy and History: Essays on Theory and Practice*, Routledge, London, 2006, 234pp.

Reviewed By Lieutenant Colonel Gav Reynolds, Senior Military Fellow,
Land Warfare Studies Centre

With twenty books and three hundred articles to his credit, Colin Gray's name has become synonymous with the analysis of strategy. It must surely have been a daunting task to select eleven essays from his existing collection and use an unpublished twelfth to summarise his current thoughts on strategy. This collection comprises essays that have retained a contemporary resonance and stand the test of time in their original form. *Strategy and History* is a summary of strategic issues over a period of 30 years and, as those who ignore the lessons of history do so to their peril, it is a book that enables strategic lessons to be identified and utilised by the adaptive strategist in his quest to learn and evolve.

Gray is an avid follower of Carl von Clausewitz and uses history as an effective foundation for his investigation of strategy and the bridging role that it plays between politics and the military. This is particularly evident in Part I of the four parts to this collection. The essays that comprise this first part concern those enduring traits of warfare that transcend the fads and fashions associated with individual weapon systems or tactics. Gray's argument throughout is that only a flawed logic would dismiss strategic considerations from a previous era as no longer relevant. Identifying that pre-nuclear military theory is not redundant simply because it predates the existence of nuclear weapons is an important subtext throughout the book. The initial essays highlight the utility of history and raise many questions which, while left unanswered, provide fertile ground for the essays

This collection comprises essays that have retained a contemporary resonance and stand the test of time in their original form.

that follow. The abundant historical examples and the use of the British Empire as a case study evoke images of Australia's own 'fortress island' strategy through the end of the last century.

In 'Why strategy is difficult', Gray explores the place of strategy, which he sees as somewhere between 'political competence and military skill', and focuses on the relationships between key players. He skilfully develops the concept that a successful strategist requires training and must be an expert in the use of force or the threat to use force for the achieving of policy goals. Successful strategy, he asserts, should therefore be entrusted to professional strategists—a notion which may appear to be justification for the creation of a position that could best be filled by one Colin S. Gray. Nonetheless, there is no denying the consistent failure of strategy through the pursuit of political goals beyond military means as illustrated only too poignantly in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Part I concludes on a Clausewitzian note, as Gray advances his argument that the principles of war relate more closely to warfare than to war itself, proposing that a new style of principle be adopted. This final paper was written in 2005 and is designed to provide a template for a strategy transformation within that global superpower, the United States. Gray argues that the so-called 'fourth generation warfare' should be treated with some scepticism as over-reliance on technology can lead to failure on many levels. Indeed, this is a consistent theme throughout the book as Gray reminds the reader that, while technology can change warfare, the nature of war itself remains immutable given that it will always involve a human element. Clarifying the distinction between war and warfare makes sense. In putting politics back into strategy, Gray aims his arguments at the United States, a nation, he argues, which operates well at the tactical and operational level, but is not gifted with the ability to craft effective strategy. Gray's 'new style' principles are carefully crafted and designed to foster strategic planning that is tolerant of flaws—and thus essentially adaptive.

MAD, that infamous acronym for 'mutually assured destruction' returns to parlance in the first essay in Part II. This piece was written some 27 years ago and is imbued with the Cold War flavour of a time when the world faced the very real prospect of a global nuclear war. Gray's reminiscences and descriptions of Cold War-era strategies are timely, despite the fact that this is a vastly different world. The recent resurgence of a nuclear threat, particularly on the border between India and Pakistan, Iran and Israel, and the Korean Peninsula, serve to remind us of the

[Gray] skilfully develops
the concept that a
successful strategist
requires training and
must be an expert in the
use of force ...

somewhat cyclic nature of warfare. Nuclear weapons are still very much a part of our world and the formulation of any strategy must always take into account factors such as the restraint, selectivity, useability and precision of these weapons. The use of such weapons in any military action to produce desired political ends is a conundrum that endures—relentlessly so.

Side by side with the hapless strategist's efforts to grapple with the ongoing presence of doomsday weapons are the theories of cyber war that rose to prominence with the debate surrounding the Revolution in Military Affairs in the 1990s. Gray neatly summarises the different schools of thought, cutting through the apparent contradictions

and infusing a healthy dose of common sense and a clear perspective. While information is vital, admits Gray, it does not hold ground or clear the streets of Baghdad. As in all warfare across the ages, only soldiers can do this and these tasks are no less difficult and bloody for all the technological advances that time ushers in.

Gray's final essay in the second part of this collection deals with arms control. He argues that, throughout history, treaties and arms control measures have largely failed. Gray's assertion is that there is no net security benefit from arms control as it represents a misunderstanding of the basic relationship between weapons and a political posture. Ultimately, 'arms control works when politicians are not strongly motivated to break out of the confining embrace'; yet history is filled to overflowing with a myriad of at times ingenious examples of the flouting of arms control regulations. It is people who make war, not weapons, and Gray's careful dissection of arms control regimes is intriguing and, at times, alarming.

Gray's maxims are prevalent throughout the book, and many of these resonate with truth, including 'proximity breeds issues for dispute'. The fact that geography is an important influence on strategy is surely self-evident. Yet Gray argues passionately in his first essay in Part III that geography remains largely ignored as an element of strategy. Once again, he provides a useful mix of historical examples to illustrate this point and his careful division of physical and political geography is a useful entrée to his next piece on the context of strategic culture. In this essay, Gray explores the link between strategic culture

... the hapless strategist's efforts to grapple with the ongoing presence of doomsday weapons are the theories of cyber war ...

It is people who make war, not weapons, and Gray's careful dissection of arms control regimes is intriguing and, at times, alarming.

and behaviour, bemoaning the fact that culture is an under-explored dimension of strategy, yet adamant that it is just one of many equally important dimensions. While Gray provides an excellent summary of the limited theoretical works on this rather rarefied topic, he lays siege to the ideas proposed by Alastair Iain Johnston using them effectively as a rebound to advance his own approach to the concept of strategic culture. Gray's final essay in this section treats that central conundrum of strategy debates: the moral imperative versus the national interest. Gray provides ten precepts (rules of conduct) which aim to guide the strategist through the moral imperative or, on the other hand, pragmatic justification for national action. He also lists what he terms 'six sources of authority' for moral judgement and ethical reasoning which he treats as a handy 'ready reckoner' for the strategist.

Gray's book provides a broad sweep of strategic theory, a portrait of the role of the strategist and the myriad influences on strategy. His final comments turn to the future with a useful piece that summarises his thoughts as a strategist and his view on the enduring aspects of war as well as the continuing need for strategic analysis. His avowed 'world view' is a practical summation of the concepts, ideas and realities that have both underpinned and dominated his essays. He completes his collection with the brave forecast that strategy is the key to the future—albeit a highly developed and honed strategy, a much more refined version of its current form.

Gray's collection of essays provides an excellent treatise on strategy. In addition, the blending of the essays over a significant time-frame illustrates the way in which strategists have searched for their place amongst policy and defence planners as the global context has evolved. This is particularly evident in the essay 'New directions for strategic studies?' which was published in 1992 and highlights the lack of strategic direction following the end of the Cold War. A fascinating discussion, this forms a continuing theme throughout the book, exploring the role of the strategic theorist and the relevance of strategic studies in reducing the risk of nuclear—and conventional—war. This collection of essays, while merely indicative of Colin Gray's contribution to the recent evolution of strategic thought, is a thought provoking and informative body of work. This book is a welcome addition to the libraries of those with an abiding interest in military strategy and, more significantly, has the ability to assist politicians and bureaucrats, military planners and commanders, in the shaping of strategy in today's complex world.

[Gray] completes his
collection with the brave
forecast that strategy is
the key to the future ...

BOOK REVIEW

The Cambridge History of Warfare, edited by Geoffrey Parker,
New York, Cambridge University Press, 2005, 432pp.

Reviewed by Anthony Robinson, FDI Associate, Canberra

With every major conflict, there is a temporary period when titles that focus on war and conflict move from the back of the bookstore to the front. Many of these works, while valuable by themselves, often look at one conflict and sometimes one battle without considering the evolution of warfare. Placing individual conflicts in the context of millennia of human competition, such as *The Cambridge History of Warfare*, provides for a richer understanding of contemporary, and perhaps future, conflicts.

The Cambridge History of Warfare is written in an accessible style and fills the void between earnest, academic theoretical works and superficial approaches that do not satisfy the more discerning student of history. It provides a good reference source for history students, from undergraduate through to those undertaking postgraduate studies. In addition, casual readers, seeking a good read and or an A-to-Z about warfare, strategy and history, will find the book enjoyable and a useful addition to any reference library.

The editor and contributing author, Geoffrey Parker, is a Professor of History at the Ohio State University and has written or edited more than thirty books. His latest work is the result of collaboration with six other contributors. These contributors include Williamson Murray and the distinguished and much published US scholar Victor Davis Hanson, another aficionado of the Western way of war. The result has been carefully collated to produce the answer to the question: how did the 'Western way of war' become so dominant? The editor puts forward the proposition that the 'Western way of war' rests upon five foundations: technology, discipline, an aggressive military tradition, an extraordinary capacity to respond rapidly to challenges,

... the 'Western way
of war' rests upon
five foundations ...

and the use of capital rather than manpower to achieve victory. The combination of these factors has ensured Western predominance over the ages. Although the work takes an unashamedly Eurocentric view of warfare, it acknowledges the military effectiveness of adversaries.

In the introduction of the book, the editor makes the claim that 'Religious and ideological constraints have seldom interfered with either the discussion or the conduct of war in the West'. St Augustine may disagree. 'Who pays and why' is as important in the western way of war as 'Who fights and why'. It is the ability to organise long-term credit, and therefore the existence of a secure and sophisticated capital market, to fund public borrowing in wartime which represented a crucial 'secret weapon' of the West.¹

The work covers five eras, 'the age of massed infantry' from 600 BCE to 300 AD, 'the age of fortifications' from 300 AD to 1500 AD, 'the age of guns and sails' from 1500 to 1815, and the last section covers 'the age of mechanised warfare', from 1815 to 2004. The second chapter, titled 'From Phalanx to Legion', superbly written by Victor Davis Hanson, provides a fascinating dissertation on the 'Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA)' brought about by Rome. This RMA radically changed the structure and subsequent lethality of 2nd-century BCE warfare. Hanson describes this change as the: '... Roman way of war thus stood in stark contrast to the chaos of the Hellenic military style ... mobility and fluidity, not naked force, and the short sword, not the pike, gave new-found lethality to Roman infantry.'²

However, the Roman way of war, as with all other ways, had its own weaknesses. Hanson describes how two specific and very different battlefield environments, the narrow flat terrain found at Cannae in 216 BCE and the open treeless plains of Carrhae, resulted in the annihilation of Roman fighting forces.

Overall, the work is balanced and presents an objective view of warfare and strategy throughout the ages. As such, the reviewer was perplexed to read the editor's comparison of US President George W. Bush and Adolph Hitler in the epilogue:

In the 1930s only one European leader really wanted war: Adolph Hitler; in the first years of the twenty-first century, only one world leader really wanted war with Iraq: George W. Bush. In both cases, the war that most of the world desperately opposed broke out.³

... the work is
balanced and presents
an objective view of
warfare and strategy
throughout the ages.

Most historians and commentators agree that history has not yet decided on the wisdom or otherwise of US-led 2003 invasion of Iraq. The editor's observation is a little premature to be incorporated into works of history, published less than three years after the event, with the outcome still in doubt.

In his concluding chapter, Parker summarises his formula for the future of the western way of warfare as:

The future of the western way of war, and son of the western way of life and the advantageous economic system that sustains it, ultimately depends on three things: a sustained ability to manage international crises and prevent them from turning into armed conflicts, the outcomes of which is always unpredictable; the continued willingness to pay (in both human and material terms) for defence against perils that are not immediately apparent; and the maintenance of each state's political control over its armed forces ...⁴

In conclusion, the book is an admirable and informative read. It is fully referenced and has an excellent index and notes section. Several unfortunate typographical errors, including one on the first page, fail to disguise the significant effort put into producing this work of history.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Geoffrey Parker (ed.), *The Cambridge History of Warfare*, Cambridge University Press, 2005; p. 9.
- 2 Parker, p. 41.
- 3 Ibid, p. 429.
- 4 Ibid, p. 428.



LETTERS AND COMMENTARY

TO THE EDITORS

Congratulations on publishing, in the *Winter 2006 AAJ*, the article by Captain Daimien Patterson entitled *Army Force Structure - What has gone wrong?*¹

As a staff officer serving with HQ 1st Division, I am simultaneously impressed that Captain Patterson wants to sack me: 'we don't need a Division Headquarters'¹, while he also provides some excellent critical thinking on the future of our Army. This type of critical thinking should be encouraged at all levels within Army, especially if we are to continue succeeding in this long war against violent extremism.

I note two points with regards to Captain Patterson's commentary. Firstly, in this time of high operational tempo for our Army, change is occurring so rapidly that many of Captain Patterson's seemingly radical ideas have now been significantly progressed. Examples include: the widening of on-line/off-line readiness cycles, which in 2006 have been shared, within 1st Division, between 1st Brigade, 3rd Brigade, and 7th Brigade; the consolidation of Reserve units, which is planned to be considerable in 2007; and the impending de-linking of 5/7 RAR into two mechanised Battle Groups.

Secondly, I applaud Captain Patterson's desire to eliminate Army's *Ettamogah Pub* force structure, but I note one word of caution with regards to his views on the rank of Major being worn by Battle Group Operations Officers (OPSO). I make the important distinction here regarding *Battle Group* OPSOs. In Army we have eight Battle Groups, which at present can be selected from, and centred on, a maximum of 12 units, from 1st Division, Special Operations Command, and 16th Aviation Brigade, as follows:

- Ready Battalion Group, centred on 1 RAR or 2 RAR;
- Follow-on Battalion Group, centred on 1 RAR or 2 RAR;
- Airborne Battle Group, centred on 3 RAR;

1 CAPT Daimien Patterson, 'Army Force Structure - What has gone wrong?', *Australian Army Journal*, Vol. 3, No. 2, Winter 2006, p. 180

LETTERS AND COMMENTARY

- Mechanised Battle Group, centred on 1 AR or 5/7 RAR;
- Cavalry Battle Group, centred on 2 Cav Regt or 2/14 LHR;
- Motorised Battle Group, centred on 6 RAR;
- Special Forces Battle Group, centred on SASR or 4 RAR; and,
- Aviation Battle Group, centred on 1 Avn Regt or 5 Avn Regt.

Each Battle Group may be centred on any combination of units shown above, but they are always complemented in their combined-arms effects by combat support and combat service support units throughout Army, and indeed Defence and coalition partners.

Army therefore has two types of units: those units that provide the centre (or core) of Battle Groups, and those units that support the Battle Group effect. Thus, units upon which Battle Groups are centred actually *expand* when a Battle Group is formed, while units that support the Battle Group effect actually *contract* under the same circumstances.

I therefore agree with Captain Patterson that units supporting Battle Groups do not need Majors as OPSOs because, when Army forms Battle Groups, these units get smaller. However, for units that provide the core of Army's eight Battle Groups, which in turn increases the core unit's span of responsibility, I strongly disagree.

It should be noted that in recent times, Townsville-based Battle Group HQ has received challenges from the Directorate of Officer Career Management – Army (DOCM-A) regarding the preference in 1 RAR and 2 RAR to hold Majors for a third year in those Battle Groups as OPSOs. The friction between DOCM-A and the Townsville based Battle Groups is caused by career imperatives versus operational effect. This has resulted in some Majors in 1 RAR and 2 RAR taking significant personal risk, regarding Staff College selection, to remain for a third year in either Battle Group. The fact that this friction occurs is emblematic of Army's difficulties in digesting the broad implications of the *Hardening the Networked Army* plan, which holds Battle Grouping and warfighting as core outputs.

In closing, I would note that Captain Patterson makes a significant point about rank levels in all Army units, and Army's *Ettamogah Pub* force structure. Perhaps, given current personnel shortages and high operational tempo, now is the time to appoint Captains as Combat Team Commanders in order to provide even greater influence for our Battle Group OPSOs in the *Hardened and Networked Army*.

Chris Field
Lieutenant Colonel
G3 HQ 1 Div

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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

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

The *Australian Army Journal* reserves the right to edit contributions in order to meet space limitations and to conform to the journal's style and format.

GENERAL STYLE

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

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

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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

BIOGRAPHIES

Authors submitting articles for inclusion in the journal should also attach a current biography. This should be a brief, concise paragraph, whose length should not exceed eight lines. The biography is to include the contributor's full name and title, a brief summary of current or previous service history (if applicable) and details of educational qualifications. Contributors outside the services should identify the institution they represent. Any other information considered relevant—for example, source documentation for those articles reprinted from another publication—should also be included.