



# Australian Army Journal

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- Seeking Victory Against Hybrid Adversaries: The Changing Character of Twenty-first Century Threats and How to Fight Them
- Pure Manipulation: ISIL and the Exploitation of Social Media
- Logistics, Strategy and Tactics: Logistics in the Formation of the Medium-weight Army
- Regional Special Operations Force Capacity Building: An Asymmetric Australian Maritime Strategy
- The Capture of *Unit 621*: Lessons in Information Security Management from the North Africa Campaign
- Paid Volunteers: Experiencing Reserve Service and Resignation
- Enhancing the Army's Urban Warfighting Capability
- Force Protection's Last Resort: Evaluating the Browning Hi-Power Mk III for the Australian Army of Tomorrow

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## E.G. Keogh oration 2015

Professor Audrey Kurth Cronin

E.G. Keogh Visiting Chair in Land Warfare Studies, 2015

The E.G. Keogh Visiting Chair in Land Warfare Studies is an annual visit by a selected eminent academic in strategic or war studies designed to increase the profile of debate on land warfare issues in Australia. The Chair is named after Colonel E.G. Keogh, MBE, ED, (1899 – 1981) who served in the Australian Imperial Forces during both the First and Second World War. He was the founder and editor of the *Australian Army Journal* in 1948, and continued as its editor until 1976. Naming the Visiting Chair after Colonel Keogh recognises his accomplishments in professional military education and his role in ensuring that the Australian Army was well placed to develop a deep understanding the role of land warfare in Australia's unique national security environment. The chosen distinguished Visiting Chair is a person of prominence who, through public engagement and speaking events around Australia, contributes to the rigour of debate on land warfare in the contemporary environment within the Australian Army. The visit included the delivery of the E.G. Keogh Oration. The Visiting Chair was first offered in 2014.

Audrey Kurth Cronin is Distinguished Service Professor (with tenure) and director of the international security program at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia, USA. Prior to that, she was Professor and director of the core course on military strategy at the National War College (2007-2011). She came to the war college from Oxford University, where she was Academic Director of Studies for the Changing Character of War program (2005–2007). She continues as a non-residential Senior Research Associate at Oxford. Before that, she was Specialist

in Terrorism at the Congressional Research Service, advising Members of the US Congress in the aftermath of 9/11. She has also served periodically in the Executive branch of the US government, including in the Office of the Secretary of Defense/Policy, where she drafted portions of the Secretary's strategic plan.

Professor Cronin has a longstanding interest in the question of how conflicts end. While on the faculty at Oxford University, she completed *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, her fourth book, published by Princeton University Press. She also wrote *Ending Terrorism: A Strategy for Defeating Al-Qaeda*, a policy-oriented Adelphi Paper published by the International Institute for Strategic Studies (London). Notable recent articles include 'ISIS is Not a Terrorist Group', *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2015; 'The "War on Terrorism": What Does it Mean to Win?', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, April 2014; and 'Why Drones Fail: When Tactics Drive Strategy', *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2013. She is widely published in peer-reviewed academic and policy journals, also including *International Security*, *Orbis*, *International Affairs*, *Parameters*, *The Washington Quarterly*, and *Survival*.

Professor Cronin delivered her address on seeking victory against hybrid adversaries to members of the Australian Defence Force, distinguished and other guests and other parties at the Australian Defence College, Canberra, on 14 August 2015.

# Seeking Victory Against Hybrid Adversaries: The Changing Character of Twenty-first Century Threats and How to Fight Them

Audrey Kurth Cronin, Distinguished Professor, George Mason University

It is human nature for the weak to take the measure of the strong. Global underdogs — both states and non-state actors — are taking stock of the strengths and weaknesses of today's dominant military power. And since 2001, the United States has obligingly displayed them. Having been at war for the past fourteen years, the United States and its allies have offered adversaries plenty of opportunity to school themselves on our tactics, operations and technologies. As social networking makes every major operation transparent and tweetable, it could hardly be otherwise.

In the United States, debate about the future of warfare concentrates on the 'what is it' question: what are its characteristics, what are adversaries doing, what should we call it, and what does it mean. 'Hybrid warfare', 'political warfare', 'partisan warfare', 'geopolitical guerrillas' are all different ways of saying the same thing: in the twenty-first century, our enemies have adapted to our strengths, and they are smart and agile enough to do a range of things that avoid them. It has been like this throughout history.

Hybrid adversaries are the ying to our yang, not just in military operations but in the political realm as well. Our enemies *begin* with a political strategy then mix tactics, conventional and irregular forces, state and non-state actors, and open and clandestine means, to single-mindedly pursue that political strategy against a predominant foe. We rely on impressive tactics and technologies, such as armed drones, cyber offense, and special operations, without the overarching framework of a clear and sustainable long-term political strategy. No wonder we are repeatedly surprised. That's the point. We conceive of war too narrowly and then are surprised by the result.

Enemy adaptation is ancient. What is new is that US policymakers have fallen into the habit of assessing warfare outside its broader political context, assuming that our remarkable military instrument (as we call it) is so technologically advanced, so exquisite and so superior that it can fit an ever-expanding array of political tasks.

When Carl von Clausewitz wrote, ‘war is the continuation of politics by other means’, he did not mean that military force could conquer or transform every political problem everywhere. If anything, it was the opposite — politics persist throughout warfare and extend well beyond. For one side to win, the other side must know it has lost. If a political strategy continues and reaches people beyond the battlefield, the loss is but a temporary setback for them. We have no choice but to engage our hybrid adversaries on the broad political front, as well.

So, here I won’t concentrate on the ‘what is it’ question. Others have done that. Besides, all of you are intimately familiar with what is unfolding on the battlefield today. I want to focus on the ‘why’ and ‘how’:

- *Why* is war in the twenty-first century changing?
- *What* are the practical effects?
- *How* must we adapt to fight it and win?

## Why is twenty-first century war changing?

Any smart soldier knows that the nature of war never changes. From the Peloponnesian War to the Persian Gulf War, from Gallipoli to the Global War on Terrorism, war has been a clash of opposing forces, dangerous and uncertain. Clausewitz’s remarkable trinity of primordial violence, chance, and reason persists. The skills of the soldier, the cohesion of fighting units, the effectiveness of training, the honour and integrity of the cause — all of these virtues remain vital to war. They are timeless.

But the *character* of war evolves. War’s character reflects its political, social, and economic context, and that context is different now than it was just a few years ago. To predict the future *character* of war, by which I mean where it is going and how it will look, we must understand major changes in the global context in which we fight. Because these are affecting where the threat is coming from, how we meet it, and whether or not we will win.

There are two key dimensions of change.

First, there has been a transformation in the means and ends of mobilisation — that is, how we tap into the popular passion that is the engine of war. To see and fully understand this, we again have to look back to Clausewitz’s world.



Clausewitz wrote *On War* in reaction to dramatic changes in the character of war at the end of the eighteenth century. Most important was the *levée en masse*, the August 1793 decree that the entire population of France must serve the war effort. This enabled Napoleon to harness the energies of the French people and build an enormous army that swept through Europe. Napoleon was a brilliant general, but he tended to win when he had superior numbers. With more men, he could fight on several fronts and absorb casualties at a rate that his opponents could not equal.

The character of war on the battlefield changed as a result. After they had been drubbed a few times, Napoleon's opponents learned to match him: from a height of 60,000 to 80,000 men in the seventeenth century, armies ballooned by four or five times to 250,000 men on the field (at Borodino), or even 460,000 (at Leipzig) by the early nineteenth century. The literal meaning of the *levée en masse*, referring to the mass conscription that provided all that manpower, is well known.

Now this story might seem immaterial in our age of volunteer armies. But the French *levée en masse* had a second meaning, less remembered but more relevant to our situation today: mass uprising. If conscription was the end, inspiration — leading to uprising — was the means.

Without radicalising, organising and educating the French population in the ideals of the revolution, the French Army could not have achieved numerical superiority. And the key to that process was a far-reaching change in access to information. Between 1789 and 1793, the publishing sector in France was deregulated. Ordinary people suddenly had access to shorter, cheaper and simpler printed materials. Rousing revolutionary images like the storming of the Bastille appeared in a flood of newspapers, pamphlets, and engravings. The number of journals produced in Paris went from 4 to 335, the number of printers quadrupled, and the number of publishers and sellers nearly tripled. People who were literate read aloud to those who were not. The deregulation of the presses democratised communications and helped drive a transformation of French society. Peasants from the lowest classes were inspired and gained a national identity as the 'People', French citizens, holders of popular sovereignty. So when Napoleon began his campaigns, the French nation and the Army were one.

How does this relate to us today? With the growth of mobile phones, the Internet, and related social media, we have experienced a similar, much broader democratisation of communications throughout the world. Over the past twenty-five years, there has been an increase in public access, a sharp reduction in cost,

a growth in frequency of messages, and an exploitation of images on the Internet. As a result, tapping into today's popular passions — Clausewitz's primordial violence, hatred and enmity that is part of every war — has become much easier. Many types of actors can build a mobilising narrative that manipulates diaspora communities and shapes identities.

This is the political context in which we are operating. I first wrote about 'cyber-mobilisation' ten years ago (when inventing words beginning with 'cyber' was all the rage).<sup>1</sup> At that time I was not sure whether the positive or the negative aspects would prevail. Would all this new connectivity spur democratic uprisings of Arab populations against their authoritarian rulers, as in the Arab Spring? Would it spread knowledge and build a stronger global community?

Some of that has occurred: new media combined with old media (like television and newspapers) have diffused knowledge and ideas. Remember the colour revolutions that unfolded during the early 2000s, including the former Yugoslavia's 'Bulldozer Revolution' in 2000, Georgia's Rose Revolution in 2003, and Ukraine's Orange Revolution in the winter of 2004/05? In the long run, I have faith in the power of the democratic ideals that drove these uprisings.

But in the short term, the consequences of this mobilisation from below have been disheartening. We are not seeing mass armies sweep across Europe, but the outcome is just as dramatic because now it is global. Except in states that suppress free speech, the predominant pattern has been the polarisation of political communities and the growth of a powerful underworld of criminal networks, gangs, terrorist groups, human traffickers, warlords, proxies, insurgents and state-supported thugs. Democratic states like ours are stuck between the Scylla of suppressing free speech, and the Charybdis of allowing new forms of mobilisation leading to violence that threatens us all.

This is bad news for those who value stability and predictability. States no longer hold a monopoly on mobilisation. Individual actors and non-state groups of all types can reach broad populations virtually, to form new identities, to mobilise them to join a cause, to indoctrinate or inspire them to carry out violent attacks at home. Most of the time you still need human facilitators, but online radicalisation extends the reach and accelerates the process. At a time of global connectivity, disparate identities are stronger than ever. When the so-called Islamic State's newspaper in October 2014 called for lone wolf-style attacks against the United States, United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia, for example, this was an integral part

of their military strategy. It has become easier to create chaos and disorder, but harder to govern, stabilise, and build. Napoleon's mobilisation built the modern nation-state; this mobilisation undermines it.

The second key dimension of change in contemporary war is a shift in the process of innovation — a buzzword that pops up everywhere from airport bookshops to the Pentagon. In the twentieth century, military technological innovation was all about states, armies, and complex systems. The focus was on capital-intensive programs like aircraft carriers, submarines, armoured vehicles and fighter jets, built by or for the military. Ships, tanks, airplanes and nuclear missiles were exquisite technological marvels, linearly developed, with each one eclipsing its predecessor. These incredible weapons systems helped win the Second World War, and the Cold War too.

Capital ships and fighter jets remain important today and many countries are building them. Australia's Canberra-class Landing Helicopter Docks and amphibious assault ships will be vital to her ability to project power and engage in humanitarian relief missions. But most of these systems are assembled by a few companies with a monopoly, or near monopoly, on their production. Competition is narrow, and their most advanced features are the software in their computers or the weapons they carry aboard. These are sustaining technologies now.

The forefront of twenty-first century technological innovation has shifted elsewhere. The relationship between the military and industry has always been close. But in the twentieth century, the private sector often drew from major systems first developed for the military. To take one example, jet aircraft began as weapons of war and then Boeing Corporation took the lead in establishing their commercial use. Indeed, many military aircraft technologies — such as the crew compartment pressurisation systems, first used in the B-29 bomber — later became essential to high-altitude commercial passenger jets. Now the process is reversed. Disruptive changes come from innovations not even within the scope of the military — yet they keenly affect what militaries do, including whether or not they win.

The diffusion of critical technologies driving this change occurred decades ago through deliberate US government policy, as part of the post-Cold War euphoria of a unipolar, democratised world. Publicly financed basic and applied research from the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s drove the technology boom of the 1990s. With US federal government support, Advanced Research Projects Agency Network (ARPANET) became the Internet. Tax dollars developed the Global Positioning System (GPS). The Google search engine emerged from a National

Science Foundation grant. Apple now earns some US\$40 billion a year, but few realise that all the major components of the iPhone derive from US government programs, including the microchips, the touchscreens, and Siri, the voice activated system. In short, the much-maligned US federal bureaucracy was a net exporter of key information technology throughout the 1990s.

Now it is a net importer of technology. The process has shifted from consolidating power in the hands of a few, to sharing it — or to be more precise, selling it — to the masses. Today, the most important advances in 3-D printing, robotics, information technology, artificial intelligence, and many other emerging technologies come from the private sector, to be harvested by US and allied militaries (or not). And it is not just the US private sector that is charging ahead; sometimes the most important developers of new technologies are in China, India or Europe. This is an important shift. Like the democratisation of communications, this is the democratisation of access to a wide range of emerging, sometimes lethal, technologies. And that means these dangerous, leading-edge technologies are available to our adversaries. In short, taken together, these two dimensions of change mean that war is more unpredictably ‘passionate’ and lethal arms are more accessible.

## **What are the practical effects of the changing character of war?**

The practical effects of these two drivers of conflict — innovation and mobilisation — are easy to see. We have circumscribed the role our governments play in these two realms, and placed greater power in the hands of individuals and private actors. Yet our armies still bear the responsibility to deal with the consequences, promote stability, fight enemies abroad, and protect our citizens at home.

Beginning first with innovation, the proliferation of democratised military technologies to both state and non-state adversaries is an unfolding drama. It is not that our technological edge is slipping. We have given away or sold the key technical tools enabling others to catch up and we are no longer investing in the kinds of basic research that spawned all this creativity some thirty or forty years ago. Now we confront the practical consequences for war.

Take unmanned aerial vehicles, or ‘drones’. There is nothing especially advanced about the capabilities of these aircraft; it is all about the Internet connections, the satellite guidance, and the quality of the photographic lenses they carry. More than

ninety states have unmanned aerial vehicles in their arsenals now; about thirty have or are developing armed drones. I understand that Australia is among them. American companies chafe against restrictions on our export sales because the Chinese, the Israelis, the Turks, the Iranians and many others are gaining global market share. If we do not sell them, others will, they say. It is better for the United States to be the world's leader in drone technology than to yield the lead to the Chinese, they argue. At this late point in the game, they are probably right. State use of drones in traditional war zones is a given.

What is new is that illicit non-state actors are becoming more innovative and unpredictable in how they use emerging technologies. For example, in the past terrorists were generally conservative in their means. According to the US Global Terrorism Database, about 88 per cent of all terrorist attacks since 1970 have used explosives and firearms, familiar technologies that go back hundreds of years. Low-probability, high-impact types of threats, like chemical, biological, nuclear or radiological attacks, represented less than one-quarter of 1 per cent of all terrorist attacks.

With widely accessible emerging lethal technologies, non-state actors' methods are evolving in unexpected ways. Hezbollah recently took an Iranian drone, added sixty pounds of explosives and flew it over Israeli air space. Last autumn, it began to use weaponised drones against Islamic State of Syria and the Levant (ISIL) and al-Nusra in Syria. For its part, ISIL has used reconnaissance drones to assess adversary movements or just demonstrate their prowess to potential recruits. Friendly unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) have been hacked and controlled by insurgents using GPS-signal spoofing.

And it is not just terrorist groups, insurgents and jihadists employing new technologies. Drug smugglers, human traffickers and wildlife poachers use them to trace routes and track quarries. Even ordinary hobbyists can build their own drones and get around manufacturer-installed safeguards. These are private individuals whose actions have public consequences. Power is diffusing as a result.

With all the technological bells and whistles available to coalition forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, the most devastating threat to our soldiers was the improvised explosive device (IED). Armed by amateurs, cheap drones may soon become airborne IEDs, or grouped into swarms that challenge the control of airspace that our armies take for granted. If we continue down the road toward autonomous systems, individuals may some day be able to launch thousands of autonomously piloted UAVs toward a target, then walk away and melt into the crowd. We seek

autonomous systems because they extend the range, reliability and accuracy of our weapons. What will happen when they give anonymity to criminals and terrorists? How will our armies or police forces respond?

Still, as widespread and accessible as these technologies are, we will learn to counter them on the battlefield.

It is the second key dimension — mobilisation — that worries me more. The state's faltering grip on popular mobilisation is changing the causes of war, specifically why violence occurs and who fights. This first became clear with al Qaeda, even more so now with ISIL.

There is a direct connection between ISIL's military conquest on the ground and their ability to mobilise people, in the Middle East and abroad. Recall that the civil war in Syria started in March 2011 with anti-regime protests as part of the so-called Arab Spring. The idealistic individuals who first flocked there wanted to help civilians being massacred by the Assad regime, their heart-wrenching fates broadcast over YouTube and Facebook. Western powers did almost nothing to defend them. ISIL then took advantage of the anger and chaos, and fighters gravitated to the most successful anti-Assad faction.

In neighboring Iraq, ISIL capitalised on sectarian strife to build an alliance with Iraqi Sunni tribal leaders, former anti-US insurgents, and even secular former Iraqi military officers. Met by mass desertions from the US-trained Iraqi army, ISIL swept across Iraq last year. Seeing the results through the Internet and other media, thousands of foreign fighters flocked to the region, about a thousand a month. Many have died fighting there or have been used as human fodder for suicide attacks, though now our governments fear others will return home to carry out attacks.

The so-called Islamic State has capitalised on the ability to mobilise a following through the Internet and every other type of social media tool. Having declared a caliphate, it projects the image of utopia on earth, where individuals can live together in a just and pious society. They do this by demonstrating their power, in gruesome beheading videos for example, or spinning a tale of adventure, in carefully crafted storylines about the joys of living in the caliphate. They do not just want fighters, as al Qaeda did, with its ascetic videos of old men in caves; ISIL is recruiting doctors, teachers, engineers, entire families, and young brides to build their pseudo-state.

With a sophisticated 24-hour online operation and a huge cadre of trained recruiters, ISIL are reaching out to individuals, many of whom have no criminal record, no prior history of involvement in violence, no clear or reliable profile that law enforcement can identify. Then they recruit them either to join the so-called jihad in Iraq and Syria or to kill so-called infidels at home. People heeding this call are usually Muslims, members of diaspora communities from North Africa, the Middle East or South Asia, but not always.

For example, one beautiful 23-year-old American woman named 'Alex', from a deeply religious Christian family in rural Washington State, was recruited earlier this year through emails, Twitter posts, texts and Skype chats — all under the noses of her devoted grandparents, and even as she taught Sunday school and attended church each week. Her English-speaking online recruiter sent care packages with headscarves and Lindt chocolate bars — an allusion to last December's Lindt café hostage siege in Sydney. She converted to Islam and was planning her escape to the Islamic State when her grandparents turned her in to the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Alex is but one example; there are many similar stories in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe and here in Australia.

In a broader sense, changes in the political context are forcing us to recalibrate what it means to be a sovereign state. The primary responsibility of the nation-state is to protect its citizens. To what extent should that include protecting them from external indoctrination and violent mobilisation? The advances of 'hybrid' enemies owe as much to the weaknesses of the governments they oppose as to the military force they use. What does sovereign authority mean? Does it exist if a government cannot or will not defend itself? How about if it is unable to mobilise its own populace?

In Iraq, the Maliki government undermined its own legitimacy by pursuing a hardline pro-Shi'ite agenda, cutting funding to the Sons of Iraq, arresting hundreds of Sunni tribal elders, barring Sunni candidates from elections, and killing peaceful protestors. According to the Congressional Research Service, the United States had spent US\$26 billion on the Iraqi Security Forces alone. Iraq should have had an army able to turn back the advance of ISIL and a police force willing and able to protect the rights and interests of the Sunni minority. They did not. I sincerely hope that the new Iraqi government will be able to rally its inhabitants — Shi'a and Sunni alike — to support and defend it, especially with the help of US and Australian air power. But no matter how much equipment, or how many embedded advisers we provide, external powers will never be able to force them to do so. War is, and always has been, a matter of clashing wills.

So these two broad dimensions are changing war in practical ways. The greater accessibility of lethal technologies means that non-state groups such as human traffickers, pirates and terrorist groups are gaining ground on state armies and navies. And democratised mobilisation is enabling illicit actors like ISIL to tap into popular passions and manipulate susceptible people far from the battlefield. In short, the changing character of war is affecting who fights, why they fight, where they fight, and with what means.

## How must we adapt to fight it?

In this shifting global context, Western military gains have not been translated effectively into the achievement of political goals that serve our national interests. If the top priority is protection of the homeland, then the connection between overseas expeditionary operations and the security of the homeland must be more rigorously analysed and compared against the opportunity costs.

In our efforts to carry out operations ‘by, with, and through’, for example, we have depended on local governments who for local political, cultural, or historical reasons — or maybe just old-fashioned greed — have placed graft and corruption ahead of the welfare of their people and their states. We have no choice but to confront the legitimacy of the governments we are asked to defend if we are to make wise strategic choices about where our armies should fight, and why.

To illustrate, the Islamic State will be defeated, but not directly by the democratic powers. A core part of the myth of the Islamic State is its claim to be a caliphate. If we flood the region with troops, we will supply the pretext for the theological nonsense they spout. They tell their followers the caliphate will soon face what they call the army of ‘Rome’, meaning Christian-majority nations, that will confront them in towns like Dabiq in northern Syria and initiate a countdown to the apocalypse. It would be foolish to play into that narrative. They would use it to mobilise or inspire additional supporters in the region, and the threat of homegrown attacks will grow.

But that does not mean we should be passive. We must attack this threat with sustainable policies that can achieve our political objectives. These include bearing down with punishing air strikes on ISIL targets, supporting the Iraqis and the Kurds as they fight, continuing arms embargos and sanctions, and choking off ISIL smuggling routes. While containing them militarily, we should greatly increase aid to civilians fleeing the fighting.



More importantly, we have no choice but to attack the message. We can kill a prominent figure such as Anwar Al-Awlaki, the charismatic cleric from al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula who was targeted by a US drone attack in Yemen, but his videos and speeches persist on the web. Indeed, they are more popular than ever. The Tsarnaev brothers who carried out the Boston Marathon bombing in 2013, and the Kouachi brothers who orchestrated the Paris Charlie Hebdo massacre in 2015 were both inspired by Al-Awlaki videos, accessed over YouTube. Al-Awlaki died in 2011. That is a key difference between today's political mobilisation and the *levée en masse* of the French Revolution — messages and images appearing on the Internet are immortal.

The only way to finally end this threat, both at home and abroad, is to build a viable political strategy that undercuts ISIL's message and interrupts their ability to capture the imaginations of Muslims and non-Muslims alike. Fortunately, they are helping us. They have claimed to establish a state, yet most of the indigenous populations of Iraq and Syria have fled. With 14 million displaced people or refugees, it is the worst such crisis since the Second World War. No wonder ISIL is desperate to attract new people — they have denuded their territory of those who normally live there.

The so-called Islamic State is not governing their territory as a utopia, and they cannot sustain this phony image. Foreigners who travel to Iraq and Syria to join the Islamic State are killed, sometimes as they flee the harsh conditions. Brave activists like the group Raqqa is Being Slaughtered Silently send out videos of ISIL atrocities, brutal punishments, or long lines for bread. The Islamic State's revenues are not infinite. Banks can only be looted once, oil revenues are depressed, and captured Iraqi military equipment is breaking down. Extortion of the local population now means a tax of up to 50 per cent on salaries and 20 per cent on contracts and businesses. We should broadcast the hypocrisy of this hell on earth.

Instead of taking advantage of these weaknesses, we sometimes actually help ISIL mobilise. They regularly claim 'credit' for attacks they had nothing to do with, and we trumpet the claims. ISIL has ties with some 35 groups that have announced support or allegiance. This projects an image of power, while also building into the movement a source of weakness through infighting and overstretch. It is not a seamless jihadist movement; it is more like a global civil war. And many of the so-called ISIL affiliates are al Qaeda rejects. In fact, ISIL and al Qaeda have been mortal enemies. We must take care not to help ISIL by lionising them.

We must also be much smarter in using our brilliant technologies to help us more than they help them. The same technologies that facilitate their recruiting enable authorities to track social media and intervene when a plot is underway or a recruit has departed the county. Experts use grisly ISIL videos to geolocate ISIL training camps. Cell phone data and social media posts help us target air strikes. But online tracking means having access to communications that democratic countries define as free speech. For some, this represents an alarming expansion of the power of the state, but I believe we have no choice.

At the heart of adapting to fight 'hybrid' wars is ensuring that our use of violence reinforces a clear political strategy, and that means facing up to the strategic as well as tactical importance of communications. Measures to counter the adversary's messaging and mobilisation will often be non-kinetic, but they will directly affect what happens on the battlefield and in our home countries. Twitter, Facebook, Google, Instagram, Tumblr and other social media sites may consider themselves neutral platforms, but they regularly serve as purveyors of enemy propaganda, especially when they allow encrypted sites that our security services cannot read. They should be held accountable for their role in this process. If online geniuses can create algorithms that track every click we make to sell us things, they can figure out how to prevent ISIL from using the vitriol of Neil Prakash, and others, to recruit young Australians who are vulnerable or bored. ISIL's online campaign is not free speech, but a form of virtual mobilisation that can threaten our societies.

## Conclusion

In recent years, we have tried to act as if politics and the use of military force are separable — online platforms were virtual utopias where free expression and the human spirit could blossom. Tactical resources such as drones and special operations forces took the place of an integrated political strategy. We have tried to leave behind a messy world and rely upon emerging technologies as the answer to tomorrow's wars.

But the character of war is moving toward democratised access to technologies that facilitate both popular mobilisation for war and widespread participation in the conflicts that do break out. There is no such thing as a strictly military conflict and never has been. We cannot avoid engaging in the political dimension of war. That is where the passions of the people reside, the source of deadly violence, the explanation for why war's reason and chance may not predominate even when we have the better technology going forward.

We must adjust. In the twentieth century we counted on popular mobilisation to serve the interests of the state. Governments raised armies. When a country was militarily defeated, its political leaders surrendered and the people knew they were defeated. That time is over. Terrorism was a provocative and powerful non-state use of force in 2001 because it affected a wide range of audiences throughout the world. Osama bin Laden was not just trying to intimidate the American people; he was demonstrating his strength and power to young men that he wanted to recruit to al Qaeda from dozens of countries.

ISIL is even more determined to recruit through its provocative use of violence, its conventional military campaign sweeping across Iraq, and its establishment of a so-called caliphate reaching back to the seventh century. Unlike al Qaeda, the so-called Islamic State is trying to recruit an entire society, including professionals, women, and whole families. Some of their targets live here, and in my country too. As we determine how to respond to this threat, we have no choice but to factor political mobilisation into the causes and the effects of our military operations.

The good news is that ISIL will fail — because creating and governing a new state has become more difficult than ever. We, on the other hand, come from strong nations with proud traditions of democracy and justice. We will cooperate, adapt and prevail. Even as we have worked by, with and through some regional coalition members who were found wanting, the United States and Australia have stood shoulder to shoulder, close friends and solid allies. Our partnership has been invaluable; the dedication, grit and determination of the Australian Army, inspiring. With a smart, sustainable strategy, conceived, built and implemented together, we will triumph against these complex global threats. ■

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## Social media

# Pure Manipulation: ISIL and the Exploitation of Social Media

Captain Sean Childs

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### Abstract

Social media and strategic communication sit at the heart of the war of ideas between the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and the West. The West is critically vulnerable to ISIL's use of social media, shrewdly exploited in the recruitment of potential jihadists. This article argues that the Western world is losing the digital propaganda war waged by ISIL. At the strategic level, ISIL plans, synchronises and coordinates its social media efforts. Commanders provide operational updates and select content relevant to their strategic needs. From the battlefield, Western recruits tweet predominantly in their native language. Disseminators residing in the West and not officially aligned with ISIL, share and pass on ISIL's propaganda. These proxy disseminators perform the vast majority of ISIL's strategic narrative propagation. ISIL uses social media technologies that make the discovery and tracking of its recruitment propaganda difficult, exploiting the 'deep web' and 'dark web', severely hampering Western tracking agencies' efforts to identify and isolate it. This article concludes that the West's qualified

moderate voice must be legitimised, encouraged and empowered to win the war of ideas. To do this the West must reform its strategic communication approach; it must comprehensively increase the volume of proactive participation in the ideological discourse conducted within the social media space.

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## Introduction

Extremist Islam's twenty-first century iteration of jihad<sup>1</sup> against the West is a war of ideas with the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) placed strategically at the vanguard.<sup>2</sup> Central to ISIL's jihad is strategic communication through social media, particularly Twitter. This communication is deliberately designed to persuade the entire global community of Muslims, and particularly its youth, bound together by ties of religion and referred to in this article as 'Ummah', to join the jihad. ISIL's 'methodical and planned' use of social media in its recruitment to the war of ideas represents a major threat to the West.<sup>3</sup> Essential to this recruitment are those globally diffuse supportive digital natives of the virtual Ummah who act as message disseminators and are each a pivotal part of an inbuilt redundancy network design. It is in this sense that ISIL has deftly turned the information age to its distinct advantage, mastering the use of social media and its connected technology as a formidable information weapon that mobilises grassroots support.

Significantly, globalisation in the information age has resulted in an ongoing detribalisation of the West and a retribalisation of the Ummah. Detribalisation acts to effectively dilute the West's dominant paradigms, while retribalisation is empowering the Ummah. ISIL's narrative is informed by an ancient religious and cultural memory, one that draws on Islam's history of protecting its ideology and traditions. The West's counter-narrative is influenced by a modern secular memory, induced by democracy and globalisation.

ISIL's jihad across the borders of Syria and Iraq is an extension and evolution of the war of ideas that is rooted in opposing eschatological cultural narratives, their ideological dichotomy one of ultimate ends.<sup>4</sup> On one side is ISIL's utopian desire for Islamic purity, encompassed by a dominant Islam emanating from a caliphate grounded in sharia law.<sup>5</sup> On the other side is the West's concept of democracy, globalisation and the universality of human rights.<sup>6</sup> ISIL maintains Islam's traditional extremist strategic narrative, albeit with an updated amplification more effectively propagated through social media.

## ISIL and the social media threat to the West

Social media consists of Internet web pages and applications such as Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Flickr and many more. It is an interactive model of communication that facilitates a two-way exchange of information between the broadcaster and recipient, but it also blurs the boundaries of the more usual methods of mediated creation of meaning. It allows users to create and share digital content, while simultaneously discovering and interacting with like-minded audiences. Social media's significance and value to ISIL lies in its ability to increase message dissemination. Its ability to find and galvanise like-minded audiences extends well beyond previous two-way communication models and is its primary method of influence, particularly among potential recruits to jihad within the West's youth.<sup>7</sup> In essence, social media allows ISIL to compress the time and space within which it interacts with potential recruits, therefore amplifying the intent and effects of its strategic narrative.<sup>8</sup>

ISIL's use of social media is a threat to the West for diverse, yet interrelated reasons. The information age and social media's technology, its audiences, system, related jurisprudence and ability to shape perception, are all cleverly employed by ISIL against the West in the war of ideas.

### Technology and audience

Access to social media technology is cheap and facilitated by no more than a simple power supply (see Figure 1).<sup>9</sup> The simplicity of use and widespread nature of its technology means that ISIL's propaganda dissemination is lateral and almost instantaneous.<sup>10</sup> Information spreads broadly and quickly among users and audiences with few geographical constraints.<sup>11</sup> ISIL's globally diffuse supporters and disseminators are in fact each part of an inbuilt redundancy network designed to ensure that any muting of a supporter's messaging does not curtail information spread.<sup>12</sup> This makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the West to prevent ISIL distributing propaganda.

ISIL's manipulation of technology is well suited to its target audience of potential Western recruits, the majority of whom are 'barely out of high school',<sup>13</sup> perceive themselves as socially marginalised<sup>14</sup> and are therefore readily receptive to ISIL's strategic narrative. These potential recruits are digital natives<sup>15</sup> of the virtual Ummah<sup>16</sup> — individuals who are immersed and fluent in the use of social media and who 'think and process information fundamentally differently from their predecessors'.<sup>17</sup> Their changed thinking pattern has made each of them

targetable 'netizens',<sup>18</sup> individuals who are globally distributed, but instantly digitally connectable, and therefore easily accessible to ISIL and their recruitment tactics. Catalysed by their own perception of marginalisation, each 'contribute[s] to the whole intellectual and social value and possibilities' of ISIL's strategic narrative, which is aimed at mobilising a globalised virtual Ummah to jihad.<sup>19</sup>



Figure 1<sup>20</sup>

### Globalisation and mediated memory

One consequence of globalisation in the information age has been the West's ongoing detribalisation, with users now possessing an even greater ability to access and process knowledge from across the world.<sup>21</sup> In other words, global information access in the digital era is facilitating more diverse views and opinions within the West that challenge dominant Western paradigms, and which serve to erode a consensus that relies on a 'sense of identity, belonging and cause'.<sup>22</sup> Conversely, this same information-age globalisation is enabling the virtual Ummah's retribalisation<sup>23</sup> from a grassroots level,<sup>24</sup> allowing both ISIL and its potential extremist recruits to easily engage in a discourse that challenges the West's dominant ideological platform of secular democracy. For them, social media is facilitating 'the perfect place [as] individuals to express themselves while claiming to belong to a community to whose enactment they contribute, rather than being passive members in it'.<sup>25</sup>

Through social media then, ISIL mediates the Ummah's memory. By contextualising history's verifiable facts and drawing out the abstract truths, ISIL claims its jihad is informed, re-imagining the past and connecting with the present in ways that

portray history as more than the accumulation of documented events.<sup>26</sup> Simple content is used to link traditional memory with the ISIL message. A prime example is ISIL's use of cat images in its Twitter content (Figure 2). According to several Koranic references, the prophet Mohammad is said to have loved and cared for cats.<sup>27</sup> The text in Figure 2 refers to Huraira, perhaps a reference to Abu Hurairah, a historical friend of the prophet Mohammad, also a cat lover and a master Hadith<sup>28</sup> storyteller.<sup>29</sup> ISIL's use of the cat in battlefield settings conveys the memory of divinity, directly invoking Islamic traditions, values and beliefs.

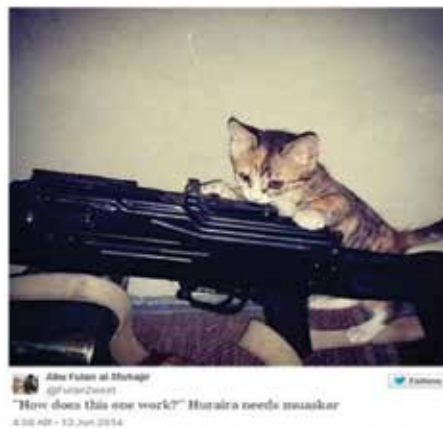


Figure 2<sup>30</sup>

## ISIL's subversion of Western narratives

ISIL's use of social media has enabled it to circumvent Western media's traditional role in communication, thereby providing it greater narrative control over its messaging. In the 1950s, David Manning White postulated that news published in traditional print media was determined by those with the power to decide — the journalist, the editor or the publication's owner.<sup>31</sup> The rise of television news, although less structured, still reflected this model. Power models in social media are not as clear.

### Circumventing the gatekeeper

There is a long-standing recognition that media heavily influences what a society considers its priorities.<sup>32</sup> ISIL's use of social media allows it to exploit these traditional models, bypassing the traditional media's gatekeeper function and creating its own agenda-setting action among its potential recruits. ISIL has



forcefully illustrated this point by directly attacking the West's media industry with consecutive beheadings of American journalists James Foley and Steven Sotloff in August and September 2014.<sup>33</sup> These symbolic acts serve ISIL in three ways, while also powerfully demonstrating its threat to the West. First, ISIL sets the agenda by broadcasting the acts through its social media network. These are then widely reported by Western media outlets. Second, by killing journalists ISIL demonstrates that it does not need the traditional media model to disseminate its message. Third, by dressing the victims in orange jumpsuits similar to those used for jihadist detainees at Guantanamo Bay, ISIL appeals to its audience's sense of retribution against the perceived wrongs perpetrated by the West.

ISIL's use of social media effectively manipulates and subverts the West's traditional news media practices to communicate its narrative. Western media may value objectivity and balance, but news value is often determined by shocking content. The old adage 'if it bleeds it leads' originated in the idea that news content that evokes fear and repugnance also ensures greater audience share. ISIL is well aware of this. It knows its fearful and repugnant content uploaded onto social media will be rebroadcast by the West's media. It is also acutely aware that Western news media's adherence to professional ethical requirements of objectivity and balance can also work in its favour. For example, in response to the call by 120 members of the British Parliament that the British Broadcasting Corporation use the term 'Daesh' in its news reporting rather than the Islamic State,<sup>34</sup> Director General Tony Hall asserted that doing so would 'bias their coverage'.<sup>35</sup>

### **ISIL social media global warriors: proxy disseminators**

Despite the apparent lack of control over messaging in social media, ISIL's strategic social media recruitment approach, driven by Twitter, allows it an extraordinary degree of control.<sup>36</sup> ISIL's message is effectively dispersed through an efficient network<sup>37</sup> in which 'individual and official [Twitter] accounts work in parallel and are tightly integrated'.<sup>38</sup> At the strategic level, ISIL plans, synchronises and coordinates its social media efforts through its official al-Hayat Media Center.<sup>39</sup> At regional levels throughout its area of operations, ISIL's commanders provide operational updates and select content relevant to their strategic needs.<sup>40</sup> From the battlefield, Western recruits tweet predominantly in their native language, providing simple coherence that can be effortlessly broadcast to the West.<sup>41</sup> Finally, and most crucially, disseminators residing in the West and not officially aligned with ISIL share and pass on ISIL's propaganda.<sup>42</sup> These proxy disseminators account for the vast majority of ISIL's strategic narrative propagation.<sup>43</sup>

**Using Western principles: 'lawfare' and freedom of speech**

Western jurisprudence is, in itself, a threat to the West in the face of ISIL's social media. The term 'lawfare', coined in the 1990s by retired US Air Force Major General Charles Dunlap, is an operational focus or 'way to apply legal pressure on the other side of a conflict ... which then potentially forces the enemy to defend themselves in multiple arenas'.<sup>44</sup> Despite the West's intelligent and legally nuanced understanding of lawfare, ISIL's use of social media affords it a significant opportunity to appropriate the concept by staging events that, when digitally recorded and disseminated, will evoke an emotional response among potential recruits.

The following is an effective ISIL strategic communication or 'lawfare' operation facilitated by social media, adapted from an actual event<sup>45</sup>:

1. *The set-up*: ISIL targets Western troops from the minaret of a mosque thereby violating international humanitarian law;
2. *The bait*: Western troops return proportionate fire in accordance with international humanitarian law;
3. *Record it*: ISIL digitally records the West's response;
4. *Strategic communication*: ISIL disseminates the recording via its social media network, highlighting the West's attack on a holy Islamic site;
5. *Lawfare*: an unofficial Western ISIL sympathiser presents the recording as evidence to a judicial forum under a false pretext;
6. *Recruitment effect*: the probable failure of the legal proceeding further reinforces the perception of the West attacking Islam in the minds of potential recruits.

The West's highly valued freedom of speech also presents a problem. Freedom of speech emerged from the liberal belief in the importance of 'a space where the individual is free from social coercion'.<sup>46</sup> Social media is also a space, but its digital nature creates challenges for freedom of speech and censorship laws. Legally proving ISIL-generated social media content being shared by unofficial ISIL proxy disseminators (or any individual who shares the content, including journalists) is seditious is extremely difficult. It would be farcical, for example, to assert in a court of law that the tweeting of a cat atop a Kalashnikov is an act of sedition.

Legal parameters aside, to effectively censor and block ISIL's propaganda, the West must first be aware of its existence. The technology available to and utilised by ISIL's social media practitioners makes the discovery of its recruitment propaganda difficult. ISIL's social media network is designed to drive potential

recruits to the deep<sup>47</sup> and dark web,<sup>48</sup> internet spaces that are ‘dynamically generated [that] standard search engines never find’.<sup>49</sup> Sophisticated and expensive software is required to laboriously scour the deep web, with efforts continually frustrated by proxy disseminators simply changing their identity, shutting down sites and establishing new ones.<sup>50</sup> Encryption software also makes detection increasingly difficult, with open-source software such as Freenet allowing users to share content anonymously.<sup>51</sup> The sharing of content at close range is also almost undetectable through the use of Bluetooth PAN (personal area network) technology.<sup>52</sup> Evidence suggests potential recruits share content between their hand-held devices on a ‘pocket-to-pocket’ basis.<sup>53</sup>

### Promises and perception

David Galula provided a prescient warning in 1968 stating, ‘the insurgent [is] judged by what he promises, not by what he does ... the counterinsurgent [is] judged on what he does, not on what he says’.<sup>54</sup> In other words, ISIL’s promise of a utopian Islamic caliphate, whether achievable or not, is an easier narrative to disseminate than that of the West. For the West, the measure of success lies in achieving tangible results within the bounds of liberal democratic norms. Among other things, effective strategic communication requires that perception is managed in some way. Social media, with its perception as user generated and the speed at which it can be disseminated assumes the guise of authenticity. Among potential recruits, ISIL’s use of social media as a platform creates an impression of content spontaneously produced and shared by jihadists on the battlefield. What is perceived as user-generated content is actually constructed to reflect truth and jihadists’ experiences. That the narrative is strategic rather than unmediated is hidden beneath constructed authenticity that belies the reality of ISIL’s purposefully designed narrative and controlled dissemination.

## Narrative and counter-narrative

ISIL’s strategic narrative continues an extremist jihadi tradition that consists of five key messages<sup>55</sup>: Islam is under attack from the West; jihad is essential to defend Islam from attack; ISIL’s defence is piously correct and just; it is the duty of all Muslims to join the jihad; and finally, the re-establishment of a caliphate will secure Islam’s future. The narrative is informed by a rich and complex enmeshing of ideology, tradition and common sense.<sup>56</sup> In what Ann Swidler describes as ‘culture shaping action’, ‘belief and ritual practice directly shape action for the community that adheres to a given ideology’.<sup>57</sup> For ISIL and its potential recruits,

the compelling ideology is Islam, the tradition is fighting the infidel or the West, and the common sense is that jihad is the natural path of Islam's history. Importantly, ISIL's audience of potential Western digital native netizens of the virtual Ummah informs its narrative in a modern way. For example, ISIL responds to its audience's way of thinking through the use of video games (Figure 3), hoping that a targeted individual will perceive the potentially fatal choice to join the jihad as no more than a simple game, or that the life of a jihadist is normal and fun (Figure 4).

Figure 3<sup>58</sup>



The West's counter-narrative is informed by the nature of the West itself, which encompasses a diverse international community of nation-states grounded in an accepted liberal democratic paradigm that maintains the agreed international status quo. It comprises a multitude of key actions including counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, the prevention and restructuring of failed states, the targeting and disruption of terrorist funding, national interests and the free flow of trade.<sup>59</sup> Secular democracy is its ideology, free trade and globalisation its tradition, and the right to freedom its common sense. To counter ISIL's strategic narrative in the social media domain, the West, led by the United States, has launched a Twitter campaign known as #thinkagainturnaway. The campaign relies on the West's self-perception of its ability to prevent recruits from joining the jihad through reason (Figure 5) and a common unity between the West and Muslim adherents (Figure 6).

Countering ISIL's war of ideas can be achieved by attacking its social media centre of gravity. The West must recognise, appropriate and prioritise social media as its own formidable information weapon. It must introspectively reform its strategic communication approach and clearly delineate between the two separate digital native audiences of the West and the Ummah, detach their narratives and those who give them voice.



Figure 4<sup>60</sup>

The West must begin to reverse its globalised, detribalising nature by retribalising its own audience. It must mobilise the majority to recognise that the luxury of liberal democratic secular freedom carries with it the quid pro quo of obligation — the obligation to actively defend and export liberal democracy's ideals. With clarity, simplicity, common intelligibility and realistic interpretation, targeted social media content must evoke the imagination and actively promote its culture's rewards.<sup>61</sup>



Figure 5 (courtesy of Twitter.com)

The West must recognise the tribalised virtual Ummah and acknowledge that Islam's fate can only be decided by Islam's faithful. To act differently will serve only to corroborate ISIL's strategic narrative. The Ummah's qualified moderate voice must be legitimised, encouraged and empowered to win its own war of ideas. To do this, it must comprehensively increase the volume of its proactive participation in the ideological discourse conducted within the social media space. To that end, the West's counter-narrative's status quo of counterterrorism, counterinsurgency, and prevention and restructuring of failed states is no longer relevant for ISIL. ISIL has moved beyond these confines. By force it has acquired land, created a space, established a presence, renewed an ancient ideology and garnered and projected power to become a nascent state coercively asserting its legitimacy. It must be offensively treated as such. The West's narrative must be the narrative not simply a counter-narrative.



Figure 6 (courtesy of Twitter.com)

## Conclusion

Social media and strategic communication are at the centre of the war of ideas between ISIL and the West. The West is critically vulnerable to ISIL's use of social media due to its technology, its audiences, the system, its related jurisprudence and ability to shape perception, all of which are shrewdly worked by ISIL in the recruitment of potential jihadists. Significantly, ISIL's recruitment strategy relies on those globally diffuse and supportive digital natives of the virtual Ummah who spread the message of jihad from within a network with an inbuilt redundancy. In other words, the silencing of one or more supporters' messages does not diminish information spread, making it difficult if not impossible for the West to prevent ISIL's propaganda distribution. Most importantly, globalisation in the

information age is facilitating a detribalisation of the West and a retribalisation of the Ummah. The dominant paradigms of the West are being diluted by its detribalisation while, conversely, the Ummah is being empowered by its retribalisation. ISIL's narrative is informed by an antique religious and cultural recollection, one that appeals to Islam's history of protecting its ideology and traditions. The West's counter-narrative is progressed by a modern secular memory, persuaded by democracy and globalisation.

The West and the moderate Ummah can win. However this is a victory that will be a long time in the making, expensive and difficult. ■

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## Logistics

# Logistics, Strategy and Tactics: Logistics in the Formation of the Medium-weight Army

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### Abstract

The friction of war, heavily influenced by logistic factors, ultimately determines how military capabilities will perform. Despite the intended strategy and tactics of a force, captured in the operational concepts developed by Army's staff and established in principles employed in the introduction into service of new capabilities, logistics reveals itself to be much more than a mere afterthought. This article examines how often overlooked logistics factors, considered in unison with strategy and tactics, influences the outcomes of military transformation and capability development. In examining the Australian Army's aspirations to develop its combat weight and analysing the concept of the US Army Stryker Brigade Combat Team, this article draws a number of lessons worthy of consideration by Army's capability development and concept writers.

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*Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult. The difficulties accumulate and produce a friction, which no man can imagine who has not seen war. ... So in war, through the influence of an infinity of petty circumstances, which cannot be properly described on paper, things disappoint us, and we shall fall short of the mark.*

Carl von Clausewitz<sup>1</sup>

While Clausewitz's idea of 'friction' reflects the vagaries of chance in war, he could quite easily have been referring to the ability of apparently routine logistical matters to define the way armies actually fight. Certainly, in shaping and influencing the way armies function operationally, there is no other factor that exerts as consistent or pervasive an influence as logistics. This is a point of particular importance to the Australian Army which, over the past decade, has sought to increase its combat power through its modernisation initiatives. Since the introduction of the Hardened and Networked Army initiative, Army has spent the better part of a decade restructuring and developing new capabilities 'to afford [it] greater protection and firepower'.<sup>2</sup> Army must also devote increased attention to the logistics element of this aspiration so as to understand the points of friction that might, to use Clausewitz's term, initially appear 'petty', so that when it does take new capabilities to war, it does not 'fall short of the mark'.<sup>3</sup>

Hardened and Networked Army was introduced at a time when well-resourced larger militaries such as the US Army, which were designed to meet defunct Cold War-era contingencies, were being reshaped to reflect expeditionary-oriented force structures that enabled greater strategic reach and operational mobility.<sup>4</sup> Conversely, obsolete equipment and capability deficiencies compelled the Australian Army to pursue a capability trajectory that ran contrary to the trend of 'lightening', as described by then Chief of Army Lieutenant General Peter Leahy.<sup>5</sup> This transformation trend has continued in Plan Beersheba, a restructure that standardises nominally light, motorised and heavier brigades to achieve a sustainable, ostensibly medium-weighted force. The transformation has also influenced operational concepts such as the recently proposed joint archipelagic manoeuvre concept developed to support Australia's maritime strategy.<sup>6</sup> However, the sustainment initiatives and logistic concepts that are the necessary accompaniments to Army's long-term capability direction remain largely absent. This is cause for concern, and suggests that Army may not recognise the source of much of the 'friction' experienced during operations. Before Army 'builds on Beersheba', it is therefore essential to review how its present state reflects the intentions of the past, and whether its capacity to sustain its capabilities will suit its aspirations.<sup>7</sup>

This article will describe the way logistic factors, often evident in operational friction, can dominate the outcomes of military transformation. As Deborah Cowen explains, military logistics must not be a 'practical afterthought' in modernisation, but should be 'the calculative practice that defines thought'.<sup>8</sup> The US Army's creation of the medium-weight Stryker brigade combat team will be used as a case study to illustrate how sustainment-induced 'friction', evident in the crucible of training and warfare, shaped the way this force ultimately fought. This case offers clear parallels and, by extension, lessons relevant to the Australian Army's modernisation approach. It demonstrates that, while operational concepts and transformation initiatives may be important intellectual artefacts, unless explicitly proven by the study of logistics such concepts should be deemed purely aspirational in nature. As the second of two articles, this study offers a direct, practical and pragmatic examination of why logistics, strategy and tactics must always be balanced in the development of operational concepts and in the conduct of actual military practice, particularly if their implications are considered broadly and in terms of the theory of war.<sup>9</sup>

## Preparing for war – logistics in the design of armies

When Phillip, King of Macedonia, forbade the use of wagons and reduced the number of followers within his army by three quarters, he produced not only the leanest, but also the most effective fighting force in Europe and Asia. He bequeathed to his son, Alexander, the ancient world's most operationally mobile army, an army that sustained the longest expeditionary land campaign ever undertaken.<sup>10</sup> At a glance, it may appear that reducing the size of the Macedonian logistic train, or demanding that soldiers carry their own equipment and sustenance, was the key to Alexander's operational mobility. Such a view certainly reflects the modern military message that managing the 'tooth-to-tail' ratio is at the heart of military effectiveness. However, as Donald Engels contends, it was actually Alexander's meticulous attention to the provisioning of his army that allowed him to advance his force through one of the most inhospitable regions of the world. Moreover, he employed a force that was specifically designed and formed with an operational concept based on an understanding of the logistic factors that were to underpin its true combat potential.

Through Engels's now widely cited portrayal, Alexander the Great has been shown to have mastered the amalgamation of logistics, strategy and tactics to design an army that successfully married operational concepts with logistic capacity and

limitations. And this example appears all the more exceptional when compared to others. Retired Major General Julian Thompson, who fought in the British Falklands campaign of 1982, drew on his experiences in concluding that logistics was 'the principal factor in driving planning', adding that 'unpreparedness' was a consequence of a 'flawed perception of future conflict' and the way in which wars would be fought.<sup>11</sup> What occurred prior to the operation in terms of designing the force, preparing capabilities and writing concepts, proved as important as overcoming logistic friction during the campaign itself. It was evident that the British had made significant miscalculations, particularly in terms of their assessment of the way capability systems worked. It was only through cannibalising the resources of non-participant formations and sheer luck in the application of a hastily drafted logistic concept, that the British were ultimately successful.<sup>12</sup>

Both Engels and Thompson confirm the importance of aligning strategy, tactics and logistics in operational practice, while others have pointed more directly to the importance of this union in capability development. Writing in 1914, US Army Colonel George C. Thorpe conceived of militaries as 'fighting machines' that must be 'constructed as a unit, adapted in kind and strength to meet such tasks as may be imposed'.<sup>13</sup> This metaphor for what might now be termed capability, describes how it was particularly important, not only for logisticians who are expected to sustain the war machine, but for all military practitioners, that the 'nature of the machine does not determine the design of the function'.<sup>14</sup> This caution applies equally to the Australian Army with its foundation idea of capability management as 'concept-led, capability-driven'.<sup>15</sup> Yet what Thorpe recommended to his readership, and what armies have collectively tended to struggle with, is weaving sustainment and supply into the concepts that describe 'the function' of a military force.

Militaries typically avoid firm commitment to the functional aspects of the 'fighting machine' and often appear unprepared to overcome the friction of war. Martin van Creveld observes that,

There is scant evidence that the task has been attempted by the majority of twentieth century (not to mention earlier) operational planners. Rather most armies seem to have prepared their campaigns as best as they could on an ad hoc basis, making great, if uncoordinated, efforts to gather the largest possible numbers of tactical vehicles, trucks of all descriptions, railway troops, etc., while giving little, if any, thought to the 'ideal' combination, which, in theory would have carried them furthest.<sup>16</sup>

This feature of military planning is evident in the history of the Australian Army, clearly identified in Colonel Bob Breen's study into Australia's post-Cold War operational deployments. In examining logistic performance among other aspects relevant to the projection of military power, it was evident to Breen that, although 'one might have expected that a force-projecting island nation like Australia would have become increasingly proficient' at expeditionary warfare, the Australian Defence Force exhibited many of the characteristics articulated by van Creveld.<sup>17</sup> Planning to overcome sources of logistic friction prior to the conduct of military operations is therefore a rare trait of armies and commanders.

Quite clearly, van Creveld was generalising when he criticised armies for failing to plan for 'operational sustainability'.<sup>18</sup> There are also many factors that prevent military forces perfecting such planning. First, at the very least, force designers require fantastical predictive powers. That the 'future cannot be predicted' has become a well-worn slogan in modern military planning, but it is certainly relevant to force development where decisions based on the present profoundly affect the operational outcomes of the future.<sup>19</sup> Second, there is an often unstated desire among military staff to design forces able to achieve the full range of possible requirements. This is an exceptionally difficult task, particularly in a resource-constrained — and by extension logistically constrained — environment.<sup>20</sup> Finally, militaries often tend to emphasise those functions they traditionally perform best, rather than actually responding to strategic requirements. Despite this, the assertion that logistics have not been factored into military capabilities, particularly in the modern age, is clearly an exaggeration. The Australian Army certainly assesses how forces might deploy, critiques supply requirements and analyses numerous factors in describing its capability needs. However it is the prediction, assessment and ultimately the development of the complete 'fighting machine' that requires further attention.

Noting that the intention of Army's current operational concepts is to produce a 'machine' that is both expeditionary and of medium combat weight, there are a number of parallels worthy of examination which will allow Army to benefit from the experience of others. Army's current focus on amphibious capability suggests the analysis of transformation initiatives that have occurred in marine forces, particularly those of the US Marine Corps (USMC), which epitomised modern maritime-centric warfare with its 'operational manoeuvre from the sea' concept, and the United Kingdom, with its experience of war in the Falkland Islands.<sup>21</sup> However, with the process of transformation initiated under Hardened and Networked Army and continued through Plan Beersheba, and the impending introduction of key

projects to meet the goal of increasing Army's combat weight, the amphibious initiative forms a much smaller component of Army's broader modernisation requirements. Thus it is the US Army Stryker Brigade Combat Team — a nominally medium-weight force — that best represents the goal of the Australian Army's current force planners.

## **Delivering the operationally mobile force — the US Army and the Stryker Brigade Combat Team**

*An operational concept should be immediately followed by a transport capability study. If the transportation system will support, or can be developed in time to support, the forces necessary to carry out a contingency plan, the rest of the logistics can usually be brought into line.*

General Carter B. Magruder (Ret'd), US Army<sup>22</sup>

In analysing the American experience of war through to 1953, James Huston concluded that the US Army's most common limiting factor in deployment was transport.<sup>23</sup> Huston drew his conclusion from analysis of what he termed 'overseas warfare' — strategic and operational mobility encompassing the projection of personnel, equipment and supplies from the homeland.<sup>24</sup> Force projection requirements would prove to be a defining feature of force development forty years after Huston's analysis. The imminent collapse of the Soviet Union presaged a dramatically different strategic environment, one the USMC aptly named the 'new anarchy' due to the turmoil it instigated. First, strategic and operational mobility reappeared as a critical consideration for military modernisation.<sup>25</sup> The US overseas presence diminished and the closure of forward bases, coupled with emerging threats to national and global security, compelled the US military to reconsider how it might project its forces from its homeland. Second, and probably of greater consequence, the US senior military leadership was particularly concerned about the time it had taken for its forces to deploy to the Middle East during the Gulf War of 1991.<sup>26</sup> The then US Army Chief of Staff, General Eric Shinseki, described the major challenges in responding to these problems, commenting that 'our forces are too heavy and our light forces lack staying power'.<sup>27</sup> It was on the basis of this logic that the US Army would embark on one of the most significant modernisation and transformation initiatives of the last twenty years.

In coining the idea of the 'Objective Force', Shinseki outlined the creation of 'interim brigade combat teams' that would respond to the US Army's substantial near-term capability gap.<sup>28</sup> This interim force, once introduced and subjected to trials over



an extended period, would form the basis for the US Army force structure from 2020. Despite compelling operational reasons, it was logistics considerations that would determine the selection of an appropriate platform for the transition, and subsequently shape the way the combat team would fight. With a mobility goal of being able to deploy an entire brigade with a combination of C-17 and C-130 aircraft (and importantly, no shipping) anywhere in the world within 96 hours, it was quite clear that a medium-weight armoured, wheeled platform of around 10 to 20 tons (approximately 9 to 18 tonnes) would be favoured over heavier options. This medium-weight platform was the Stryker.<sup>29</sup> This interim force would also ensure its strategic and operational mobility by being logistically light, while the Army would 'aggressively reduce its logistics footprint and replenishment demand'.<sup>30</sup> In hindsight, this approach to designing the Stryker appears extraordinary, as actual replenishment demand is what should drive the 'logistics footprint' and not the reverse. Events would later prove the veracity of this well-known historical lesson.

The interim force represented the systemic convergence of a wide variety of modernisation trends such as digitisation and network-centric warfare which were prominent in the 1990s. The force's logistics also reflected the conjunction of a number of popular ideas.<sup>31</sup> First, there was an overwhelming belief that technology and process improvements could 'leverage combat service support reach capabilities that allow commanders to reduce stockpiles in theatre'.<sup>32</sup> Second, maintenance efficiencies were sought with 'reliable systems and commonality ... in chassis, repair parts, fuel, munitions and components'.<sup>33</sup> Modularity in components and a common combat vehicle type reduced the number of items required in the supply chain and enabled more efficient repair. Moreover, this meant that components could be replaced quickly and simply, with rapid backloading to a relatively well-resourced contractor-based maintenance organisation (for the Stryker this was General Dynamics, the original equipment manufacturer). This effectively capped the number of maintenance personnel required in forward positions.

Third, and most importantly, because the interim force was designed only to be sustainable for three days, it was believed that brigade logistic force elements could be substantially reduced. Logistic manning was reduced to one-third of the capability of heavier formations in the belief that sufficient additional supplementation could be derived from corps-level logistic elements.<sup>34</sup> In order to increase the number of manoeuvre units within the Stryker by an infantry battalion, the brigade support battalion (BSB) was reduced in size commensurately.<sup>35</sup> In any case, all sustainment was concentrated in the BSB, thereby reducing the

sustainment effectiveness of the Stryker to a level below that available to either lighter or heavier brigade combat teams in the US Army.<sup>36</sup> The BSB was increased from the woefully inadequate strength of 350 personnel to 600 (slightly larger than the Australian Army's combat service support battalions) following revealing trials in 2001, but even a BSB of this size continued to draw criticism.

While the transformation of the US Army climaxed with the raising of Stryker brigades in I Corps, achieving operational sustainability was a different matter. Logisticians questioned whether the predicted logistic requirements of the Stryker, based on low-intensity and small-scale operations, were sensible. They were particularly concerned that the austere force design developed to allow 96-hour air deployability was too arbitrary, and introduced too much risk to logistic planning. Neither were they confident that 'distribution-based, centralised combat service support' would prove effective.<sup>37</sup> Other studies produced for the US Air Force confirmed that the deployment of a sustainable Stryker brigade would significantly exceed the desired deployment timeline by a factor of four (roughly two weeks).<sup>38</sup> Moreover, the paucity of distribution-related force elements meant that the formation would be overly reliant on logistic 'echelons above brigade' to execute functions they should be performing organically, or on static logistic positions from which contractor support could be drawn.<sup>39</sup>

Operational experience in the Middle East over the period 2003 to 2014 confirmed the accuracy of these concerns. Stryker units proved sufficiently deployable, but increases in armour weight to offset platform vulnerabilities against rocket-propelled grenades and improvised explosive devices meant the Stryker was no longer C-130 transportable.<sup>40</sup> Arguably, this new dependence on the larger but scarcer C-17 and C-5 airframes for movement strained strategic deployment timelines and undermined the ability to deploy the Stryker into small airfields. The increase in weight also meant that recovery assets internal to the Stryker combat team could not transport damaged vehicles and that heavy recovery assets from corps logistics elements were required.<sup>41</sup> Stryker units were also dependent on contractor support for their sustainment, particularly in terms of maintenance. While the Objective Force may have been specifically designed with a light logistic tail, it was the false promise of increased efficiency that has since led to a particularly instructive response: the 'GDLS [General Dynamics Land System] to Green' initiative which sees formerly contracted maintenance tasks returned to soldiers.<sup>42</sup>

Yet of all the issues that were to plague the implementation of the Stryker brigade, it was logistic hollowness that would prove the most pernicious. Logisticians had responded to the requirement to be 'adaptive' by developing new logistic

concepts of support such as the logistic support team, which saw purpose-built teams formed from the centralised logistic capabilities within BSBs and provided to manoeuvre units.<sup>43</sup> While the concept that underpinned the logistic support team was relatively successful, it was not possible to fully overcome the limitations of force design; the manning for the logistic support team was drawn from the BSB and, as such, came at the expense of its capacity to support other elements within the brigade.<sup>44</sup> It thus proved to be an operational 'bandaid' rather than a reliable means of eliminating logistic risks and issues.<sup>45</sup> Only since 2014, with the assignment of a further 350 personnel to the BSB (a total of 950 personnel) has the capacity to develop standing unit-specific logistic elements or forward support companies been regenerated.<sup>46</sup> Whether this means that the US Army has abandoned its decade-old mobility objectives as a consequence of this change is yet to be seen.

The Stryker model remains highly controversial, and many US Army officers remain sceptical of the capability conclusion for the medium-weight expeditionary force.<sup>47</sup> The plan to achieve a rapid transformation outcome essential for the modernised US Army was highly ambitious and offered the prospect of reforming the way in which operational logistics was conducted. However, if the designers of the Objective Force had read Engels's work on Alexander the Great, they appear to have learned the wrong lesson. The operational mobility of the Macedonian army was not a consequence of reducing its logistic tail. Alexander, understanding the impact of supply on his strategy and tactics, structured his army accordingly.<sup>48</sup> Through a force design that appreciated logistics factors, he accomplished what even now appears impossible. He proved that the understanding of a realistic replenishment demand must always precede the calculation of a logistic 'footprint'; function must come before form when new force structures are created. At the very least, this problem suggests that operational ideas and outcomes, strategy, and perhaps even tactics, could be described as appendices to logistics.<sup>49</sup> As the Australian Army moves 'beyond Beersheba', this vital lesson on capability and force design must not be ignored.

## Combat power and logistic friction – lessons for the Australian Army

Despite the Australian Army's aspirations to be a 'medium-weight' force, care must be taken when modelling it on the US Army's medium-weight capabilities. The Stryker is nested within a wide spectrum of specialised capabilities available to the US Army that are specifically designed for lower intensity conflict situations and tasks. Furthermore, the US Army has seemingly vast logistic capabilities, commensurate with its prodigious ability to project military power. Conversely, by virtue of being much smaller and therefore unable to sustain a similar spectrum of specialised capabilities, the Australian Army's combat and support brigades must be capable of a wider variety of contingencies and operation types.<sup>50</sup> This includes the generation of amphibious capability, an imperative not necessarily recognised by the US Army force designers responsible for the Objective Force. The panoply of potential missions expected of the combat brigade therefore makes any predictions on capability or the way the 'fighting machine' might eventually perform a much more difficult prospect for Australian Army planners than for their American counterparts. Nonetheless, there are a number of lessons from the Stryker that are of particular value to Army planners and concept writers.

The first key lesson, and one not only associated with becoming 'medium weight', is that a realistic, precise and well-defined warfighting concept is the precursor to any operationally effective sustainment plan. The application of explicit parameters to guide capability development and their retention throughout all stages of planning may have been extremely useful for defining the Objective Force, but its unrealistic objectives produced a fundamentally flawed sustainment concept. As noted earlier, designing a formation on a limited operational viability period of 72 hours of low-intensity conflict was intrinsically flawed. Well-defined logistic requirements based on realistic scenarios will be important factors for the Australian Army's future force design and the development of complete capability systems. It will not be sufficient for Army to be capable of a wide variety of missions if it is not resourced with an appropriate sustainment structure to withstand the most testing of predicted events.

Second, adjustments to combat power or capability result in consequential and proportional logistic costs. In the case of the Stryker, adjustments to the combat weight of formations adversely affected the rapidity with which land power could be concentrated via strategic transportation.<sup>51</sup> This example is directly pertinent to any expeditionary-oriented military force to which the Australian Army aspires. However, given the enhancement of armoured capabilities envisaged under Army's

Land 400 and a variety of other capability projects, there are other more pernicious consequences of adjusting combat power.<sup>52</sup> Better self-protection, greater lethality and enhanced mobility are logical desires for Army's capability planners, but each factor will be matched by a commensurate cost in maintenance, ammunition and fuel. It is inevitable that such costs will ensure an increased logistic machinery and manpower will be required on the battlefield. Significantly, these costs will not be immediately apparent, perhaps only emerging once effective testing and experimentation occurs before, perhaps even after, the introduction of new capabilities. However, it is important that logistics are seriously considered and not relegated to an afterthought by force designers.

Third, new logistic concepts and technologies rarely achieve their promise of reducing actual logistic costs; in the case of the Stryker, these seemed to merely keep pace with adjustments to combat power. This is not to say that the Australian Army should not investigate new ways to mitigate logistic friction; certainly its transformation in combat weight will require new measures to ensure combat effectiveness. As it evolves from its roots as a light, infantry-oriented army, primarily defined by the subsistence of individual soldiers, the Army will discover that petrol, oil and lubricants, machine parts, multiple ammunition types and natures, and instrumentation are its lifeblood. Army's sustainment problems will be further compounded by the need to maintain a large number of highly complex weapon and equipment types procured to suit very specific operational requirements, and the management requirements of precision equipment. Most logisticians would argue that these are not minor changes, but are logistic problems that require the consideration of influences not evident in recent history. Logistics will undoubtedly remain a 'momentous exercise in coordination', will continue to determine what is strategically and tactically feasible during operations, and most importantly, its miscalculations will remind us that logistics cannot be ignored.<sup>53</sup>

Of course it will always be tempting for Army to emulate Shinseki and seek a higher tooth-to-tail ratio with larger numbers of combat troops to logisticians. But to do so risks producing the very effect that militaries seek to avoid as smaller numbers of supporting forces become proportionally more important to the final battlefield outcome. As the Stryker experience demonstrates, the inability of scarce logistics assets — let alone logisticians — to devote time to protecting themselves makes the supply chain, and transport platforms in particular, especially vulnerable to interdiction or disruption.<sup>54</sup> Despite efforts to ensure support elements are capable of their own protection, it is almost impossible for them to operate without combat elements. Furthermore, the scarcity of logistic force elements within the Stryker made it highly dependent on contractor support which, in turn, forced

formations to operate at relatively short ranges from static sources of supply. This is extremely pertinent to the Australian Army which also seeks to alleviate logistic deficiencies through the employment of military contractors. Moreover, even these limited examples confirm that operational problems are not simply overcome by proportionally increasing the firepower of the deployed force.

This leads to the final and ultimately most important conclusion: logistic requirements rarely conform to the will of commanders, capability managers or concept writers. Friction caused by logistics can be mitigated by effective preparation, but will never be eliminated in its entirety. While the Stryker proved a successful, battle-tested, motorised and medium-weight addition to the US Army's range of capabilities, it has only become so because it has been adapted to suit logistic exigencies. In many respects, it is fortunate that the operations in which it has performed have been of such limited intensity that it has been relatively easy to adapt the Stryker concept. However, as a smaller military without the considerable resources available to the US Army, the Australian Army cannot minimise risk the way Americans can.<sup>55</sup> This makes precision in capability planning particularly important, and operational concepts based on the instincts of soldiers to adapt to overcome challenges on operations a risky proposition. Army should not ask how logistic capabilities, concepts and forces can better support operations once capabilities have been introduced or transformation completed. This question must be answered long before the process of change is actually commenced.

Yet transformation cannot occur without a degree of risk. Leaving a critique of capability or modernisation in the hands of specialists in an attempt to find an apparently 'perfect' solution would probably see no transformation occur at all. Aspiration and momentum are important to the achievement of lasting change, and at times the price to be paid may be in the formulation of utopian plans. It is therefore reasonable to assume that General Shinseki regarded the transformation of the US Army as essential to its future success, irrespective of the logistic problems that might emerge. Finding the same logic in the Australian Army's approach to modernisation through programs such as Hardened and Networked Army, Plan Beersheba and the development of Army's amphibious capabilities would therefore be unsurprising. However, military staff implementing capability changes and transformation must not forget the difference between the need for transformation within an organisation, and the requirement to ensure Army's capabilities and operational objectives can be sustained. This, as the history of the US Army's Stryker brigade demonstrates, may leave operational forces devoid of effective sustainment at the critical point of an operation.

## Conclusion

Logistic factors shape how capability systems are eventually employed, despite the ideas behind the creation of those systems. While the union of strategy, tactics and logistics is vitally important in producing coherent and effective operational plans, the way capabilities actually operate is determined by the same three factors in unison. As it becomes a heavier army, Army will increasingly find that its operational options will be determined by logistic factors — much to the chagrin of its commanders. As such, when Army seeks to design a new capability system, it must be developed in conjunction with an operational sustainment concept. Army must avoid the same mistake as witnessed with the US Army's Stryker brigade, and avoid simply treating logistics as an afterthought rather than a fundamental determinant of the way combat power is delivered. If capability development does not encompass sustainment requirements (food, fuel, ammunition, equipment and personnel) and methods of delivering supply, the robustness of the future force when operationally deployed will suffer commensurately. As Major Andy Love aptly put it when discussing Army's approach to amphibious warfare and force development, 'you can't ride a concept to the beach'.<sup>56</sup>

The pursuit of a medium-weight army is just one component of modernisation and thus this analysis does not fully address many other influences and aspects of Army's modernisation. However, even if it did, it is almost certain that the same conclusions regarding capability development would result. Irrespective of the path taken to modernisation, Army cannot escape the fact that to produce operationally sustainable outcomes it must be pragmatic rather than purely conceptual. It must avoid being overly consumed by the 'monumental' at the expense of the 'mundane'.<sup>57</sup> This was the secret of Alexander the Great's successes and the reason for most of the US Army Stryker brigade's failures. The Australian Army cannot afford to dismiss logistics, explaining away sustainment and logistic contingency planning through the employment of technology or by addressing the form, but not function, of its logistic system. If Army chooses to take the path of expediency, the creation of an effective 'fighting machine', ready, deployable and capable of succeeding in expeditionary warfare, may ultimately prove elusive. ■

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## Strategy

# Regional Special Operations Force Capacity Building: An Asymmetric Australian Maritime Strategy

Major Andrew Maher

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## Abstract

This article explores the establishment of an operationally-orientated organisation to effect regional capacity building, which might serve as a focal point for coordinating unorthodox responses to contemporary security challenges within the region. Such an organisation would be capable of providing strategic deterrence through the employment of land-based anti-ship missiles to deny maritime chokepoints in an Australianised version of an anti-access, area-denial strategy. Habitual capacity-building operations would posture such an organisation to be capable of affecting strategic response options through practiced engagement within the archipelagic region to Australia's north. Establishing such an organisation sends a clear strategic message. Australia is united with the United States and its regional partners to deter aggression from a potential state-centric adversary, while building the necessary institutions to resist disruptive threats that infiltrate

transnational borders. Such a strategy would promote a 'pre-crisis' mindset involving the building of a coalition, the rehearsal of robust contingency plans and the development of familiarity with the operating environment, to hold response options within our highest priority regions.

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## Introduction

In 2012, strategist Michael Evans argued against the Sino-centric focus that seems to dominate Defence thinking, arguing that 'the force structure of the Australian Army of the future must always be configured for expeditionary operations and carefully embedded within a clearly articulated Australian Defence Force joint maritime strategy — as befits an island trading nation situated on the cusp of an economically dynamic Asia'.<sup>1</sup> Such observations are in the context of Australia's historic employment of 'expeditionary land power elements ... to achieve national political objectives'.<sup>2</sup> Evans argued the necessity to plan for 'most likely' as low to mid-level in intensity — which is at odds with Army's focus on 'joint land combat'.

Army's strategic analysis is seemingly anchored to a cognitive bias for the high-intensity conflict in the defence of Australia, frequently referred to as Australia's least likely task.<sup>3</sup> This ties it to a framework that envisages defensive action to repel an invasion force in northern Australia. Army has yet to understand how it might contribute to an expeditionary, joint maritime strategy.

This article therefore advocates a manoeuvrist approach to both the primary task of the defence of Australia and its secondary task, a stable Indo-Pacific. The essence of the manoeuvrist approach 'lies in defeating the enemy's will to fight by 'destroying' the enemy's plan rather than destroying his forces'.<sup>4</sup> By simply knowing that an element of the Australian Army holds a robust anti-access, area-denial (A2AD) capability, planned aggression against Australian territory could well be defeated cognitively. An adversary may well determine that they are unable to generate sufficient intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR), and/or security forces to 'find, fix, finish' such small, yet lethal threats to their plan. The very asymmetry of Iranian influence over the Straits of Hormuz is indicative that such a calculus can hold true.

*A simmering region.* The Chinese government has recently made aggressive assertions of sovereignty over portions of the South China Sea, provoking strong reactions from Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia and Indonesia. The United

States responded, announcing its 'pivot to Asia', and thus drawing the nation into the geopolitical 'cauldron' of the South China Sea. Arguing against perceived US interference, Chinese President Xi Jinping commented that, 'in the end, the business of Asia can only be handled by Asians, the issues of Asia can only be solved by Asians and the security of Asia can only be maintained by Asians'.<sup>5</sup> Perhaps he is correct, and local militaries need to take responsibility for local issues. Indeed the indirect strategy currently being applied in Iraq of using Western forces to build indigenous capacity could potentially provide a model to mitigate the threat of conflict in South-East Asia.

A 'stable Indo-Pacific'<sup>6</sup> is of particular Australian strategic interest, prompting the question of how Australia might support the Asian community in securing a balance within South-East Asia given the assertiveness of China. This article argues that an Australian-led, combined joint special operations task force (CJSOTF), including embedded officers from a broad range of government agencies and orientated indigenous capacity-building (ICB) throughout South-East Asia, would have much to offer the Asian community in its quest for regional stability.<sup>7</sup>

*Why now?* The Australian Government will consider the challenges posed by Chinese assertiveness, Islamic fundamentalism and enduring geopolitical realities in its forthcoming 2015 Defence white paper. It is therefore both timely and appropriate to consider how such challenges are met. Does Australia require a dozen submarines to deny maritime chokepoints in the primary operating environment (POE), or might this effect be achieved by other means? Could Indonesian and Malaysian foreign fighters return battle-hardened from Iraq and Syria to create a new cohort of regional terrorists? How are Australia's regional partners addressing these and other challenges, and how can the Australian Defence Force (ADF) assist them?

In a recent US policy document, *Strategic Landpower: Winning the Clash of Wills*, senior US Army, US Marine Corps and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) leaders describe the logic of a special operations force-centric, partnered approach to national security.

Forward deployed, actively engaged forces have proven essential to contributing to peace by reassuring our friends and deterring our enemies. Such forces provide a broad range of benefits that includes: demonstration of US commitment, establishment of enduring relationships with regional military and political leaders, improved capability of hosts to handle their own internal security challenges,

increased willingness of hosts to participate in friendly coalitions, ability of the US to achieve a higher level of understanding than is possible just with technical means, reduced chance of experiencing strategic surprise, reduced chance that an aggressor will miscalculate US resolve or capability, and increased responsiveness to crises.<sup>8</sup>

This article will first examine the geopolitical drivers of military strategy in South-East Asia before considering the effect of the United States 'pivot' toward this increasingly important region. Against such a background, the article will then analyse how Australia could 'punch above its weight' by linking into the geopolitical networks within and outside the region in partnered archipelagic defence in depth. Given the limitations of space, combined responses to non-regional security challenges such as the Korean Peninsula or the current commitments to the Middle East are considered beyond the scope of this article.

## The South China Sea 'cauldron'

The initial section of this article will review the constraints imposed by geography on the primary operating environment (POE) of Australia's northern approaches. This will be overlaid by national security agreement considerations that underpin international networks such as the Five Power Defence Arrangements. Finally, the geographic and diplomatic ramifications of the employment of military force in South-East Asia will be considered, particularly the South China Sea which,

In geopolitical terms ... might arguably be the most critical geographical juncture of the non-Western world... A 'strong foothold' in the South China Sea gives China a strategic 'hinterland' of over a thousand miles stretching to Indonesia, and would thus act as a 'restraining factor' for the US Navy's Seventh Fleet transiting the Pacific and Indian oceans.<sup>9</sup>

*The primary operating environment.* Sweeping from Rangoon through to Rarotonga, the POE encompasses Australia's highest and second-highest priority regions, as articulated by *Defence White Paper 2013*. The ethnic, religious and language diversity within the tropical, littoral and increasingly urbanised POE, presents a challenge for Western culture. Fostering regional cooperation within this archipelagic environment will be difficult, exacerbated by historical frictions and the bold aspirations of various neighbours.

*Trouble in paradise.* The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) currently consists of Brunei, Myanmar (Burma), Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. These nations encircle the 'cauldron

of the South China Sea' and many are involved in territorial claims in the region.<sup>10</sup> The relatively small size of these nations compared to an assertive Chinese military giant encourages regionalism, collective defence considerations and an arms race that presents both risks and benefits for Australia. Increased military modernisation throughout the region not only erodes Australia's technological advantage, but also increases the likelihood of regional conflict. This 'Asian arms race' is funded by increases in regional military spending (45 per cent higher in 2014 than in 2005). However, Chinese assertiveness may also persuade regional nations that the key to their security lies in developing and managing military partnerships in the region. Japan's acceptance of the critical role of multilateral organisations is one example of this.<sup>11</sup> As Patrick Cronin et al. argue,

ASEAN and its related institutions and meetings have served as vital venues for managing competition between great powers while providing platforms for increasing substantive confidence-building measures. These multilateral arenas therefore provide a cushion between the United States and China, which can often make US–China cooperation politically and bureaucratically easier, as neither side is seen as leading a particular initiative.<sup>12</sup>

*Current security networks.* Australia has strong defence relationships in the region with Singapore and Malaysia under the Five Power Defence Arrangements, and with the other non-ASEAN nations of New Zealand and the United Kingdom. The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus formally invites non-ASEAN nations into a collaborative defence forum. The growth of these extra-regional institutions further signals the geostrategic importance of the South China Sea, the 'beating heart of the Asia–Pacific and a cross-roads for the global economy'.<sup>13</sup> The Asian region is also increasingly important to global economic prosperity. As Peter Chalk asserts, 'should plans for a projected Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) come to fruition, it would enmesh ASEAN in what would be the world's single largest trading bloc'.<sup>14</sup> Regional relationships are increasingly characterised by enmeshed bilateral and multilateral agreements. According to Cronin et al.,

Countries in Asia — including Australia, India, Japan, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam — are developing bilateral security ties with one another in unprecedented ways. This emergent trend of intra-Asian defense and security cooperation which we term the 'Asia Power Web' will have profound implications for regional security and US strategy in Asia.<sup>15</sup>

With a combined US\$2.1 trillion gross domestic product (of which Australia's two-way trade share is approximately US\$87.48 billion), ASEAN is too big not to merit special consideration. This point was recognised in September 2013 when Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Julie Bishop, announced the appointment of Australia's first resident ambassador to ASEAN.<sup>16</sup> By 2020 and, more significantly, by 2030 economic growth could potentially transform the region into a significant global power, particularly through the burgeoning influence of such nations as Indonesia and Vietnam.<sup>17</sup> The influence of ASEAN and these rising nations will significantly alter the dynamic of the current regional balance of power.

## The pivot to Asia: current efforts in the region

This section will examine the longstanding US interests in, and strategic guidance on, the Asian region, as well as the operational alignment of forces linked to these interests. Discussion of the recent posture of the United States in South-East Asia and the post-Afghanistan desire to shape and influence the region without being forced to intervene militarily will follow. The section concludes with the description of additional security interests in the region.

*Obama's pivot?* President Obama signalled the 'pivot' to Asia with his comment that US economic and security interests are 'inextricably linked to the developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean and South Asia'.<sup>18</sup> This 'inextricable link' must be an important focus for Australian strategic policy if, as Peter Jennings asserts, 'the big strategic challenge for Australia is not China's growth but rather the risk that the US ceases to be a great military power and withdraws from the East Asian region'.<sup>19</sup> Rory Medcalf seemingly agrees. In analysing a recent Lowy Institute poll, he concludes that the results could be read as 'a reminder for Australia to do its utmost to influence and shape the [US] alliance and US foreign policy more generally so that it continues to serve Australian interests in a changing world'.<sup>20</sup> Conditions may well be set for an alignment of interests given President Obama's recent comments at West Point regarding networked capacity-building efforts,

Earlier this year I asked my national security team to develop a plan for a network of partnerships from South Asia to the Sahel. Today, as part of this effort, I am calling on Congress to support a new counterterrorism partnerships fund of up to \$5 billion, which will allow us to train, build capacity and facilitate partner countries on the front lines.<sup>21</sup>



*Aligning with US interests.* One of the longest-serving, regionally-orientated and operationally-engaged organisations in the region is the US Pacific Command, and its subordinate component, the US Special Operations Command, Pacific (SOCPAC). SOCPAC is force assigned the 1st Special Forces Group,<sup>22</sup> and US Marine, Navy and Air Force special operations capabilities. Regionally, SOCPAC divides its efforts into a number of sub-regions, within which a combined joint special operations task force – South–East Asia (CJSOTF–SEA) would clearly be positioned. These regions are: North–East Asia (China, Japan, Mongolia and the two Koreas), South Asia (Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal and Sri Lanka), Oceania (14 countries, including Australia) and South-East Asia (the 11 member countries of ASEAN).

US *Quadrennial Defense Review 2014* guidance for special forces elements captures the challenge of globalised connectivity. It notes that ‘the rapidly accelerating spread of information is challenging the ability of some governments to control their populations and maintain civil order, while at the same time changing *how wars are fought* and aiding groups in mobilising and organising’ (emphasis added).<sup>23</sup> This encapsulates the American strategic response to the irregular conflicts initiated by the Arab Spring, the complex globalised terrorist threat and the increasing utility of special operations force responses.

*The U.S. Army Operating Concept: Win in a Complex World 2020–2040* gives such complexity momentum by noting that, ‘shifts [in the geopolitical landscape] and the violence associated with them occur more rapidly than in the past due to advances in technology, the proliferation of information, and the associated increased momentum of human interactions’.<sup>24</sup> In this geopolitical landscape, the special operations force ‘small footprint’ approach reflects the requirement for small, adaptable elements to keep pace with environmental shifts. In a sense, such employment of forces could be seen as a response to the challenges of the information age. As Robert Martinage from the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments states,

The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) asserted that SOF [special operations forces] should be re-oriented ... to one that is shaped, sized, and postured for long-duration, steady-state operations critical to the war against violent Islamic extremism such as intelligence collection, foreign internal defense, and unconventional warfare; reactive and proactive counterterrorism and counterproliferation missions; and high-end theatre warfare as part of a joint force.<sup>25</sup>

Recent operational commitments demonstrate that such approaches are not 'exclusive' to special operations. Indeed, the Australian Army has a long and proud history of capacity building through the Pacific Islands Regiment and service in Malaya, Vietnam and Timor–Leste, in addition to its lengthy investment under the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP). But this speaks to the heart of the issue, 'cooperation' needs to become an 'operation', emulating the US Army, US Marine Corps and SOCOM approach.

### **How are US special forces being utilised in the region?**

*Operational preparation of the environment.* Operational preparation of the environment (OPE) is designed to describe pre-emptive capacity building designed to enhance partners' means to maintain security before a crisis emerges. Admiral McRaven, then Commander US SOCOM, describes OPE efforts as 'building a network', a response to the current 'era of persistent conflict'.<sup>26</sup> In simple terms, OPE (also known as Phase Zero<sup>27</sup>) comprises early, fine-tuned intervention to improve indigenous capacity and prevent a nation becoming a 'failed state'. The efforts of the Joint Special Operations Task Force — Philippines in assisting the Filipino government conduct counterinsurgency operations against the Abu Sayyaf Group in Mindanao from 2002 provide just one example of this low-signature model.

*Basing.* US SOCOM is moving to adjust the current balance of its special operations forces, 90 per cent of which are stationed in the continental United States, to a more forward-engaged posture.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence, the United States recently secured an agreement with the Philippines for the use of Clark Air Force Base in Luzon, and with Singapore to base four littoral combat ships at Changi Harbour (and potentially also a joint high-speed vessel). This reposture presents a strategic opportunity for Australia, given the close ties developed in recent operational theatres.

*Joint combined exchange training serials.* Joint combined exchange training serials are nominally training events, yet are recognised as operations that are linked to campaign strategies and global counterterrorism efforts. Similarly, Australia's regional international engagement training serials are almost indistinguishable from recent operational train, assist and advise missions. SOCPAC is already broadly engaged within the region, having conducted 22 joint combined exchange training serials in South-East Asia through the 1st Special Forces Group alone in 2013.<sup>29</sup> The example set by US SOCOM through such engagements recognises that actions performed within joint combined exchange training present a realistic and

challenging form of training for the demands of operational train, advise and assist missions. This same realistic and challenging training model is not apparent in the Australian Army's regional engagement under the Defence Cooperation Program.

## How is Australia engaged, and is it doing enough?

*Defence White Paper 2013* notes that 'Australia must seek to shape an international environment favourable to [its] future security and prosperity'.<sup>30</sup> Understanding the region, its strengths and its fragilities is therefore essential. The shaping of relationships throughout the region occurs daily, particularly in the joint environment, primarily through the Royal Australian Navy's freedom of navigation and conduct of port visits. The Royal Australian Air Force also has the ability to achieve similar outcomes through combined exercises such as Exercise Pitch Black. Neither service has the ability or imperative to engage with the local inhabitants however, particularly as they are largely dissociated from the population at 25,000 feet or 50 nautical miles out to sea. Army is in an entirely different situation.

Army conducts regional engagement through the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), albeit without an explicit operational orientation that postures for future conflict.<sup>31</sup> This engagement could arguably be enhanced through collaboration with US forces which are similarly active in our region. However, DCP engagement generally does not address improving indigenous capacity to counter terrorist and unconventional threats that may destabilise the region. All South-East Asian nations, with the exception of Singapore and Brunei, have experienced insurgency since the end of the Second World War.<sup>32</sup> Efforts to improve regional counterterrorism and counterinsurgency capabilities are particularly timely given reports that 'up to 200 Indonesians, 40 Malaysians, 100 Filipinos... and a "handful" of Singaporeans may have joined ISIS in Iraq or Syria'.<sup>33</sup>

*Capacity building as an operation.* Recent operational experience has taught the Australian Army the long-term value of capacity building in setting conditions for eventual military exit. However, this is a culturally attuned, immersive and difficult task.<sup>34</sup> Andrew Davies, Peter Jennings and Ben Schreer argue that special operations forces 'offer the best value in unconventional operations and in these so-called "Phase Zero" missions, which focus on building and shaping defence relationships with key partners in a pre-crisis environment'.<sup>35</sup> Indeed, noting the difficulty of the task, the potential for DCP actions to be managed under a standing operation in conjunction with the amphibious ready element and commanded by the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters is worthy of consideration.

*A special operations complement to the amphibious ready element / amphibious ready group.* The introduction into service of the landing helicopter dock heralded the arrival of a highly visible political tool for the conduct of international engagement, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The use of special forces elements for the operational preparation of the environment in support of and prior to the arrival of the amphibious ready element / amphibious ready group, is a critical requirement of the Australian amphibious concept.

## OPE in the POE

This section will review how US SOCOM is pursuing a global strategy of operational preparation of the environment (OPE), in the context of what it now perceives to be an era of persistent conflict. This strategy aims to build indigenous capacity to resist the destabilising threats of non-state actors and hold unconventional capabilities against hostile nation-states. It will further explore the interests of regional nations seeking to hedge against an assertive Chinese military, concluding that subtle capacity-building efforts within the primary operating environment (POE) directly support Australian strategic interests.

### Strategic deterrence

*'Australianised A2AD'.* The geography of the South China Sea, drained by chokepoints at the Sunda, Malacca and Makassar Straits and the Molucca Sea, coupled with thousands of archipelagic islands, provides the potential for land-based, anti-ship missile systems to be a low-cost, asymmetric strategy to Chinese military expansion. A recent RAND study noted the significant difficulty in intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) detection of such systems, their reach (approaching 200 kilometres), and their potential lethality when combined with sub-surface and aerial platforms.<sup>36</sup> The study describes how to establish a 'distant blockade' in the event of a conflict with China, a version of an anti-access area denial (A2AD) strategy.<sup>37</sup> The generation of such A2AD effects across the Sunda, Malacca and Phillipine straits and the Makassar Strait and the Molucca Sea would alleviate pressure on limited regional naval and air assets in any conflict against China's People's Liberation Army — Navy and People's Liberation Army — Air Force. It would also maximise the value of the planned MQ-4 Triton Broad Area Maritime Surveillance acquisition as a component of a maritime 'reconnaissance-strike complex'.

RAND analysis concluded that, given the ballooning costs of modern warships, land-based anti-ship missile capabilities 'may prove potent and inexpensive joint force multipliers'.<sup>38</sup> The thousands of miles of island chain would 'significantly dilute the effectiveness of PLA [People's Liberation Army] missile and air forces', and most of the nations upon which this defensive concept relies are 'strong partners or allies' of the United States, or are alarmed by China's aggressive attitude in the South China Sea.<sup>39</sup> The challenge that Hezbollah's Katyusha rocket launchers and C-802 land-based anti-ship missiles presented to Israeli forces in 2006, exemplifies the surveillance dilemma of small, easily concealed launchers.

*Layers of Defence.* Indonesia may become the world's tenth largest economy by 2030, with commensurately large military capabilities. Benjamin Schreer argues that 'a friendly, militarily more powerful Indonesia would be a major geostrategic asset for Australia'.<sup>40</sup> Indonesian investment in anti-ship cruise missiles, fighter aircraft and diesel submarines, 'will make it very difficult for any hostile force to establish a stronghold in the archipelago'.<sup>41</sup>

### Strategic response

Any armed attack against Australia would require an adversary to physically cross the air space, potentially the land mass and also the territorial waters of not just Indonesia, but Timor-Leste, Singapore, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea and/or Brunei. The collective size of the forces of these nations is at least half a million serving personnel, 16 frigates, 10 submarines (with at least an additional three in the next five years), over 300 tanks and in excess of 360 modern combat aircraft (not including forward-based US platforms).<sup>42</sup> Australia's security could therefore be significantly enhanced through our partners' capabilities if these are employed collaboratively.<sup>43</sup> Australia could enhance the protection of its 'air-sea gap' through building deeper strategic partnerships and contributing positively to the region's security and stability.<sup>44</sup>

Collectively, these considerations prompt an expansion of the traditional concept of combined arms. In its concept of joint combined arms operations, the US Army described this expansion 'to include the integration of not only joint capabilities but also the broad range of efforts necessary to accomplish the mission'.<sup>45</sup> *Army in a Joint Archipelagic Manoeuvre Concept* similarly argues that the ADF should 'be capable of applying focused maritime control operations that deny an adversary's access to, or ability to control, the key routes within a maritime archipelagic environment, and mounting and leading expeditionary stability operations in our immediate region'.<sup>46</sup>

A standing and practiced operational command and control structure is essential to the development of a *combined* joint archipelagic manoeuvre concept. This development will only be possible with the enhancement of Australia's limited military-to-military engagement with regional nations, asymmetric capabilities and dedicated contingency planning teams. As Alan Dupont argues, 'Australia cannot be a disinterested observer in any future conflict in the western Pacific because virtually all our core defence and economic interests are engaged'.<sup>47</sup>

### **The strategic importance of partner capacity building**

In 1999, Dr Jim Rolfe wrote that 'the major lesson from the Second World War for New Zealand was [that] it could not defend itself by itself. Security was to be found through working with like-minded powers with similar values and similar world-views'.<sup>48</sup> Australian strategic guidance over several decades highlights the importance of the Australia-US relationship and notes this country's dependence on its 'great power ally' to underpin its security requirements. Explicitly recognising that Australia's national security relies on relationships with other nations will increase understanding of the vulnerability of its sea lines of communication and the challenges of Australia's decreasing technological advantage in the region.

*The Importance of the ANZUS Treaty and the benefit of aligned interests.* The US Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments recently observed that 'for the first time since World War II, Australian and American areas of strategic priority overlap. The strength of this rekindled convergence suggests that the US-Australia relationship may well prove to be the most special [sic] relationship of the 21st century'.<sup>49</sup> In this context, 'if Australia appears less than serious about its own security, or about shouldering a portion of the security burden in a changing Asia, it will be difficult to maintain credibility in the eyes of the United States, itself struggling to follow through on its declared "rebalance" to Asia'.<sup>50</sup> Clearly, Australia can play a role in supporting such objectives so as to mitigate the risk of a US withdrawal from the region, particular by strengthening US multilateral ties with ASEAN.

### **The purpose of a standing operation**

At the strategic level, the formation of a combined joint special operations task force (CJSOTF) would represent an initial step for the Australian Government in acknowledging the increasing potential for instability and burgeoning competition between nation-states within the region.<sup>51</sup> Such a step distances Australia from the benign assessments of the *Asian Century White Paper*, while responding to those positive engagement objectives and foreign policy concepts this white paper espoused. Furthermore, it promises to strengthen the ASEAN regional framework

that currently stabilises the region, directly supporting broader stakeholder interests, such as those of India,<sup>52</sup> the Republic of Korea and Japan.<sup>53</sup> Finally, a CJSOTF would add another layer to the ANZUS (Australia, New Zealand, United States Security) Treaty of shared defence responsibilities and contribute to the sharing of regional defence concerns.

At the operational level, a CJSOTF could fill a long-term advanced force operations role within the 'Phase Zero' and 'Phase One – Shaping' stages of campaign planning, under a named, standing operation.<sup>54</sup> The CJSOTF would therefore be tasked to collect environmental intelligence, conduct indigenous capacity building and exercise force projection within the region.<sup>55</sup>

Tactically, a CJSOTF could support the seizure of points of entry into hostile nations and neutralise high value targets in support of a theatre campaign plan. In the aftermath of major combat operations, detailed understanding of the targeted region can support indigenous capacity building during the 'stability' and 'transition' phases of a campaign. The ability to provide support to all phases of a campaign plan is a significant strength and, as knowledge of the operating environment is developed, defence partnerships will be established and interoperability built and tested.

These effects are described in a recent US Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments report that considered Australia's location at the juncture of the Indo-Pacific in ANZUS strategic planning. The centre considered Australia's potential role as a 'supportive sanctuary' for allied military forces. The report also described Australia as an 'Indo-Pacific watchtower' for ISR cooperation, a 'green water warden' supporting Indonesia's role in safeguarding the Sunda and Lombok Straits, and a 'peripheral launchpad' to support campaigns into the Indian Ocean, should conflict break out in the western Pacific.<sup>56</sup> A standing operation would provide a 'running start' for any of these concepts through a CJSOTF structure oriented to the ASEAN region.

*The value of a CJSOTF–SEA.* An Australian-led effort to build a sub-network within SOCPAC oriented to ASEAN nations, represents a logical effort with like-minded partners, both internal and external to the region. Such a sub-network would adhere to the intent of US SOCOM engagement to use small footprints and a low-level presence that unobtrusively assists partner forces while maintaining ongoing surveillance.<sup>57</sup> This sub-network would operate through routine deployments and establish logistic infrastructure seeking to mitigate the costly interventions of conventional conflict typical of Afghanistan's surge and the Iraq invasion. Most importantly, as US Admiral McRaven highlights, 'the US can't do it alone'.<sup>58</sup>

### **A special operations lead in Phase Zero?**

Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, recently asked, 'Should we consider that [US] SOCOM is the global combatant command, and most everybody else [is in support]?'<sup>59</sup> While the United States adapts its aim, its response to the globalised security environment, characterised by a web of interconnectedness and irregular threats, may continue to evolve.<sup>60</sup> Against these globalised irregular threats, the United States intends 'to increase significantly, its abilities to improve the capabilities of partners around the globe ... a principal component of our Phase Zero military activities'.<sup>61</sup> US SOCOM contributions to the strategic aspects of understanding the human terrain will continue, operating by, with and through partner forces across more than the current 70 nations globally.<sup>62</sup> Andrew Davies, Peter Jennings and Ben Schreer highlight the importance of special operations forces in the future, arguing that,

Special Operations have a lot to offer in Defence's regional engagement strategy ... [prioritised upon] Australia's near region ... [by] establishing SOF liaison elements in selected Australian embassies ... [and] maintaining and strengthening SOF cooperation with our US ally ... vital for activities in the Asia-Pacific theatre and further abroad.<sup>63</sup>

### **Why should Australia establish a standing operation?**

A 'stable Indo-Pacific' is undeniably in Australia's strategic interest.<sup>64</sup> An Australian-led CJSOTF would prove a valuable asset given its ability to generate a number of effects that would assist in the achievement of Army's strategic tasks, including,<sup>65</sup>

- Enhancing the ANZUS relationship with the United States that underpins Australia's national defence,
- Detering aggression against Australia's maritime interests,
- Improving indigenous self-defence, including counterterrorism and irregular warfare through habitual engagement with regional ASEAN partners,
- Complementing the Australian amphibious concept through a habitual exercising of advance force operations in support of the Australian amphibious ready element and/or US Marine Corps elements forward deployed to the region (Darwin), and
- Strengthening the ASEAN regional framework, supporting broader stakeholder interests, such as those of India, the Republic of Korea and Japan.



*Pre-crisis prudence.* If there is one important lesson from the current operational challenges of Iraq and Syria, it is the confirmation that bad news does improve with time. Prudent military planning could see emerging threats confronted by established indigenous partners, coalition framework, enabling assets and staging locations, through an ongoing strategy. As James Brown and Rory Medcalf assert,

Australian contributions can and should include leadership on security contingencies in the South Pacific; major responsibility for shared situational awareness in the eastern Indian Ocean and the core Indo-Pacific zone of Maritime Southeast Asia; undertaking tailored engagement with countries that the US military is legislatively prohibited from engaging deeply with (including China); and providing military intelligence, planning, and wise strategic counsel in the event of regional crises.<sup>66</sup>

*Resolute, but not resounding.* China remains concerned over strategic encirclement.<sup>67</sup> Australia (and the United States) needs to acknowledge this concern. Efforts to improve regional capacity through the 'light touch' of a special forces profile may assuage concerns when compared to conventional footprints such as the high-profile rotational basing of US Marines in Darwin, or the exercising of the amphibious ready element in the South China Sea. What is therefore required is a purpose-built, special operations force-centric organisation that can coordinate the enhancement of regional special forces capabilities to fight the full range of threats from unconventional and disruptive, to conventional and existential.

## Is a CJSOTF feasible and what is needed to make it work?

This section will examine the best means to create a regionally-oriented network of stakeholders willing to build ASEAN nations' capacity and capability. It will focus upon the military capabilities that can complement 'Australianised A2AD' and capacity-building strategies. Due to the limitations of space, this section will not explore the second-order considerations of policy development, standing operation funding lines, basing arrangements and status of forces agreements, but will instead consider the holistic capability model that would drive such political considerations.

*Partners' perceptions – United States, Canada, United Kingdom and New Zealand.* The strategic logic of Australia-US engagement within the region clearly also extends to New Zealand given its national defence objectives.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, the strong

defence relationship New Zealand maintains with south-west Pacific nations is a considerable asset for a CJSOTF network. Shared training objectives and resourcing is likely to prove attractive to New Zealand special operations forces. However, Canada and the United Kingdom have limited engagement interests within the region, and therefore the provision of liaison officers and/or staff officers to an operational, regional headquarters may prove an attractive economy of effort, while fulfilling headquarter manning requirements.

*Regional partner perceptions.* The allocation of Western special operations forces resourcing to build regional capabilities sends a strong message to regional nations. In the context of the regional competition for hegemony over the South China Sea, such messages carry greater weight than previous defence platitudes regarding the deterrence of aggression. In spite of this, Defence diplomacy must maintain a subtle balance between building an individual nation's capability and enhancing collective ASEAN capabilities. Indeed, it is this required balance that drives the need for a permanently assigned headquarters that can establish the requisite context.

*Individual training and education.* The DCP provides an outstanding baseline for expansion into regional training and education to assist regional partners combat their contemporary asymmetric challenges. The United States already dedicates 'several million dollars annually to sending ... SOF representatives from all services, to the US for International Military Education and Training'.<sup>69</sup> Harmonising efforts through the Special Forces Training Centre — potentially in conjunction with experienced international education providers such as the US Joint Special Operations University — to establish ASEAN-targeted educational programs under a broadened DCP could work to increase trust with regional partners. Collectively, these objectives could form the basis for the establishment of a regional special operations forces training centre, an idea first mooted by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute.<sup>70</sup>

*A joint anti-ship / surface-surface missile system.* The use of land-based anti-ship missiles in the region to provide an asymmetric means to deny sea lines of communication could potentially be enhanced by cooperation with ASEAN partners (although this is not a current ADF capability). Recent technological advances that improve flexibility demonstrate the true potential of such systems.<sup>71</sup> With GPS (global positioning system) and inertial guidance options, these missiles can be capable of precision-strike effects, fired from land, naval or airborne platforms.<sup>72</sup> Given the range of such systems, they may also afford long-range precision fire support in an A2AD environment that currently use close air support

platforms. This joint fires concept would require the force generation of a number of teams of surface-surface missile operators, recruited from tri-service backgrounds, and specifically trained for small-team, dispersed employment.<sup>73</sup> Such teams may utilise forecast cross-terrain vehicles given an air-transportable, distributed fires employment.<sup>74</sup> A joint land-based anti-ship missile/surface-surface capability could be managed by the CJSOTF, and would come with the same price tag as a single Joint Strike Fighter airframe.

*Operationalised train–advise–assist.* The joint operators of a land-based anti-ship missile system could provide capacity-building support to regional nations, allowing them to develop similar capabilities that could complement special operations engagement. This would extend special operations engagement beyond its current counterterrorism focus to enhance regional capability to resist aggression through the development of a joint fires capability. These efforts may require the expansion (or enhanced access) of the special operations liaison officer network throughout the region, building on the recent establishment of a SOCOMD liaison post at US Pacific Command.<sup>75</sup> The current program of international engagement conducted by the Deployable Joint Forces Headquarters can likewise be focused through this standing operation, as may broader capacity-building efforts by the joint services and other government agencies. The peacetime conduct of train, advise and assist missions will enhance operational preparedness for the indigenous capacity-building line of operation outlined in *Adaptive Campaigning: Future Land Operating Concept*.

*Feasibility summary.* The interoperability of distributed joint fires with US and Australian ISR capabilities significantly enhances Australia's potential to achieve its strategic objectives in the primary operating environment. Collective use of proposed systems could see the achievement of 'distributed manoeuvre', 'Australianised A2AD' and partnered train, advise and assist missions in the joint environment, well beyond the 'air–sea gap' patrolled by Australia's Joint Strike Fighters. Furthermore, the potential generated by an Australian SOCOMD-led 'ASEAN focal point' addresses the American desire for its 'allies to cooperate in implementing a strategy which employs a more flexible, expanded, multifaceted, and integrated framework for security, encouraging more action and responsibility amongst allies ... to address and mitigate security challenges at national, regional and even global levels'.<sup>76</sup>

## Conclusion

Geoffrey Till recently argued that any country that abrogates its responsibilities to contribute ‘is especially likely to lose the capacity to influence outcomes’.<sup>77</sup> In South-East Asia, it is clear that China is seeking to influence the outcome of maritime disputes in the South China Sea. In response, this article advocates the strengthening of the Asian security framework that is ASEAN, through nation-to-nation military diplomacy,

It would be healthier for the American–Chinese relationship — the most important bilateral relationship in the world — if Asian states themselves helped balance against rising Chinese military power, rather than relying overwhelmingly on the United States. The most obvious mechanism for that is a strengthened Association of South-East Asian Nations. ASEAN is ascending.<sup>78</sup>

Special operations capacity-building efforts in South–East Asia directly support Australia’s strategic interests at a time when support from the US cannot be guaranteed due to the strategic concerns of fiscal pressures, Russian resurgence and ongoing conflict across the Middle East and North Africa. Enhancing such efforts through a standing operation is a significant step for the ADF to take to adjust to the US ‘pivot’. The threat to Australia has continued to metastasise, either through raw economic and armed forces growth in Asia, or through globalised connectivity to inform the latest application of terrorist tactics, techniques and procedures.

A combined joint special operations task force ‘focal point’ will produce a pre-crisis, cascading alignment of nuanced support, directed into the primary operating environment.<sup>79</sup> The building of a multi-lateral network oriented to the ASEAN region, performing a combined intelligence and operations function comprises a response to observations that ‘the preferred strategy of Western powers, Australia included, will be one of building capacity in other nations to reduce the need for security assistance and military employments’.<sup>80</sup> Developing regional capability and supporting the US pivot to Asia is critical for Australia to generate ‘defence in depth’ that can enhance Australia’s maritime strategy and enable archipelagic defence in depth to achieve ‘a secure Australia’.<sup>81</sup> ■

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## The author

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- 43 Consideration of some of the lesser regional actors only increases the potential military force behind ASEAN. Vietnam has invested \$2 billion in six Kilo-class diesel-electric submarines, \$1 billion in Russian fighter jets and a P-800 shore-based anti-ship missile system ranging out to 300 kilometers, Myanmar's Tatmadaw of almost 500,000 men under arms is the ninth largest military in the world and the Thai military closely resembles Western models and includes a helicopter carrier, Marine Corps and three amphibious vessels.
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- 74 As proposed by Land 121 (<http://www.army.gov.au/Our-future/Projects/Project-LAND-121>). Platforms such as the Rhienmetall have already been modified for the Patriot missile system, and therefore may be ideal for modification.
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## Command

# The Capture of *Unit 621*: Lessons in Information Security Management from the North Africa Campaign

Colonel Tim Gellel

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## Abstract

Army's military history is not some curio simply to be admired. Events that took place many decades ago, many thousands of kilometres away and against very different adversaries to those faced today still provide valuable lessons for modern commanders. This article examines the little-known capture of Rommel's signals intelligence unit by an Australian battalion in North Africa in July 1942 as a case in point. It identifies how risks taken by German commanders compromised not just Rommel's intelligence efforts, but also the broader German military signals intelligence capability. It further demonstrates how a lack of understanding of the German unit's intelligence value limited the Australians' ability to fully exploit the personnel, information and material they captured. And it explains why those lessons are relevant to modern commanders.

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## Introduction

In the early hours of 10 July 1942, Rommel's *Panzerarmee Afrika* lay within reach of Cairo and the Suez Canal. With just one more push, the newly promoted Field Marshal Rommel could deal the Allies a decisive blow in the Middle East. But when news reached him of an attack at Tel el Eisa on his northern flank, Rommel abandoned his eastern advance and rushed north to rescue the situation. When at around 9.00 am Rommel asked Second Lieutenant Wischmann, an officer from his signal intelligence company, *Unit 621*, for the latest intercept reports, Wischmann,

Had to tell him that we still had not established radio contact with the company yet. 'Where is the company positioned?' he asked. I showed him on the map. 'Then it is futsch — lost!' he said, absolutely furious.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to having his flank turned and being forced onto the defensive, Rommel knew that his premier source of battlefield intelligence was also gone. An avid consumer of signals intelligence, Rommel recognised that the nature of warfare in North Africa meant that 'radio was the only possible form of communication — a medium as dangerous as it was valuable — and the British used it more carelessly than ever'.<sup>2</sup> *Unit 621* provided him,

With accurate and welcome information, on which he could base his bold and varied tactics. His peculiar talent for gaining unexpected success in armoured warfare, where radio communication played a vital role, had already brought him a number of startling victories as commander of a panzer division in the Campaign in the West. In the desert Rommel encouraged this new method of tactical reconnaissance, especially since the results of German air reconnaissance were limited by British air superiority.<sup>3</sup>

While this incident occurred more than 70 years ago and half a world away, it provides valuable and relevant lessons on the importance of managing the security risks associated with the forward deployment of sensitive intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) assets.

## ***Unit 621***

*Panzerarmee Afrika*'s first radio monitoring (*horchzug*) platoon arrived in theatre in February 1941 and was joined in April by the remainder of Captain Alfred Seeböhm's *3rd Company, 56th Signals Battalion*. Quickly renamed *Nachrichten Fernsehsendung Aufklärung Kompanie 621 (Signals Intercept Company 621)*,<sup>4</sup> Seeböhm's soldiers referred to themselves as the 'Circus'<sup>5</sup> because of the unit's 'nondescript gaggle of buses and wireless lorries'.<sup>6</sup> Many of these were civilian vehicles commandeered in France or elsewhere in Europe, and their non-military nature meant that *Unit 621* looked quite unlike *Panzerarmee Afrika*'s other front-line units.

Many of *Unit 621*'s 10 officers, 63 non-commissioned officers and 259 other ranks,<sup>7</sup> were English-language cryptanalysts with experience in intercepting British traffic from the French and Belgian campaign, and 'therefore knew the weaknesses of the British radio system'.<sup>8</sup> They were organised into eight platoons: headquarters, signals, analysis, intercept, short and medium-wave direction-finding, and two transport platoons.<sup>9</sup> Their equipment included 'receivers and direction-finding instruments suitable for use in a tropical climate'.<sup>10</sup> However, with only five machine pistols and six light machine-guns, the unit could not defend itself against any threat greater than an infantry patrol.<sup>11</sup>

Since early July, *Unit 621*'s headquarters had been located with *Panzerarmee Afrika*'s main headquarters while the majority of the unit had deployed behind the Italian *60th (Sabratha) Division* near Tel el Eisa. There, the unit's 200 men and 40 vehicles occupied an area of around 700 metres by 300 metres close to the beach.<sup>12</sup> This echelon included almost 75 per cent of the intercept platoon and 60 per cent of the analysis platoon, one direction-finding platoon, signals personnel and members of the transport element.<sup>13</sup>

Seeböhm's considerations in selecting this forward site included its suitability for intercepting British communication. The location close to the beach provided 'uninterrupted reception' from his priority targets, namely 'Cairo, Middle East Headquarters, Eighth Army, 30th Corps and the allied armour in front of him'.<sup>14</sup> Further considerations included the need to maintain communications with his own direction-finding detachments, as well as with Rommel's very mobile forward headquarters.<sup>15</sup> Timely reporting was essential, and,

Not infrequently, the intercepted enemy signals had been deciphered and were in Rommel's hand whilst the [less well positioned] enemy signallers were still querying them. Rommel thus often had signals in his hands before the enemy commanders to whom they had been addressed.<sup>16</sup>

Seebohm's men questioned his decision to site the unit there. Lieutenant Habel (who succeeded Seebohm as unit commander) questioned why the site was 'so far forward'.<sup>17</sup> Separately, Staff Sergeant Hässler commented that Seebohm 'personally chose the position at Tel-el-Eisa and refused to budge even when his subordinates warned of the conspicuously frequent reconnaissance flights by enemy planes'.<sup>18</sup> While those flights did not necessarily mean the British knew of the presence of *Unit 621*, they nonetheless signalled British interest in the area.

German accounts ascribe much of the reason for *Unit 621*'s capture to Seebohm's decision to 'imprudently station [his unit] far in advance of Rommel's headquarters and only a few kilometres behind an Italian sector of the front'.<sup>19</sup> Seebohm had 'rather apologetically' told Lieutenant Behrendt 'that he knew his position was very far advanced, but he would get much better results from there'.<sup>20</sup> Hässler recalled that Seebohm had been 'accused of cowardice before the enemy, and threatened with court-martial' for withdrawing from Mersa Matruh at the end of June.<sup>21</sup> Wischmann thought 'Seebohm was extremely ambitious and always wanted to win glory in Rommel's eyes by obtaining impressive results from our company,' concluding that,

It was to achieve such brilliant results that Seebohm had taken the risk of putting our company in such an exposed position by the sea, just a few hundred yards behind a sector defended by Italian troops. In the event, when the enemy attacked, the Italians fled.<sup>22</sup>

*Panzerarmee Afrika*'s command environment was also a factor. Rommel's career and reputation were built on throwing caution to the wind as he urged his units ever forward. *Unit 621* was no exception, and had twice previously come close to peril. On 24 December 1941,

Radio Direction Finder 3rd Section was overrun by enemy tanks and taken prisoner. Thanks to prudent action by the commanding officer of Direction Finding Section 3 this section escaped from captivity. The section salvaged its equipment, which is being taken to Company for repair.<sup>23</sup>

Then, on 24 January 1942,

Direction Finding 4th Section was surprised by the enemy on its way to the new assignment area. The commanding officer was captured with wireless documents but freed himself by cool action and personally took seventeen prisoners.<sup>24</sup>

It says much of the command environment that the alleged Mersa Matruh incident could have influenced Seebohm's decision-making process more than the two close calls he and his men had earlier experienced.

### Lessons/insights

*Unit 621*'s experience demonstrates that 'chasing ground' is as much a temptation when siting ISR assets as it is with any weapon system. A further lesson is that Seebohm accepted — or ignored — the security risks inherent in his decision to locate the unit so far forward because *Panzerarmee Afrika*'s command environment tolerated risk to the point of recklessness. However, *Unit 621*'s non-military appearance worked in its favour and meant that the Australians initially overlooked its intelligence value.

## Tel el Eisa

Despite their location behind the Italian *60th Sabratha Division* and less than 5000 metres from the front line, Seebohm's men did not expect to be attacked. Similarly, when the men of the Australian 2/24th Battalion assaulted the ridge north of Tel el Eisa railway siding, they did not expect to pull off one of the Second World War's greatest intelligence coups, although they only became aware of this achievement long after the war.

The 2/24th Battalion's attack was part of the First Battle of El Alamein. As Rommel's advance on Cairo lost momentum near Alamein, the British Eighth Army commenced a limited counteroffensive towards Tel el Eisa. Under cover of a heavy artillery barrage, the Australian 26th Brigade (9th Australian Division) attacked from a line along the coast and secured the low ridge to the north of the railway. In doing so, the Australians scythed through the inexperienced *Sabratha Division*, which had only just occupied underprepared defences in the sector, and took more than 1500 prisoners. Indeed, the Luftwaffe commander in Africa, Lieutenant General van Waldau, later concluded that it was Seebohm's unit that had mounted 'the first real resistance' to the Australians.<sup>25</sup>

While some of the Circus's vehicles managed to escape during the 90-minute firefight, some 100 unit members were killed or taken captive.<sup>26</sup> Among the captured were the mortally wounded Seebohm and his second-in-command, Lieutenant Herz. According to Herz, the speed of the Australian attack meant 'methodical destruction of the documents, etc, was no longer possible'.<sup>27</sup> This view is supported in the German signals intelligence service's history, which concluded,

There was no opportunity to destroy the valuable intercept files. Thus, the enemy captured the German records of intercepted British messages and codes, the analyses prepared by the German intercept service, as well as German and Italian radio schedules and ciphers.<sup>28</sup>

### Lessons/insights

ISR assets are rarely capable of defending themselves and require protection by combat units. Emergency destruction plans for sensitive information and equipment must be effective and capable of rapid implementation.

## The haul

It is difficult to determine precisely what the Eighth Army knew about *Unit 621*'s presence at Tel el Eisa. According to Lieutenant Behrendt's post-war research, the relevant British Army files were subject to a 100-year embargo from public release, which limited his assessment as to whether British commanders knew that *Unit 621* lay in the path of the Australian attack.<sup>29</sup> More recent research indicates that the British signals intercept effort ('Y' Service) had 'through intercepts fixed the location of [Unit] 621'.<sup>30</sup> But even if the British knew that *Unit 621* was located behind the *Sabratha Division*, there is no evidence to suggest the Australians did. A member of the 26th Brigade's intelligence staff recalled 'the surprise engendered by a headquarters camp being so far forward, and that some prisoners were sent on with great rapidity'.<sup>31</sup>

Interrogation of Lieutenant Herz and 16 other members yielded further insights into *Unit 621*'s capabilities.<sup>32</sup> Results were initially limited as Seebohm's men underplayed the unit's successes and demonstrated a 'stubborn resistance to interrogation', which suggested they had been provided 'frequent and intensive indoctrination in security'.<sup>33</sup> Nonetheless, two prisoners alerted interrogators to their 'communication with two *Abwehr* [German Military Intelligence] agents in Cairo'.<sup>34</sup>

In addition to the prisoners, the Australians captured sensitive documents and signals interception equipment. A collection of *Unit 621*'s daily and monthly reports, including some dating back to the Battleaxe Offensive on 14 June 1941, provided insights into the inadequacy of British communications security countermeasures.<sup>35</sup> The Eighth Army's heavy reliance on speech led Herz to comment that *Unit 621* did 'not have to bother too much about ciphers, all we really needed [were] linguists, the sort who were waiters at the Dorchester before this war started'.<sup>36</sup> According to British records, many of the captured reports appeared to have been carried by Seebohm, who was visiting his forward echelon at the time.<sup>37</sup>



While no British codebooks were recovered, there was evidence that British codes had been compromised.<sup>38</sup> Also captured were the results of direction-finding and traffic analysis, including a list of British callsigns.<sup>39</sup> *Unit 621* identified individual units by tracking their Morse operators' distinctive 'fist'.<sup>40</sup> It had also exploited poor British radio discipline, including 'clear-text radiotelephone and telegraph messages mentioning geographical data, the names of individuals, unit designations; the failure to mask such terms properly; and the use of extremely simple ciphers and routine call signs'.<sup>41</sup>

The captured documents also indicated that the Germans knew the British signals intercept service enjoyed successes against German *en-clair* communications, and that the 'British were decoding [German and Italian] enciphered messages both simultaneously and retroactively, using the quantities of captured signals and by means of captured keys and cryptanalysis'.<sup>42</sup> More ominously, 'the captured material ... contained much detail about the penetration of the Black Code'<sup>43</sup> used to convey information to Washington from briefings with senior British military leadership in Cairo by the US Military Attaché in Cairo, Colonel Fellers. Fellers' reports were so reliable that the Germans referred to him as the 'Good Source'. Reassuringly for the Allies, there was no evidence to suggest that the British success against the German Enigma communications had been compromised.<sup>44</sup> While there is no evidence that an Enigma machine was part of the booty at Tel el Eisa, the capture of German ciphers and radio schedules led *Panzerarmee Afrika* to change these during the El Alamein battle.<sup>45</sup>

### Lessons/insights

Resistance to interrogation training is effective in delaying the intelligence exploitation of prisoners. Adherence to the need-to-hold principle, under which documents of strategic value that were not needed at the front line should not have been held, is particularly vital when moving to areas of greater security risk. Intelligence and security are two sides of the same coin — poor communications security significantly improves an adversary's signals intelligence.

## Few clues

The Australians were largely ignorant of the significance of their prize. The war diaries of the 2/24th Battalion and its parent formations, the 26th Brigade and the 9th Division, provide few clues on the capture of Seebohm's unit. The most substantial reference is in the 9th Division's Intelligence Summary No. 245 (13 July), which identified *Unit 621*,

69 ... German POWs ... were identified as belonging to NACH.FERNSP. AUFKL. KLMP 621 (3 Coy 56 Sig Bn). Some very valuable documents including wireless intercept messages were captured from this Coy.<sup>46</sup>

The 26th Brigade War Diary entries refer to German prisoners, but not their unit, while comment in the 2/24th Battalion War Diary is limited to a note that 'appreciation has been expressed concerning captured material and documents sent back, much valuable information has been gained'.<sup>47</sup> Over the following days, War Diary entries implore soldiers to hand in any souvenirs and documents of potential intelligence value.

Security may be one reason these records barely mention *Unit 621*'s capture. British signals intelligence channels did not extend below corps level, and so divisional, brigade and unit commanders were unaware of the extent of the signals intelligence threat. It was also imperative to keep the Germans guessing on the extent of knowledge gained concerning the Axis signals intelligence capability through the capture of *Unit 621*.

This was particularly important in the field of signals intelligence. Eight months earlier, the British had captured one of the German 'headquarter radio cars ... complete with Enigma machine and several days' messages in plain text'.<sup>48</sup> This would have provided an important break for British cryptanalysts seeking to unravel the German military's most sophisticated cipher machine. But because the Germans were aware of the Enigma machine's loss, the intelligence coup proved 'a minor disaster, as with effect from 23rd November all *Afrika Korps* cipher settings had been changed [and were] not read again until April 1942'.<sup>49</sup>

But there were probably other more mundane explanations as to why the 2/24th Battalion did not record *Unit 621*'s capture. It was not until late July that the battalion commenced issuing intelligence summaries, and in the immediate aftermath of the Tel el Eisa action there were more pressing issues — the battalion's commanding officer was captured when his vehicle took a wrong turn during the battle.

## The damage

*Unit 621*'s capture caused 'irreparable damage' to Rommel's campaign.<sup>50</sup> The unit had been,

The source of much of Rommel's order of battle and operational intelligence. The consequent reduction of its effectiveness was a severe blow to Rommel who depended during the remainder of July on inadequate information from local sources.<sup>51</sup>

As one authority concluded, 'many of the bold *Afrika Korps* manoeuvres which are recorded in the war histories as "lucky" or "strokes of genius" were only made possible by the information furnished by the listening companies'.<sup>52</sup>

However, the damage did not stop there. At the operational level, the Eighth Army was confronted by the extent of its poor communications security and quickly improved its countermeasures.<sup>53</sup> The British rapidly 'formed a "J" Service in North Africa ... to monitor Base, Army and Corps communications for breaches of security',<sup>54</sup> and the Germans noted that 'in a very short time the British corrected their numerous, costly mistakes'.<sup>55</sup> Thereafter, even though *Unit 621* was rebuilt in Germany in September 1942, its performance suffered.<sup>56</sup> According to Lieutenant Habel,

After the company was reactivated we succeeded in breaking a British supply code and were again delivered some valuable results but there was no way of regaining the consistently excellent results that had been obtained before 10th July 1942. But the flow of good results resumed upon our arrival in Tunisian soil [in December 1942] when we came within range of the American wireless traffic. They were still happy-go-lucky and careless of their signals procedures; they had not had the bad experiences of the British.<sup>57</sup>

There was also damage at the strategic level. While the British had discovered through human intelligence sources in late June that Axis intelligence was reading Fellers' reports, *Unit 621*'s capture not only confirmed this, but provided details of the results they had obtained, which exceeded British understanding.

More broadly, *Unit 621*'s capture provided the British with a plausible cover for other signals intelligence successes. It also provided valuable reassurances that the Germans did not suspect that the British had successfully attacked their secure communication. As the British Director of Military Intelligence Middle East,

Colonel de Guingand, noted to the British Radio Security Service, 'the Germans are under the impression that we have not obtained any success as regards their cipher'.<sup>58</sup>

### Lessons/insights

Providing tactical commanders with the ability to reachback to national-strategic intelligence capabilities carries with it the risk of compromise of those capabilities.

## Conclusions

*Unit 621*'s capture offers nine lessons that remain relevant to modern armies. First, commanders must balance the opportunities for improved collection against the risks of their loss or compromise when siting ISR assets in forward areas. Seebohm prioritised collection over security when he positioned his forward echelon close to the front line at Tel el Eisa. The forward siting of ISR elements not only affords better collection opportunities, but also offers local commanders tactical advantages based on the enhanced potential to speedily exploit the intelligence they might gain. However, their vulnerability to physical compromise increases the risks to the broader strategic intelligence capabilities of which they form part, and with which they are connected.

Second, a formation's tolerance for accepting (or ignoring) risks is shaped by the command environment established by senior leadership. Seebohm, and probably his senior leadership, accepted risks in siting his collection echelon forward in order to improve *Unit 621*'s ability to provide timely, relevant and accurate intelligence. On 10 July 1942, the consequences of that deployment were realised and *Panzerarmee Afrika* suffered a devastating intelligence loss.

Third, as ISR units are rarely capable of providing their own security, other forces need to be assigned to their defence. Given its location at Tel el Eisa, a British attack on *Unit 621*'s forward echelon was always a possibility, but more could have been done to mitigate the likely consequences of the unit being overrun. This is particularly the case today given the potential reach of both conventional and unconventional forces, and the nature of threats in an insurgency. This is a significant challenge given the increased proportion of ISR elements in modern force packages and a commensurate decrease in the number of combat forces available to ensure their protection.

Fourth, combat units need to be alert to, and apprised of potential intelligence prizes. Leaders at all levels need to be alert to opportunities for intelligence exploitation and must be able to prioritise the evacuation of personnel, equipment and information that is likely to be of intelligence value. *Unit 621*'s presence at Tel el Eisa came as a complete surprise to the Australians. While allowing for the possible sanitisation of the Australian records, the omission until the late 1980s of any mention of *Unit 621*'s capture from post-war accounts indicates that, while the Australians knew they had captured German communicators, they did not appreciate the full significance of their catch. As a result, intelligence exploitation of captured personnel, equipment and documents was delayed. Tactical questioning was conducted much further behind the lines than it might have been, allowing high-value prisoners to overcome the shock of capture, contributing to their 'stubborn resistance' of their eventual interrogation. As suggested by the subsequent requests for the return of 'souvenirs', it is likely that the sensitive site, document and material exploitation were compromised through a lack of knowledge and awareness among the 2/24th Battalion soldiers.

The fifth lesson is the need for an effective emergency destruction plan. The 90-minute battle did not allow time for the emergency destruction of records and equipment that later fell into British hands. Emergency destruction protocols must be rapid if they are to account for the unforeseen, suggesting that they need to be explosive or fast burning to ensure swift and complete destruction. The April 2001 emergency landing of a US Navy EP-3E ISR aircraft on Hainan Island provides just one example of the challenges of emergency destruction in the digital age. In that incident, the aircrew, lacking other options, resorted to using hot coffee in an attempt to destroy on-board hard drives.<sup>59</sup>

Sixth, *Unit 621*'s experience demonstrates the value of preparing high-value personnel, including commanders and intelligence staff, for conduct after capture to reduce the speed at which an adversary can obtain actionable intelligence through their interrogation.

Seventh, Seeböhm's capture with documents of strategic value that were not needed at the front line demonstrates the value of the 'need-to-hold' principle. With the hindsight that studying military history provides, the wisdom of *Unit 621*'s forward echelon holding so many old reports, including those carried by Seeböhm, is questionable.<sup>60</sup> Today, the risk of compromise is even greater given the ability of electronic media to store prodigious amounts of information in a readily searchable format.

Eighth, intelligence and security are two sides of the same coin — the poorer a force's communications security, the more effective its adversary's signals intelligence. If one side enjoys intelligence successes against the other side's communications, it is dangerous not to assume that the reverse situation also applies.

Ninth, providing tactical commanders with intelligence reachback carries with it the risk of compromise of national–strategic intelligence sources. Today, there is also a potential broader cyber risk if national–strategic ISR communications networks are compromised.

Modern commanders face similar dilemmas to Rommel and Seebohm. Achieving mission success while limiting friendly force casualties and avoiding harm to non-combatants remains the highest priority for commanders at all levels and for governments. That pressure encourages commanders to deploy their ISR elements forward, while maintaining their ability to reach back to national–strategic agencies. But commanders must balance those requirements against the potential risk of compromise or loss of national strategic ISR capabilities, and the consequences for national security and long-term mission success. As modern armies rely on intelligence advantages to offset a reduced tactical footprint, the cautionary lessons from the Australian capture of *Unit 621* are of even greater significance to modern commanders. ■

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## The author

Colonel Tim Gellé is a serving Australian Army officer with experience as an intelligence officer from postings at the tactical, operational and strategic levels.

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## Reserves

### Paid Volunteers: Experiencing Reserve Service and Resignation

Major Jodie Lording

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#### Abstract

The Australian Army is investing a high proportion of its capability in operations, turning to the deployment of reservists to supplement the number of full-time soldiers available to deploy. While demand for Army reservists has increased, total force numbers have been decreasing. Defence-sponsored surveys of serving reservists are designed to analyse their motivation for serving from a quantitative standpoint. This paper presents the findings of doctoral research using a qualitative approach to complement those survey results, seeking to understand the experiences and perspectives of individuals undertaking Reserve service in Australia and the United Kingdom to assist human resource (HR) policy and practice within the Australian Army. The doctoral research involved nine participants who were asked to describe their motivation for joining the Army Reserve, their experience of HR activity, and what they regard as the most enjoyable and least enjoyable aspects of service. This data was analysed to understand individual experiences of Reserve service, retention and resignation to validate prior research. More importantly,

this latest research enabled the further development of previous theories and concepts. The study suggests that the motivation of reservists to serve is unique and represents a combination of both volunteer and part-time employee motivation. The conclusions drawn demonstrate that most participant reservists regard their service experience through both a volunteer perspective (value for time) and through an employee perspective (value for money). Reservists' attitude to their service experience in turn influences the rates of resignation and retention.

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*Is the nature of ADF Reserve service a form of part-time ADF employment or a unique form of service – or perhaps elements of both?*

Podger, Knox and Roberts<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

A 2007 review into military superannuation arrangements questioned the unique nature of Australian Defence Force (ADF) Reserve service. The review team argued that the provision of pro-rata full-time ADF conditions of service, including superannuation, is logical if the Reserve is a form of part-time employment. If, however, Reserve service is unique, then unique conditions of service should apply. The review team did not make a specific recommendation on Reserve service, leaving the matter for determination by the Department of Defence.<sup>2</sup>

Since the early 1990s, Army Reserve numbers have fallen steadily from a level of 24,000 to 25,000, to around 13,500 actively serving members today.<sup>3</sup> This has had a significant effect on ADF capability and the quality of Reserve training, the morale of reservists and, consequently, attendance at parade nights and activities. Defence has conducted numerous quantitative surveys of reservists in an attempt to understand their motivations for serving. The recent qualitative research described in this paper is designed to complement that survey work by examining the experiences and perspectives of those undertaking military service in two Army Reserve organisations: the Australian Army Reserve and the United Kingdom's (UK) Territorial Army.<sup>4</sup>

This paper addresses the unique nature of Reserve service and also analyses the reasons reservists provide for resignation. Through an overview of existing research, the paper presents the results of the original study designed to record the lived experiences of Australian Army reservists and UK Territorial Army members. The nine participants included serving and ex-serving reservists who reflected on

their motivation to join, their experience of recruitment, training, promotion and some of the most and least enjoyable aspects of Reserve service. Ex-service participants provided insights on their reasons for resigning. The participants — both male and female — had varying lengths of service, were from a range of corps, ethnic backgrounds and ranks, and represented a broad diversity of Reserve service. The size of the participant group was based on a convenient sample. The small number used is considered appropriate for the research approach employed. The research approach prefers small group sizes because it allows the researcher to dig deeply into the content and meaning derived from the interviews. This contrasts greatly from large, statistics-based research that requires large numbers of participants and limits the number of possible responses to questions. This study suggests that reservists' motivation to serve is unique and combines motivations typical of both unpaid volunteer and paid part-time or casual employees.

The study used a human resource (HR) lens to narrow the literature and research. This permitted the exclusion of other aspects such as equipment, facilities and logistic support, allowing the research to be suitably focused. Consequently, the scope of this paper includes a comparison of Reserve service and employment utilising industrial relations definitions. The study found that Reserve service most closely resembles casual employment, although there are significant differences. The 'part-time' employee psychological contract begins with the recruiting campaign<sup>5</sup> and is extensively discussed in a broad range of Defence literature.<sup>6</sup> The inaccuracy of terminology used in Defence literature often affects reservist identity and can cause psychological contract tensions between the Army and its reservists.

This study identifies that many reservists regard their service through both a volunteer (value for time) and an employee perspective (value for money). In other words, reservists consider themselves 'paid volunteers'. Models for understanding volunteer and employee tensions describe the factors that influence reservists' level of satisfaction and decision to resign. HR practices in the Army focus on the employee motivation of reservists. Thus, developing HR policies and practices that consider the volunteer motivations of reservists may increase retention.

## Reserve service research

Given the level of Reserve contribution to operations worldwide, there is surprisingly little academic thought dedicated to Reserve research. While recent research into reservist motivations is limited, there are some opinion papers and academic research that relate specifically to Reserve issues. Alex Douglas's 'Reclaiming Volunteerism' offers many important insights into Reserve service, but stops short of identifying Reserve salaries as the key difference between reservists and volunteers.<sup>7</sup> Other research targets issues such as Reserve retention after deployment, family impact on reservists during mobilisation, and the degree to which military leadership will accept Reserve casualties.<sup>8</sup>

The first significant effort to specifically understand ADF Reserves through survey methods began in the late 1990s. Subsequent reports used statistical trends to understand Reserve attitudes to part-time ADF service. These reports reviewed motivation to join, key issues of importance to reservists and factors that could boost their retention.<sup>9</sup> This significant body of quantitative research focused on quantifiable, measurable types of information. However this type of research is not equally balanced by qualitative research. Qualitative research records qualities that are descriptive, subjective or difficult to measure, allowing the voice of the individual to be heard.<sup>10</sup> This study aims to fill the gap in Reserve-focused qualitative research. The use of a qualitative approach means that this research can seek to confirm or challenge statistical findings, while also describing the reasons reservists respond to HR impacts on their service. Researching the reasons for resignation through qualitative research provides information that statistics cannot, and therefore complement current Department of Defence data.

To better understand the experiences of Army reservists in joining, serving and leaving the Reserves, the research used a specific form of qualitative research called phenomenology. The main research questions are posed from the position of 'how' a phenomenon occurs, while supporting questions that address the 'what' is happening within the phenomenon. In effect, it examines how individuals perceive their service and what has shaped this.<sup>11</sup>

The research questions addressed in this study are:

- Is serving as a reservist unique, and if so, *what* is unique about it?
- *How* do reservists experience and view their Reserve work?
- *What* model (if any) can be developed to represent the Reserve service experience?
- *How* do reservists experience resignation and their decision to stay or leave?
- *What* kind of event, or events, cause a reservist to resign?<sup>12</sup>

Data analysis used a descriptive empirical phenomenological method. The descriptive element of this analysis seeks to describe what is unique and looks for themes to explain how it is unique. The empirical part of the analysis then compares the themes with existing research models and theories such as the quantitative research conducted by Defence and others mentioned earlier. Using this approach allows the research to reinforce the findings of previous quantitative research and also to find or develop new theories or models for understanding what is happening — in this case, the phenomenon of Reserve resignation and retention.

## Unique but ambiguous employment proposition

Defining Reserve service has long been problematic and the unique nature or standard employment of reservists remains an ongoing question.<sup>13</sup> The *Defence Act 1903 (Cth)* provides the legal framework for ADF Reserve employment, defining reservists as ‘personnel who do not ordinarily render full-time service’.<sup>14</sup> Army reservists are bound by the Act and regulations to meet training period obligations.<sup>15</sup> They are not bound to render continuous full-time service unless called out or electing to do so. Essentially, Reserve service is defined by what it is not — full-time employment. This may underpin the recent use of the term ‘part-time service’.

Reserve service does not constitute a form of part-time employment or a form of unpaid volunteerism under industrial relations definitions.<sup>16</sup> Reservists are not part-timers because they do not work a full-time employee pro-rata week, but generally have set attendance patterns. Under the Department of Defence’s workforce reform plan, Plan Suakin provides part-time service that differs from routine Reserve service in that it is a pro-rata arrangement for members of the Regular Army to work part-time. Reservists are paid employees, not volunteers; however, manuals and instructions contain provisions for reservists to work without

payment.<sup>17</sup> While reservists are similar to casual employees given their shift-like employment pattern and remuneration, Reserve service and casual work also differ due to the tax-free status of Reserve pay.<sup>18</sup>

Casualised workforces enable employers to hire and retrench employees with little, if any notice. When the government institutes budget cuts, discretionary spending is one of the first areas affected. The survey participants in this study provided many examples of fluctuations in Reserve salary budgets. In 2009 and 2013, for example, budget cuts for the Reserve became newsworthy with 'cut[s] from as many as 48 to 24 [training day salaries per soldier], which would severely reduce operational readiness and probably result in mass resignations from the ranks'.<sup>19</sup> The governments of other countries have also instituted similar cuts in times of budget stringency.<sup>20</sup>

The culture of a casualised workforce may not support the depth of commitment expected of the Reserve workforce. At times, reservists are given limited notice regarding upcoming periods of employment. The Army's preference for a Reserve force that is trained and available for short-notice employment in a range of roles is well documented.<sup>21</sup> However, the notion of the Army reservist as a 'casual' employee rather than a part-time member has the potential to adversely affect the way that members of the full-time force view reservists – both in commitment to serve and quality of capability.

Increasing expectations of reservist availability do not align with the parameters of casual employment. One participant told the study: '[Reserve service will] take as much of your time as you're prepared to give it, and then they'll ask for more – always'. Another participant agreed with this sentiment, adding: 'the commitment that is expected ... [is] a big one'. Australian and UK-based participants assert that the demands on, and increasing expectations of reservists are not aligned to any other casual employment commitment. As a consequence, Reserve service is regarded as more than 'casual employment', but cannot be deemed 'part-time employment', and therefore more appropriately recognised as a unique form of employment.

Identifying Reserve service as unique employment sets the conditions for examining reservists' descriptions of their experiences. This allows the identification of themes in the analysis of reservists' motivation, satisfaction and decision to resign.

## The Reserve experience and perceptions of work

This research highlights two notable insights into the service experiences of reservists. First, the survey data gathered for this research confirms the view of Lomsky-Feder et al. who describe reservists through the metaphor of their lives as 'transmigrants'.<sup>22</sup>

The transmigrant metaphor presents an innovative viewpoint for exploring the specific social and organisational qualities of military Reserves. Reservists migrate swiftly and regularly between the military and civilian world. Lomsky-Feder et al. argue that reservists have 'different patterns of motivation, cohesion, political commitment and awareness, and long-term considerations that characterize each [world]'.<sup>23</sup> They describe the way reservists feel: they belong and yet do not fit into the military system; their civilian co-workers regard them as similar, but different due to their military service. Reservists have invested in both military and civilian life and are constantly moving as 'migrants' between military and civilian worlds. The experiences described by the participants in this research confirm the insights of Lomsky-Feder et al. Both UK and Australian participants openly discussed the unique sense of 'belonging' to the Reserve, but at times of not fitting into the broader Army. They described being both connected and disconnected from civilian colleagues because of their service and the tensions of managing other interests.

Secondly, this research also found that many reservists consider themselves both paid employees and unpaid volunteers. The ambiguity of Reserve service underpinned this line of investigation. The participants were provided the industrial relations definitions for the terms 'paid employees' and 'unpaid volunteers' and were then asked to define themselves as either an employee or a volunteer. Most struggled to describe their employment model. In analysing their responses, their literal response was considered alongside examination of what motivated them based on the motivations of employees versus the motivations of volunteers which, according to current research, can be significantly different. For example, volunteers are not motivated by remuneration as they are not paid. Seven of the nine participants presented information that indicated they considered themselves both employees and volunteers.<sup>24</sup> Of the remaining, a university student clearly perceived his service as paid employment, whereas a long-serving warrant officer explained that he would be willing to serve without remuneration. Analysis of each interview revealed evidence of changing volunteer/employee motivations and differing levels of satisfaction for each individual. These responses highlight the fact that the participating reservists regard themselves as 'a bit of both' — a hybrid of employee and volunteer.<sup>25</sup>



## Paid volunteer satisfaction and lifecycle

Reservists with a hybrid perception of service often face the tensions of competing employee/volunteer motivators and satisfiers. Employee and unpaid volunteer work motivation and satisfaction differ. While employees and volunteers may perform the same work, the actual or perceived rewards for that work vary. Volunteers' motivation to work without remuneration differs from that of paid workers. Motivation/satisfaction theories — such as described by Maslow in his hierarchy of needs theory — suggest that volunteers' lower order needs such as security, shelter and sustenance are met elsewhere<sup>26</sup> (including other work, pension, working partner). While paid work fills the lower order needs such as shelter, food and security, volunteering invariably satisfies higher order needs such as self-actualisation.<sup>27</sup> Maslow's higher order needs are those intangible rewards felt by participants in activities beyond basic survival.

Given reservists' lack of clarity in describing their employment model, thematic analysis was conducted which found that the Reserve experience correlates to both employee and volunteer satisfiers. Reservists are satisfied by their service through perceptions of being both an employee and unpaid volunteer (see Table 1).<sup>28</sup>

The study also revealed tensions between volunteer-like and employee motivation, with some themes revealing that participants were motivated in a similar way to volunteers. These motivators included the 'anticipated benefits of the activity',<sup>29</sup> and the fact that the organisation 'was doing admirable work and there were other non-monetary benefits [to] the volunteer'.<sup>30</sup> Participants' strong focus on 'culture and identity' highlighted the importance of the 'social systems and support networks' that Reserve service provides.<sup>31</sup> Likewise, participants' focus on a 'sense of belonging' to the Reserve strongly aligns with compensation theory knowledge. Compensation theory applies to those participants who explained that Reserve service compensates for the satisfaction they do not receive in their civilian work, such as taking part in exciting military activities or feeling 'set apart' from their civilian colleagues.<sup>32</sup>

Table 1: Reserve satisfiers compared with employee and volunteer satisfiers

1. Reserve satisfiers	2. Herzberg (employee satisfiers)	3. Volunteer satisfiers
Deploying	Work content	Help others or community Use skills or experience Do something worthwhile
Courses, learning, training, transferable skills	Work content	Use skills or experience Gain work experience Learn new skills
Camaraderie	Good relationships	Stemming naturally from involvement in an organisation Social contact
Exercises	Work content	Use skills or experience Be active
Adventure training	The challenge	Be active
Responsibility	Responsibility	—
Live firing	Work content	Be active
Doing something different	—	Do something worthwhile
Parades	—	Stemming naturally from involvement in an organisation
Promotion	Praise and recognition	—
Travel	—	—
—	Achievements	—
—	Autonomy	—
—	—	Personal or family involvement
—	—	Gain personal satisfaction
—	—	Relating voluntary work to religious beliefs

There was also evidence that participants' motivation closely resembled that of employees. Participants readily discussed issues concerning remuneration and benefits, training, hiring, administration and their relationship with Regular Army staff. Here the push/pull factors model is relevant, as it describes employee

retention in terms of 'pull factors' (the attractions of civilian life) and 'push factors' (the disadvantages of service life).<sup>33</sup> Participant focus on employee-like topics aligned to push factors such as 'salary, company policy and administration, supervision, working conditions, and interpersonal relations'.<sup>34</sup>

The unique Reserve service proposition occurs, in part, as a result of the ambiguity of reservists' sense of belonging to both the military and civilian spheres of their lives. Both UK and Australian reservists struggle to define the employment model in which they work. Their motivation to serve and satisfaction from service draws on both volunteer-like and employee examples. The motivation and satisfaction of employees conflicts with that of volunteers and explains, to a certain extent, the challenge of retaining reservists. The tensions between volunteer and employee motivations underpin the remaining research findings.

The above analysis points to the reservist psyche as a paradox rather than a dichotomy. Reserve service is not an 'either/or' frame of reference. The employee/volunteer motivation ebbs and flows between the two mindsets and can coexist in each individual's thinking.

A reservist's stage of life shapes his/her perception of service. As reservists experience service, other events and contexts influence the extent to which they perceive themselves as volunteers or employees. For example, if reservist currently view themselves more as volunteer, there are still aspects of service they can experience from an employee's perspective because of their current stage of life. A warrant officer participant considered himself purely as a volunteer, but readily described the need for Reserve superannuation, as appropriate to his age and length of service.

Figure 1 graphically depicts the ebbs and flows of the lifecycle mindset (dark line) and the fluctuations within this due to context or events (pale line) over time. Both relate to volunteer and employee motivation. Each individual will start and finish at different points on the graph. Some will start at a more volunteer-based position, others at an employee-based start point. This research found that reservists may start with a volunteer mindset and feel more like an employee in the later stages of their career. Others may join for the salary and later enjoy voluntary elements of service.



Figure 1: Reservists' paid-volunteer lifecycle

As each participant experienced different events in his/her personal life or Reserve service, the motivation to serve altered or became more weighted towards an employee or volunteer mindset.<sup>35</sup> Enjoyable Reserve activities that make such service different to civilian work (volunteer mindset), or fewer enjoyable tasks and heavy burdens such as administration (employee mindset), also changed participants' views of Reserve service.

Reservists unconsciously layer these short-term experiences onto their overarching view of their service. By doing so, tensions appear between the motivations to serve as an employee and a quasi-volunteer. The ever-changing view of 'self' as described by the participants, also affects their expectation of the ADF and its policies and practices. Indeed, they may view the same policy from different perspectives depending on their mindset at the time.

This theory highlights the opportunities to better understand Reserve motivation and satisfaction as a unique psychological or motivational model. If these participants are representative of other reservists, as suggested by transmigrant theory, then it will be important to develop suitable Reserve-specific HR policies and practices to maintain Reserve motivation.<sup>36</sup> If Defence adopts an employee-only focus in setting policy, a natural conflict between employee policy and volunteer-like motivation may arise, causing those who are motivated as volunteers to feel unfulfilled. The converse is also possible. Volunteer-like policies may also alienate those who regard themselves as employees.

## The resignation experience

Many participants asserted that the Army has high expectations of the modern reservist. These expectations can, at times, lead to resignation. The participants provided examples that included separation from partners due to Reserve service, the intrusion of Reserve service into civilian careers and the impact of Reserve service on other aspects of life. While these issues did not automatically cause the resignation of participants, a common thread from ex-serving participants' experiences was the issue of 'time'. Their perception was that their time was valuable and could be better spent doing other activities.

An existing theory of motivation, satisfaction and resignation known as 'spillover theory' is relevant here. The process of 'spillover' occurs when 'an employee's experience in one domain [of his/her life] affects their experience in another domain'.<sup>37</sup> Considered the most accurate view of the relationship between work and family, spillover describes multi-dimensional aspects of the work-family relationship. The four-factor spillover model (Figure 2) proposes positive and negative interrelationships between home and work.<sup>38</sup>

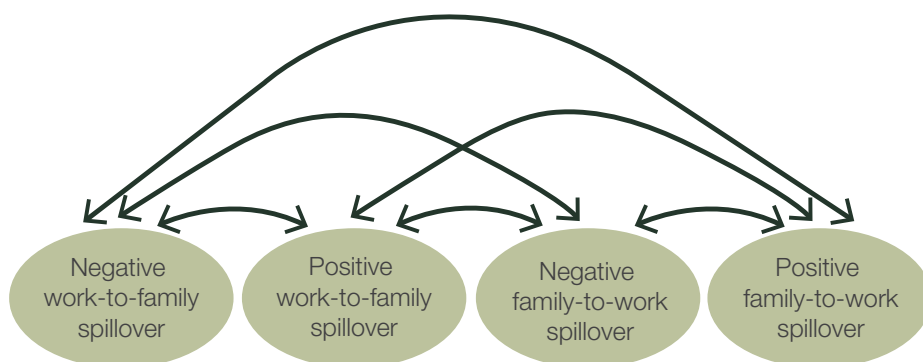


Figure 2: Kinnunen, Feldt, Guertes and Fulkkinen's four-factor spillover model

Spillover theory becomes significantly more complex when Reserve service is added to the model. By adding Reserve service, the model changes from a four-factor model to a 12-factor model.<sup>39</sup> The 12-factor model was developed prior to data collection because the literature suggested that life with Reserve service was significantly more complex. The Figure 3 model shows this to be the case. Following data analysis, the research revealed that 'time' was central to the positive and negative influences of the Army on non-service life. The model was further adjusted to include time to be central to the model.

The research demonstrated that participant perceptions of the Army's negative spillover effects magnify over time (see Figure 3).<sup>40</sup> Time is shown in the centre of all the spillover effects. The negatives of service increase in size and become more negative in the eyes of the affected reservist (red). As the negative spillover increases, it is perceived to erode time.

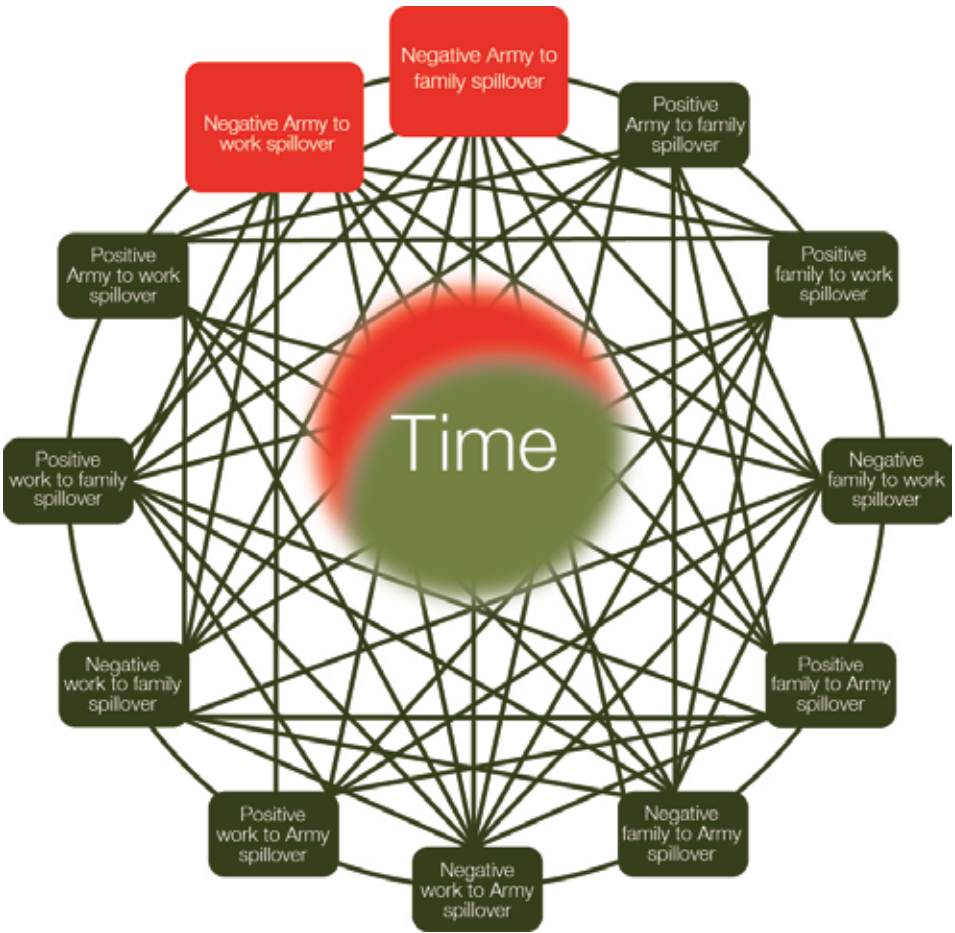


Figure 3: Reservists' spillover theory model

Previous surveys and interviews with serving members did not conclusively demonstrate the strength of pull factors for members who leave. With the inclusion of ex-serving members, this research identified that reservists commonly leave because of the tensions of finite time and the inability to manage time within their trans migratory lives.<sup>41</sup> This significant insight into the tensions of Reserve life is important in identifying likely resignation trends.

## Resignation event or events

In contrast to existing Defence survey data that infers a critical event as the precipitant, this research found that reservists often do not leave because of a single event.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, this research identified that serving reservist perceptions of reasons to leave are not likely to be predictors of future resignation.

Multiple incidents, underpinned by spillover time pressures, push and pull factors<sup>43</sup> and an emphasis on aspects of work, cause dissatisfaction as described by Herzberg.<sup>44</sup> Serving participants perceived push factors as providing more plausible reasons to resign.<sup>45</sup> Aspects of workplace conditions within the service that may prompt resignation include being 'stuffed around', being forced to leave, or being 'picked on'.<sup>46</sup> Only one serving participant mentioned a pull factor — that being that his military career has a negative impact on other aspects of life. A 2004 ADF Reserve report cites increasing Reserve pay, providing a retention bonus/financial reward, improving allowances and providing Defence-sponsored superannuation as possible incentives for persuading reservists to continue to serve.<sup>47</sup> All the elements of the survey relate to service life and thus focused only on push factors. There is arguably a gap in that the ADF report did not fully consider the possible pull factors to retention or resignation and subsequent efforts to counter the pull to leave.

This research and previous surveys reinforce the proposition of 'value for money' for reservists motivated by employee-like satisfiers. Current theory points to these factors as causing people to become dissatisfied (push factors), while other research suggests that these are not factors that would satisfy or retain members.<sup>48</sup> The surveys and interviews of serving members did not convincingly demonstrate the strength of pull factors for members who leave, given that these participants had no experience of resignation.<sup>49</sup>

By contrast with serving participant views, ex-serving participants explained that the decision to leave was not a rapid, impulsive decision, but often seriously considered over a significant timeframe. As noted in spillover theory, the ex-serving participants clearly assessed 'time' as a tangible pull factor to leave, particularly the inability to manage time within their transmigratory lives. While there are suggestions that civilian work hours appear to be increasing,<sup>50</sup> the average hours worked by full-time employees have remained stable since the 1970s.<sup>51</sup> The increase in work time appears to be more a result of the career progression of an individual rather than changes to statistical norms. Longer serving participants described experiences in which promotion to management level increased work hours. Reserve and civilian employment promotions often parallel one another, with both demanding increased time commitment beyond standard work hours. This results in unpaid Reserve work becoming more visible to civilian employers and partners. For example, two participants described Reserve service as a key contributor to collapsed relationships.<sup>52</sup>

Ex-serving reservists assert that pull factors are a more likely determinant of resignation than push factors.<sup>53</sup> Although time underpinned their resignations, the ex-serving participants described other cumulative experiences that also contributed to their decision to leave. One such experience was the erosion of the enjoyable aspects of service. Corporate governance tasks are identified as taking an increasing proportion of the time available for Reserve service. The repeated adage of 'part-time army; full-time admin' throughout the interviews emphasised this frustration. When Reserve service feels too similar to civilian work, the reservist may decide that precious 'free time' may be better spent on other activities. The pull of civilian life wins this battle.

Ex-serving reservists describe their resignation more in volunteer terms than those of employees. Phrasing such as the feeling of being unable to 'dedicate my time to it' is reminiscent of volunteer language, as an employee is less likely to offer that phrase when resigning from paid employment. While the value proposition for an employee is 'value for money', the proposition for the volunteer-like reservist is 'value for time'.

The Department of Defence's unconscious breaking of its psychological contract with employee/volunteer soldiers also contributes to resignation. The construct of a mutual agreement is the foundation of a psychological contract. According to psychological contract theory, employers and employees behave in a manner based on the supposed fulfilment of explicit or implicit promises made between



the organisation and the employee.<sup>54</sup> Further, employees' psychological contracts with the organisation vary from person to person and, as such, they have different degrees and types of expectations of their employer. In short, a psychological contract is personal and subjective. However, shared psychological contracts or normative contracts are those in which people from situations that are similar — be it team, organisation or context — tend to build similar psychological contracts to other like-minded individuals. These may result from their similar values, job descriptions, employment conditions or other similarities. Nevertheless, individuals will still interpret the employer promise (job security, salary, commission, and holidays) in unique ways based on historical norms of what they have previously received in return for work or service.<sup>55</sup>

Increasing demands on reservists' time and commitment create a psychological contract that reinforces their valuable contribution to ADF capability. The ex-serving participants in particular described the consequence of dramatic changes to Reserve commitment as quasi-casual employees in response to budget reductions. They perceived Defence's appreciation of the value of Reserve service as fickle, believing that their 'volunteer' time was no longer valuable to Defence, undermining higher order needs such as self-actualisation. The ever-changing pressures on Reserve commitment therefore contribute to Reserve resignation. Participants believed that Defence messaging on the value of the Reserves is consistent, but that there is inconsistent action to support this over budget cycles.

## Conclusion

This paper addresses the unique nature of Reserve service and the reasons for resignation identified in recent doctoral research. This research suggests that reservists are motivated by both employee and volunteer motivations, a result of ambiguity within the Reserve service proposition. Reserve service is largely described in the *Defence Act 1903 (Cth)* by what it is not and does not neatly fit into an industrial relations or HR definition of employment. As a result, reservists find it difficult to accurately describe their service.

Reservist resignation occurs when the volunteer and employee satisfiers compete and is often the result of multiple pull factors to civilian life, with time at the core. The models presented illustrate how reservists also resign when the spillover tensions from Reserve service become untenable. The opposing psychological differences between being a paid employee and a volunteer represent a significant contributing factor to the high rate of resignation.

Developing HR policies and practices that accommodate the 'paid volunteer' motivations of reservists may improve future retention and personnel capability. The unconscious ambiguity of employment status may negatively influence policymaking with repercussions for the experiences of the reservist. The nature of Reserve service is unique and requires further research. This paper recommends that Defence seek a better understanding of the nature of this service and develop more effective HR policy and practices in the future that can accommodate the various intrinsic and extrinsic factors that may prompt reservists to leave. The complexity of Reserve service means it cannot be resolved through a quick, single-focus policy, program or practice. It must be more than a modified version of full-time conditions, but rather a carefully considered suite of policies uniquely reflecting the nature of Reserve service.

Reserve HR policy must balance the employee and volunteer motivators and satisfiers to sustain future forces. While emerging Reserve HR policy is unlikely to affect future recruitment success, it is highly likely to have beneficial effects on retention. Current policy sufficiently addresses the 'value for money' proposition for employment, ensuring the 'push' disadvantages of service life are managed. The quality of policy implementation into practice varies and has mixed results on push of reserve resignation. Regardless, more focus on countering the 'pull' attractions of civilian life is required so that the paid volunteer perceives service as 'value for time'. ■

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Major Lording's doctorate was awarded from the University of Technology, Sydney. She also holds a Master of Adult Education (human resources major) and a Bachelor of Music Education from the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, as well as credentials in logistics, management, training and assessment, and workplace health and safety. In her civilian career she is an information communication and technology (ICT) project manager.

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## Endnotes

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- 3 Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report*, Canberra: Department of Defence, 2001–02, 2007–08, 2009–10, 2011–12. Department of Defence, *Army Reserve Pocket Book as at Jun 15*, Canberra.
- 4 The United Kingdom Territorial Army is now referred to as the Army Reserve.
- 5 The current Reserve recruiting campaign slogan is 'Do Something for Yourself and Your Country'. See <http://www.defencejobs.gov.au/army/reserve/>.
- 6 Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2009: Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Canberra: Department of Defence, 2009; Australian Government, *Australia in the Asian Century*, Canberra, 2012; J. Reich, J. Hearps, A. Cohn, J. Temple and P. McDonald, *Defence Personnel Environment Scan 2025*, Canberra: Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research, 2006; T. Schindlmayr, *Defence Personnel Environment Scan 2020*, Canberra: Directorate of Strategic Personnel Planning and Research, 2001.
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- 9 See J. Lording, *Paid Volunteers – Investigating Retention of Army Reservists*, EdD thesis, University of Technology, Sydney, 2014, for full bibliography of Defence reports consulted.
- 10 Quantitative research, particularly if methods focus on questionnaires, allow researchers to gather data across large organisation like the Department of Defence; generalising statistical data across diverse participants also has the tendency to pigeonhole people. Phenomenology, as a qualitative research method, provides a balance that allows the voice of the individual to be heard.
- 11 In phenomenological research, the research topic is formed from an intense interest in a particular problem or topic. A researcher's enthusiasm and inquisitiveness should positively underpin the research and 'personal history brings the core of the problem into focus'. See C. Moustakas, *Phenomenological Research methods*, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, 1994, p. 104. Phenomenologists want to know what participants are experiencing and how they experience it. See L. Finlay, *Introducing Phenomenological Research*, <http://lindafinlay.co.uk/phenomenology/>. This is true in the case of the author whose own Army Reserve experience motivated the research — a true insider's research. See T. Brannick and D. Coghlan, 'In Defense of Being "Native" — The Case for Insider Academic Research', *Organizational Research Methods*, 10: 1, 2007, pp. 59–74.
- 12 This paper cannot present all the questions and findings from the research and therefore selectively presents the most illustrative results. For the full research thesis, see Lording, *Paid Volunteers – Investigating Retention of Army Reservists*.
- 13 Podger et al., *Report of the Review into Military Superannuation Arrangements*.
- 14 Australian Government, *Defence Act 1903*, Canberra, <http://www.comlaw.gov.au/Series/C2004A07381>.
- 15 The Act accommodates the various types of Reserve service such that the regulations can specify differing training obligations between Active and Standby Reserves.
- 16 Department of Defence, *Pay and Conditions Manual*, Canberra, <http://www.defence.gov.au/dpe/pac>.
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## Training

# Enhancing the Army's Urban Warfare Capability

Lieutenants Chris Hughes and William Leben

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### Abstract

This article sets out a bold training investment opportunity for the Australian Army — a multinational, large-scale urban warfare training centre. Australia's current training facilities fall significantly short of what is required to prepare force elements the size of battle groups and larger formations for either short-duration or sustained operations in the urban littoral. Urban warfare is an Army-wide skill set, not a specialisation restricted to members of Special Operations Command. Investing in the development of a large-scale and realistic urban operations training facility will enable commanders and their units to conduct the Army's core business — winning the land battle — in the crowded urban littoral.

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*For the Army, operating in high density urban terrain will no longer be a discretionary activity.*

*Future Land Warfare Report 2014<sup>1</sup>*

If the Australian Army's vision of the future operating environment is accurate, fighting in urban terrain is almost inevitable. Indeed, recent history and current conflicts such as that in Iraq suggest that this is by no means a futuristic concept. Yet there is a mismatch between the imperative for the Army to be ready for the urban fight and the limited training facilities available to allow it to prepare its units.

Australia's current training facilities fall significantly short of what is required to prepare force elements the size of combat teams, battle groups and larger formations for either short-duration or sustained operations in the urban littoral. Moreover, the best facilities available to the Army reflect the assumption of recent years that the special forces community will bear the brunt of complex urban warfighting, a dubious assumption at best. Urban warfare is (or at least should be) an Army-wide skill set, not a specialisation restricted to members of Special Operations Command (SOCOMD). This article proposes the development of a large-scale urban warfare training facility to provide regular collective training across the Army to enhance capability. Such a facility would allow the Australian Army and partner militaries to immerse battle group and possibly larger force elements in a complex and realistic training environment.

This article is divided into two broad sections. The first describes the imperatives that may see the Army deploy substantial force elements into the urban littoral in coming years and examines the inadequacies of the currently available training infrastructure. The second section proposes a solution to the identified shortfalls and briefly examines this solution.

## **The future operating environment and the training status quo**

Australian Army publications have recognised for some time that the world is becoming increasingly urbanised, and have discussed the security implications of this trend and some of the broader realities of operating in urban terrain.<sup>2</sup> It is now widely accepted that the decisive phase of many conflicts will be concentrated in major population centres either during the conventional phase of operations or in the insurgency that may follow. The implications of urbanisation and the emergence of weak states also suggest a reasonable possibility that the Army will face



terrorists, organised crime and other threat groups in this environment. Near-peer, conventional, high-threat (choose the jargon) scenarios should also not be dismissed lightly as urban possibilities in coming years.<sup>3</sup> Attention has recently focused on the question of how to effectively control a city with limited mass, with particular reference to understanding the 'metabolism' of a city.<sup>4</sup> As David Kilcullen states,

The future conflict environment is likely to be characterized by rapid population growth, increasing urbanization, accelerating littoralization, and greater connectedness ... We are still likely to experience wars between nation-states, and conflict in remote areas such as mountains, jungles and deserts will still undoubtedly occur. But the trends are clear ... more Mumbai, Mogadishu, and Tivoli Gardens — and we had better start preparing for it.<sup>5</sup>

While such discourse is useful from an intellectual and strategic planning perspective, it actually does little to prepare units to operate in such an environment. Indeed, without proper preparation of force elements, the iterative process between concepts and strategy and what we can actually achieve with our assets and formations cannot proceed. Without testing our vision of urban operations we are conceptualising into a vacuum, surely a bad idea when the level of friction in the urban come real-world operations will be high. This we know for certain.

Current urban training facilities available to the Australian Army tend to consist of modified shipping containers or low-density settlements that are no more than three-storeys high and of limited sprawl.<sup>6</sup> The limited size of facilities restricts what can be achieved in an exercise and, as such, training tends to focus on penetration from rural terrain into urban terrain. These limitations are true even of Holsworthy's Special Forces Training Facility, an excellent facility but one understandably tailored to a certain mission set.<sup>7</sup> High quality urban training facilities are required for more than domestic counterterrorism missions. While small facilities are sufficient for soldiers to practise individual drills and for section and platoon manoeuvre, they constrain capability across units and formations.

Training should be oriented to sustained operations in the urban littoral, rather than the disconnected tactical challenges this environment presents. The small size of current facilities means that training and exercises tend to focus on penetration from the rural to the urban for a geographically and temporally limited objective, such as the seizure of a sector or the destruction of a small enemy force, prior to withdrawal from urban terrain. Commanders and units seeking to exercise a broader range of tasks for an extended period lack the infrastructure to do so. There is simply no infrastructure to support battle group or larger urban operations

training across the spectrum of conflict, let alone in a sustained and immersive fashion. This size limitation also fails to replicate the diverse nature of urban terrain, from slum to urban sprawl to high rise complexes and so on, instead presenting the commander with a more or less homogenous urban environment. Australian doctrine recognises the complex reality of urban terrain, accepting that even limited urban operations, let alone sustained ones, create a heavy burden on combat service support elements.<sup>8</sup> Add to this the likelihood of heavy casualties and an extremely confusing and confronting tactical situation for commanders and soldiers alike.<sup>9</sup> A training facility that allows adaptation to this challenge is a necessity.

Force elements will not always launch into an urban environment from the rural or littoral, conduct short-lived operations and withdraw. Rather, combat teams, battle groups and possibly larger formations, with their enabling, supporting and supplying assets, will lodge into urban terrain. They will then fight, live, resupply, refit, repair equipment, rest, plan, command, and so on, on a prolonged basis from within that environment. At present it is impractical for combat service support assets to exercise on anything approaching the full-scale resupply of force elements in an immersive urban environment. Yet this is undeniably what they will be tasked to do. Their role will range from the resupply of forward operating bases within cities — and require counter-improvised explosive device and ambush protection — to the resupply of a combat team in contact with a near-peer or peer enemy in suburban sprawl with its own very different challenges.

The nature of the urban environment in current facilities is also unrealistic in its simplicity. Typical urban clutter such as furniture, vehicles, vegetation and rubble are under-represented both indoors and outdoors making training and manoeuvre far too straightforward. Perhaps more importantly, there are far too few civilians and other state and non-state actors represented in urban training. It is rare that the entire civilian population will be able or willing to abandon their homes even in the event of a conventional combined arms assault on their city. The American experience in the Iraqi city of Fallujah provides a graphic example of this reality.<sup>10</sup>

While the Army has become well practiced in manoeuvre in the rural environment, including through regular brigade-level conventional exercises such as Exercise Hamel, it has so far committed only limited resources to training for urban operations, despite identifying this as its most likely battlefield for the remainder of the twenty-first century. This is not abstract futurism, nor is it ahistorical. For example, if Australia was to deploy substantial combat rather than training forces to Iraq to counter Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), those forces would most likely experience heavy fighting in cluttered, complex urban centres such as Mosul.

Clashes between ISIL and Iraqi forces to date have been very much urban in context.<sup>11</sup> Other Australian experiences — including in conflicts popularly perceived as within the rural environment — attest to the likelihood of the Army confronting this challenge once again. The Australian infantry and armour at Binh Ba, Vietnam, in 1969; INTERFET troops in Dili, East Timor, in 1999; and Australian infantry and cavalry in Nasiriyah, Iraq, through 2007, all testify to the challenge that urban warfare presents.

## A large-scale urban warfare facility

The Army needs to consider how it will educate and train the future force to fight in this environment. It is important for commanders and soldiers alike to become as comfortable as possible with the complexities of combat and sustainment in the urban environment. The mentality of thriving rather than surviving in the conditions, of living rather than merely fighting inside the area of operations — a mentality that at least nominally underlies large-scale rural-centric training activities — must be applied to the urban environment.

The Israeli Defence Force (IDF), in the aftermath of its 2002 incursion into Gaza and 2006 Second Lebanon War, concluded that it needed a specialised facility to adequately prepare formations for the conduct of contemporary urban warfare. While the IDF has a pressing imperative the Australian Defence Force does not, the Australian Army ignores urban warfare at its peril. The IDF's Urban Warfare Training Facility is a sprawling site that consists of over 600 buildings, some of which are up to eight-storeys high, comprising schools, shops, a mosque and apartment blocks.<sup>12</sup> The IDF facility is not suggested as a template, it is simply an example. A training facility of this size allows the conduct of battle group-level exercises entirely within the confines of an urban centre. It allows truly combined arms operations to be practised, including the use of armoured vehicles in close cooperation with infantry and engineers in a confined space. Planners for an Australian facility might also draw lessons and ideas from multiple American examples as well as British 'fighting in built-up areas' facilities, such as the Salisbury Plain training area.<sup>13</sup>

The Australian facility should be defined by a set of training outcomes. The overall benchmark standard should be, as a minimum, the ability to conduct a combined arms, battle group-sized, immersive exercise annually. This would work to rectify the shortcomings in urban training for non-SOCOMD units identified in the first part of this article. This annual exercise could then grow in frequency or scale

and should be tied from the outset to the force generation cycle. Organisationally, it seems sensible for the Combat Training Centre to 'own' training at the facility. A number of sub-benchmarks should also be met. The facility should have the capacity to be divided into discrete areas to simultaneously conduct smaller activities. These areas should include an instrumented live-fire urban range to practise applying fire to a fleeting enemy in apertures and tight spaces such as alleyways. A 'suburb' or 'sector' with a high level of destructibility ideal for breaching training could also be used to practise the hardening of structures for urban defensive operations. Two or more of these sectors, at least one or some of which should be instrumented, should be able to conduct simultaneous combat team-sized activities while armoured vehicles should be able to use every sector in order to engender close cooperation between armour and infantry.

Any blank firing exercise in the facility should incorporate a high number of civilian role players to add increased complexity to the scenario, including the prospect of collateral damage. These role players should be of identifiable religious or ethnic grouping and should be placed to interact with Australian and enemy forces, tasked to either hinder or assist according to the scenario. Specific actions or mistakes by Australian soldiers or commanders could even drive these civilian role players to take up arms in ways reflective of a real insurgency. Such role players should not be neglected given their ability to add valuable complexity to conventional warfighting scenarios.

Over a period of some years, the Australian facility should continually add structures, incorporating various types and sizes of buildings as well as urban patterns such as areas of urban sprawl, transitioning to industrial zone, transitioning to slum. It should also aim to represent other aspects of urban terrain, such as featuring a substantial level of destructibility to facilitate the full exercise of breaching, use of armoured vehicles, and so on. Israeli experience in Gaza also demonstrates the increasing trend towards subterranean warfare as the enemy will seek to use sewers, subways and even purpose-built tunnels to facilitate manoeuvre and resupply. Any urban warfare facility should, as a matter of course, include subterranean tunnels, allowing combat engineers, for example, to adapt to the challenges of tunnel clearance.

The full scope of such a facility need not be achieved in one build; it may make sense to build in stages with ongoing expansion and development over a number of years. Perhaps the greatest construction challenge involved in this proposal is the requirement to site this facility on the coast — in the littoral. As such, the first planning requirement would be to identity a suitable location on or very near

to the coast upon which to build the facility. While this poses challenges, the vast Australian coastline offers ample options, many of sufficient distance from population centres. Indeed, one option simply involves the expansion of facilities at Shoalwater Bay. Locating the facility appropriately to maximise the scenarios and terrain it can be used to exercise is essential.

There is also a degree of multinational potential in a large-scale urban training facility. The list of nations with at least a theoretical interest in this kind of proposal is extensive. Starting with Australia's closest allies and neighbours, these may include the United States, New Zealand, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia. Slightly further abroad, but still regionally, South Korea, Japan and China represent more possibilities, and there may be other sporadic, but still worthwhile interest from like-minded nations globally. Many of these partners may also be interested in combined training opportunities in such a facility, particularly once it has fully matured. Into the future, a modest level of multinational investment could be attracted to boost funding for continued additions to the facility.

## Conclusion

The Australian Army recognises that it must operate in the urban littoral in the future and it should take the necessary measures to ensure that it can train a force to prepare for such an eventuality. Armies have and will continue to operate and fight in villages, towns and cities. However Army's current facilities are inadequate and fail to meet the requirements for realistic training in the contemporary operating environment. The gradual development of a large-scale urban training facility would allow the annual training of a battle group-sized element in an immersive and realistic environment and effectively resolve this critical shortfall. This collective training benchmark should be the overarching goal of the facility, along with a number of sub-requirements such as instrumentation, the use of role players and partitioning into various sectors.

The Army must consider its training investment priorities as it moves forward in a changing operating environment. Adequate urban training facilities should be seen as a non-optional fundamental input to capability.<sup>14</sup> The fiscally constrained reality that confronts Army makes this prioritisation all the more essential. The proposal outlined in this article needs political and organisational effort to bring it to fruition, from both within and outside the Army — but it is well worth the effort. Even if it is later conceded that the *Army's Future Land Warfare Report 2014* has overstated the inevitability of operations in the urban littoral, the Australian Government

must have forces at its disposal that are capable of conducting such a mission — and they must be appropriately prepared. A large-scale and realistic urban operations training facility will enable commanders and their units to conduct the Army's core business — winning the land battle — in the crowded urban littoral.<sup>15</sup> ■

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## Capability

# Force Protection's Last Resort: Evaluating the Browning Hi-Power Mk III for the Australian Army of Tomorrow

Deane-Peter Baker and Warrant Officer Class One W<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

Handguns are increasingly being recognised as a vital piece of equipment for the protection of deployed soldiers. With the correct holster, a handgun can be brought into action faster than the F88 and M4 rifles can be reloaded. Handguns thus play a critical back-up role in the event of catastrophic failure of the primary weapon. Indeed, in some circumstances, it makes sense for the handgun to supersede the rifle as the primary weapon. This article provides a detailed analysis of the current handgun, the Browning Hi-Power, and assesses whether it meets the force protection needs of the Australian Army in the current and emerging combat environment. This analysis extends to a comparison with competing designs that feature higher capacity magazines, polymer frames, striker-fired actions and under-barrel accessory rails. The final section discusses the results of an empirical

study, which rates the performance of the Browning against more modern handguns. The results are compelling and signal that replacing the Browning is an operational and ethical imperative.

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## Introduction

John Moses Browning (1855–1926) was a weapons design genius. He was also a man of his time and many of his designs, such as the Winchester Model 1887 lever-action shotgun, belong to the past. Yet his genius was such that at least one of his designs, the M2 .50 calibre machine-gun, remains unsurpassed. The primary handgun currently in service with the Australian Army is the Self-Loading Pistol 9 millimetre Mark 3, a slightly upgraded version of one of Browning's designs that is generally known as the Browning Hi-Power. As the Army looks beyond Plan Beersheba to future modernisation projects, the continued use of the Browning Hi-Power must also be considered. Is this a weapon that meets the force protection needs of the Australian Army in the current and emerging combat environment? This article argues that, given the advances in handgun design since the Hi-Power was introduced into service by the Australian Defence Force (ADF), the Browning has been well and truly surpassed and replacing it is an operational and moral imperative.

## Why the Army's service pistol matters

The Australian Army has a duty of care to its soldiers. The moral contract that binds soldiers on enlistment requires them to be willing, if necessary, to give their lives in defence of their country. This is balanced by the moral commitment of the Australian people, exercised through the Australian Government and its military, to do everything within reason to ensure that the lives of Australian soldiers are not risked unnecessarily. Thus there is a moral aspect to force protection that goes beyond the operational imperative to preserve the warfighting capability of the force.<sup>2</sup>

While the humble handgun currently receives relatively little attention in the Australian Army, there is growing recognition that an effective pistol should be a fundamental part of every soldier's basic equipment, along with the training to employ it appropriately. It is a reality that the soldier's rifle *will* suffer stoppages, whether as a result of emptying the rifle's magazine, or through mechanical failure.

Internal data from Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) training courses indicate that, on average and with an appropriate holster, a handgun can be brought into action three seconds faster than the ADF's standard issue F88 Austeyr bullpup rifle can be reloaded, and two seconds faster than an M4 carbine. For most operators, this can be increased even further with a little extra training. These seconds are potentially the difference between life and death on the battlefield. And, of course, a soldier whose rifle suffers a catastrophic failure during combat, and who has no handgun to fall back on, is in a very difficult situation indeed (the analogy of a reserve parachute seems appropriate here).

At times, the handgun steps up from its secondary role to become the primary weapon, for example in missions where keeping a relatively low aggression profile is important, or within the confines of an office complex on a base in the operational area. Indeed the risk of 'green-on-blue'<sup>3</sup> attacks should never be overlooked. An effective pistol also offers a potentially life-saving capability when transiting obstacles or negotiating urban terrain. In short, the Army's service pistol matters, and it is important to consider whether the current issue Browning is adequate to the task.

## **Limitations of the Browning Hi-Power compared to modern competitors**

When first introduced into military service in the 1930s, the Browning's design was undoubtedly ahead of its time. By today's standards, however, it is well behind the curve for contemporary operational use. Perhaps most telling is the Browning's limited 13-round magazine capacity. By comparison, the Glock 17, chosen by the British Army to replace its Browning Hi-Powers in late 2013, has a standard 17-round magazine capacity, an increase of almost 24 per cent. Obviously, in circumstances that require the employment of a handgun, it is better to have 17 rounds 'on board' than 13 — the fastest magazine change cannot compete with simply firing the 14th round. Another limitation is the lack of an under-barrel accessory rail, which precludes the Browning from being equipped with such potentially life-saving and capability enhancing devices as weapon lights and night-vision compatible infra-red lasers. Weapon lights also provide the ability in some circumstances for improved target identification, helping operators fulfil their legal and ethical responsibility to discriminate between legitimate targets (combatants) and illegitimate targets (non-combatants).

The Browning is also behind the curve in other respects. Given its all-steel construction, it is significantly heavier than modern polymer-frame pistols, an important consideration given the high rate of musculoskeletal injuries among heavily laden infantry soldiers. As the old saying goes, 'ounces equal pounds, and pounds equal pain'. While the newer polymer-framed pistols were initially derided as 'Tupperware guns', they have more than proven their ruggedness. The all-steel construction of the Browning makes it significantly more expensive than polymer-framed pistols like the Glock 17 and Smith & Wesson M&P. On the civilian market, the Browning Hi-Power Mk III costs around \$1300, compared to Glocks and Smith & Wesson M&Ps, which sell for between \$750 and \$850 each.

The latter pistols also illustrate the strong trend in modern pistol design away from single-action hammer-fired guns with external thumb safeties such as the Browning, with striker-fired pistols equipped with drop-safeties and trigger safeties emerging as the new standard. While external thumb safeties offer little additional safety on a modern pistol, their absence avoids some key problems. The US Army has rejected Beretta's offer of an upgraded version of the current issue 30-year-old M9 pistol (itself a replacement for the Colt 1911 pistol, another of Browning's designs and closely comparable with the Hi-Power), partially because of the M9's external thumb safety which causes problems in malfunction drills.<sup>4</sup> More generally, not having an external thumb safety means that the operator can draw the pistol and begin engaging targets simply by manipulating the trigger without having to remember to manually disengage the external safety first. This is particularly important in a highly stressful close combat engagement; it is not difficult to imagine circumstances in which forgetting to disengage the safety during a firefight could result in a fatal failure of the pistol to function when needed.

These considerations provide ample justification for the replacement of the Australian Army's Brownings with a more suitable modern pistol. However, the performance of the Browning in accuracy and speed of engagement is also worthy of analysis, as it may be raised as a countervailing factor to these considerations.

## Comparative performance: an empirical study

As the previous section illustrates, the Browning Hi-Power Mk III suffers from significant shortcomings when compared to modern service pistols. These shortcomings make a strong case for the replacement of the Browning with a more modern weapon. However it is worth assessing whether the Browning outperforms its more modern competitors in accuracy and speed of engagement to such an extent to compel its retention by the ADF. This would be a logical consideration given that the primary purpose of a service sidearm is to engage targets as quickly and accurately as possible. To test this hypothesis, we conducted an empirical study of the comparative performance of a sample Browning against four modern alternatives.

### The study

The study was conducted over a two-day period under the auspices of the SASR Battle Wing at Campbell Barracks in Perth, Western Australia. The handguns compared were,

1. An ADF-issue Browning Hi-Power Mk III, 9mm with standard 'white dot' iron sights.
2. A Glock 19 (GEN3), a 9mm striker-fired polymer-framed pistol. The Glock 19 is a more compact version of the Glock 17, one of the most widely used modern pistols in military and police service in the world.<sup>5</sup> The pistol used for this study had an extended barrel (to comply with Australian firearms regulations), and a TSD Systems slide designed to accept a Trijicon RMR mini red-dot sight (MRDS)<sup>6</sup> in a co-witness<sup>7</sup> arrangement with the taller 'suppressor' iron sights mounted on the slide. The slide was fitted with a Trijicon RMR RM03 13.0 MOA amber dot sight.
3. A Heckler & Koch (H&K) USP Tactical, a 9mm single action/double action hammer-fired pistol, currently the standard side-arm used by SASR and Special Operations Command. The 'tactical' designation indicates that this variant of the USP is equipped with 'suppressor' iron sights. The pistol used for this study was fitted with green fibre-optic inserts in the front and rear sights.<sup>9</sup>
4. A Smith & Wesson (S&W) M&P 9L Pro Series C.O.R.E., a 9mm striker-fired polymer-framed pistol. A relative newcomer (the first variant was introduced in 2005), the M&P series of pistols has quickly become the strongest competitor to the Glock series pistols in the military and police market (hence the M&P designation). The Competition Optic Ready Equipment (C.O.R.E.)<sup>10</sup>

model sports a slide designed to accept a number of the leading MRDS currently available. The pistol used for this study was fitted with a Trijicon RMR RM01 sight, with a 3.25 MOA red dot, in a co-witness arrangement with the 'suppressor' sights that are standard on the C.O.R.E. model.

5. A Steyr M9A1, another 9mm striker-fired polymer pistol. Similar in many respects to the Glock series pistols, this pistol boasts advanced ergonomics and a low bore axis. The pistol used for this study was fitted with an extended barrel (to comply with Australian firearms regulations), and Steyr's proprietary trapezoid iron sights.

The experimental design of the study was relatively simple. The test group consisted of 19 volunteers, a mix of novices (8) and shooters who self-identified as either average (5), good (5) or expert (1) in their shooting skills (for the purposes of the study, the 'average', 'good' and 'expert' subjects were grouped as the 'experienced' group). Each subject fired up to 30 rounds from each pistol being tested, in three stages as follows,

1. 10 rounds, slow fire, from 5 metres at an IPSC-style target with a white 16cm x 16cm square at its centre, and a 2 cm black dot in the centre of the square;
2. 10 rounds, slow fire, from 10 metres at an IPSC-style target with a white 16cm x 16cm square at its centre, and a 2 cm black dot in the centre of the square; and
3. 10 rounds (or less, as needed), timed fire, from 7 metres<sup>11</sup> at a falling steel plate rack composed of 6 x 6 inch (15.24 cm) diameter steel plates.

The first two stages of fire were designed to test the accuracy potential of each weapon, with speed considerations not playing a role. Each subject's groups were measured, and subjects were encouraged not to 'correct' for the fall of previous shots, but instead to aim at the centre dot each time. In addition to measuring the size of the full 10-round group in each case, the group formed by the most proximate five rounds fired ('best five') was also measured. This smaller group is arguably a better reflection of the accuracy potential of the weapon, as 'flyer' rounds (poorly or relatively poorly executed shots caused by shooter error) are more likely to have been excluded from the data set. The third stage of fire was designed to test the comparative speed with which the subjects could acquire a sight picture and engage multiple targets.

The order in which the subjects shot the test pistols was randomised to avoid what we foresaw might be a 'practice bias', in which a subject becomes faster or more accurate with each pistol fired as a result of accumulated practice. The data gathered indicate that, while there was no consistent increase in accuracy for each successive pistol for the stage fired from 10 metres, there is a clear trend of improvement for the stage fired from 5 metres, most notable in the 'best 5' group — an average improvement of 18 per cent between the first and fifth pistol. We are, however, confident that the randomisation of the order of firing negated the effect of this bias on our dataset by spreading the improvement across the pistols being tested.

### **Limitations of the study**

The results of this study (presented below) must be assessed in the light of the study's limitations. First, although we compensated for what we call 'practice bias', we could not compensate for what we term 'familiarity bias'. Given volunteers were drawn from the Campbell Barracks community, all subjects who self-identified as 'average', 'good' or 'expert' shooters (58 per cent of the total number of subjects) had significant previous experience of firing the ADF-issue Browning and H&K USP pistols, and all subjects who had any previous firearms experience (including some of the novices) were familiar with the traditional iron-sight sighting arrangement on the Browning and H&K USP. By contrast, only one of the subjects had previously fired an MRDS-equipped pistol (as mounted on the Glock and S&W pistols), and none of the subjects had fired a Steyr pistol or experienced Steyr's proprietary trapezoidal sights. The effect of this bias may have been exacerbated by the limited number of rounds each subject had the opportunity to fire through each pistol, a result of time and resource constraints. Our hypothesis is that more experience with each weapon would have resulted in comparatively better average results for the MRDS-equipped Glock and S&W pistols, and for the Steyr.

A second limitation relates to the third stage of fire, the plate rack. The original experimental design allowed each subject two attempts at the plate rack, a measure designed to ameliorate the unfamiliarity of the pistols and, for many of the participants, the unfamiliarity of the plate-rack target system. Ultimately, the time available to conduct the study was restricted, reducing each subject to just one attempt at the rack. As the results show, a significant number of the subjects (including members of the 'good' group) failed to successfully engage all six targets with the 10 rounds at their disposal, which adversely affected the dataset of timed completions of the rack.

A third limitation is that groups for stages one and two were measured using analogue measuring devices (calipers and a ruler) rather than more precise digital electronic calipers. In interpreting the data, care must therefore be taken not to exaggerate the importance of small differences between comparative measurements. We take it that differences of less than 5 per cent are insignificant in comparisons between the datasets gathered. For ease of reporting, results were rounded up to the nearest percentage point, which might skew the results slightly.

A fourth limitation is that the guns used had different 'mileage' coming into the study. The Browning and the USP had been well used, and had achieved what shooters call the '1000-round trigger job', whereby the trigger pull (which has an impact on accuracy) improves as the gun is 'broken in'. By comparison, the Glock had fewer than 200 rounds fired through it before testing, while the S&W and the Steyr were brand new. This difference could have biased results slightly in favour of the Browning and the USP.

A fifth limitation is that the front sight of the Glock 19 broke off during the first session of testing, and it was not possible to replace it. Given the Glock was equipped with a MRDS, this did not directly affect the pistol's accuracy potential, but (as is explained below) may have had an adverse effect on the speed with which the pistol could be accurately employed.

Overall, the study was limited by its scope (the number of participants and the number of rounds fired) and the limited number and nature of the stages of fire employed. As such, it cannot be considered a full assessment of the suitability of any of the pistols (or their sighting systems) for Army service. However, the data gathered is sufficient to answer the question of whether the Browning Hi-Power offers sufficient advantage in speed and accuracy over more modern competitors to compensate for the Browning's other limitations.



## Results and analysis of the study

### Accuracy

Is the Browning Hi-Power Mk III significantly more accurate than the modern pistols tested in this study? According to the data collected:

From 5 metres, measuring the full 10-round groups (see Table 1), the Browning achieved, on average, similar results to the MRDS-equipped Glock 19 and the H&K USP, and performed slightly better than the MRDS-equipped S&W M&P C.O.R.E. Only the Steyr M9A1 performed significantly worse. Novices did considerably better with the MRDS-equipped Glock 19, while the more experienced subjects produced the best groups with the Browning.

Table 1: Group size, average 10-round group from 5 metres

Pistol	Overall average (%)	Novice (%)	Experienced (%)
BHP Mk III	+4	+26	—
Glock 19 (MRDS)	+2	—	+33
H&K USP	—	+7	+19
S&W M&P CORE (MRDS)	+12	+35	+8
Steyr M9A1	+24	+32	+36

When the ‘best five’ groups at 5 metres are taken into consideration (see Table 2), the Browning fared better, beaten only by the MRDS-equipped Glock 19 by a just relevant 5 per cent when the full group of subjects is taken into consideration. Novices performed best with the Glock, while the more experienced subjects shot equally well with the Browning and the Glock.

Table 2: Group size, average 5-round group (‘best five’) from 5 metres

Pistol	Overall average (%)	Novice (%)	Experienced (%)
BHP Mk III	+5	+10	—
Glock 19 (MRDS)	—	—	+2
H&K USP	+20	+25	+16
S&W M&P CORE (MRDS)	+32	+53	+5
Steyr M9A1	+35	+50	+17

From 10 metres, measuring the full 10-round groups (see Table 3) and considering the full group of subjects, the Browning and the MRDS-equipped Glock 19 produced the best groups, with the difference between the two less than the 5 per cent necessary for statistical relevance. The H&K USP was close behind, with an average group size 5 per cent larger than the Browning. Novices mirrored the overall average by shooting as well with the Browning as the Glock, while the more experienced shooters did best with the H&K USP, with the Browning coming a close second.

Table 3: Group size, average 10-round group from 10 metres

Pistol	Overall average (%)	Novice (%)	Experienced (%)
BHP Mk III	—	+3	+6
Glock 19 (MRDS)	+1	—	+13
H&K USP	+5	+17	—
S&W M&P CORE (MRDS)	+14	+22	+12
Steyr M9A1	+14	+15	+30

When the ‘best five’ groups at 10 metres (see Table 4) are taken into consideration, the most noteworthy results of the study come to light. The MRDS-equipped S&W M&P C.O.R.E. performed significantly better in this regard than any of the other pistols, and this was consistent across the novice group and the experienced shooters. When the full group of subjects is considered, the next closest performer is the Browning, which produced groups that were, on average, 14 per cent larger. Novices did slightly better with the Browning, producing groups 10 per cent larger than those produced by the S&W, while the more experienced shooters (most of whom had previous experience with the Browning and the H&K USP), remarkably produced groups 20 per cent smaller with the S&W than with the Browning and the H&K USP.

Table 4: Group size, average 5-round group (‘best five’) from 10 metres

Pistol	Overall average (%)	Novice (%)	Experienced (%)
BHP Mk III	+14	+10	+20
Glock 19 (MRDS)	+43	+55	+28
H&K USP	+22	+23	+21
S&W M&P CORE (MRDS)	—	—	—
Steyr M9A1	+18	+16	+26

Speed

The next test was designed to assess whether the Browning performs significantly better than the modern pistols tested when speed of target acquisition and engagement is compared.

According to the data collected when considering the full group of subjects, and taking into consideration only those who successfully engaged all 6 targets on the plate rack with the 10 rounds available in each pistol (see Table 5), the clear winner was the H&K USP, with the Browning achieving, on average, 25 per cent slower times, equalling the Steyr. Novices shot as well with the Steyr as the H&K USP, and were 9 per cent slower with the Browning. The more experienced shooters shot best with the H&K USP, and were on average 16 per cent slower with the Browning.

Table 5: Average time to successfully engage six falling steel plates on plate rack

Pistol	Overall average (%)	Novice (%)	Experienced (%)
BHP Mk III	+25	+9	+16
Glock 19 (MRDS)	+43	+19	+56
H&K USP	—	+3	—
S&W M&P CORE (MRDS)	+37	+22	+30
Steyr M9A1	+25	—	+33

In isolation, however, these figures are misleading, as they do not take into account those shooters who were unable to successfully engage all six of the plates with the 10 rounds available. Clearly this is an important consideration. In this regard, the Browning performed poorly, with only 13 of 19 subjects (68 per cent) completing all six plates. This equalled the performance of the MRDS-equipped Glock, which was handicapped by the loss of its front sight.<sup>12</sup> For both the H&K USP and the S&W, 14 of 19 subjects were successful with all six plates. The Steyr did best, with 16 of 19 subjects (84 per cent) succeeding with all six plates.

Analysis

What do these results reveal? In answering the first question of whether the Browning Hi-Power Mk III is significantly more accurate than the competing modern pistols tested, the study results clearly indicate that it is not. While the Browning was certainly not the least accurate pistol in the group, and in fact performed quite well, it did not achieve such an advantage over its competitors as to make its

performance a countervailing factor that clearly outweighs its limitations. Given that the limitations of the study generally favoured the Browning over all the other pistols except the H&K USP (particularly in what we call 'familiarity bias' and the issue of 'mileage'), this is even more evident. It is our hypothesis that, given more practice with the unfamiliar pistols and sighting systems, and the opportunity to 'break in' the triggers on the new guns, the relative performance of the Browning would have been worse than it appeared in the data gathered for this study.

The second question asked whether the Browning performs significantly better than the competing modern pistols tested in this study when speed of target acquisition and engagement is compared. Given the very significant limitations of the data gathered in this respect, a precise conclusion is not possible. Nonetheless the Browning performed relatively poorly in both speed and number of shooters completing all six plates on the rack. Thus the data, while only suggestive and not conclusive, indicates that the Browning's speed of target acquisition and engagement compares poorly with that of the competing modern pistols.

## Conclusion

By no means do we intend to disrespect the Browning Hi-Power pistol. It has rightfully earned its place as one of a handful of truly classic handguns, and as our study shows it is inherently accurate. Nonetheless, the design limitations of the Browning when compared to more modern pistols leave it lagging well behind, and its accuracy and speed performance does not compensate for those limitations. Given the importance of the pistol as a 'last resort' means of force protection, we believe the Army should begin a process to replace the Browning with a more capable alternative. To get the best possible replacement, it will be necessary to also assess potential breakthrough technologies such as mini red-dot sights, pistol mounted lasers (not assessed in our study, but potentially offering genuine advantage over traditional iron sights alone) and other recent innovations. ■

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## Endnotes

- 1 The co-author of this paper has protected identity status, granted to Department of Defence personnel associated with sensitive capabilities to protect against unauthorised disclosure of both their personal and sensitive capabilities in order to maintain operational security. Although the journal does not usually publish papers without clear author identification, considering the applicability of the author's position, this requirement was waived.
- 2 For a detailed discussion of the implications of what the Australian-born British Army General Sir John Hackett called 'the unlimited liability contract' that exists between military personnel and the state they serve, see Nikki Coleman, 'The Unlimited Liability Contract and its Effects on Serving Military Personnel' in George R. Lucas Jr. (ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Military Ethics*, New York: Routledge, 2015.
- 3 We use the term 'green on blue' in the broad sense of 'an attack by a force [or member thereof] regarded as neutral', as defined by the Australian National Dictionary Centre. See 'Green on Blue' Word of the Year, *ABC News*, 18 December 2012, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2012-12-18/green-on-blue-word-of-the-year/4433614>.

- 4 See 'Army Rejects M9A3 Proposal, Opts for New Pistol', *Fox News*, 9 January 2015, [http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/01/09/army-rejects-ma3-proposal-opts-for-new-pistol/?intcmp=ob\\_article\\_footer\\_text&intcmp=obinsite](http://www.foxnews.com/us/2015/01/09/army-rejects-ma3-proposal-opts-for-new-pistol/?intcmp=ob_article_footer_text&intcmp=obinsite).
- 5 Globally, data on firearms production is notoriously problematic, largely due to under-reporting by public companies and non-reporting by private companies such as Glock. See, for example, Jurgen Brauer, *The US Firearms Industry: Production and Supply*, Small Arms Survey Working Paper, Small Arms Survey, Geneva, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, 2013, <http://www.smallarmssurvey.org/fileadmin/docs/F-Working-papers/SAS-WP14-US-Firearms-Industry.pdf>. For a more detailed discussion of Glock's remarkable rise from Austrian curtain-rod manufacturing company to one of the dominant producers of handguns in the world, see Paul Barnett, *Glock: The Rise of America's Gun*, New York: Broadway Books, 2013.
- 6 The MRDS is a miniaturised electro-optical sighting system (also sometimes referred to as a 'holographic weapons sight') that is characterised by a non-magnified sight-tube or window into which is projected an illuminated dot or similar aiming point that the shooter simply places onto the target before firing. The dot is usually red, hence the characterisation of these sights as 'mini red-dot sights', however some manufacturers produce electro-optical sights of this kind that use either an amber or green dot. The MRDS functions the same way as red-dot sights that are now commonly employed on military rifles, but sized to make mounting on a handgun feasible.
- 7 In a co-witness arrangement, the red-dot of the electro-optical sight is set up in such a way as to be visually in line with the conventional 'iron' sights, such that both sighting systems can be viewed along the same sighting plane and can be used together or independently to align the weapon with the target, without operators needing to adjust their sight picture.
- 8 Attaching a suppressor to a pistol renders normal height sights useless, as the suppressor blocks the line of sight. So-called suppressor sights are like normal iron sights, but are taller than normal to enable the user to take a sight picture 'over' the suppressor.
- 9 The fibre-optic insert is a short coloured rod of fibre-optic material that is inserted into a hole in the iron sight in question located in place of the usual white dot that is painted onto traditional iron sights. The fibre optic picks up ambient light and presents as a 'glowing dot', making it theoretically quicker and easier for operators to see and align with their target than the traditional white dot. Fibre optic inserts can be fitted to the front sight and the rear sight, or only to the front sight, as the user chooses. These inserts can be changed to different colour schemes to suit the individual user's preference.
- 10 Despite the 'competition' designation, the C.O.R.E. is not, in fact, ideally suited to 'race-gun' type competitions due to its lack of a compensated barrel and slide-mounted optic. This gun has established more of a following in the combat/self-defence market in the United States. See, for example, <http://www.thebangswitch.com/rocking-the-boat-mp-core/>.
- 11 SASR Battle Wing has approval under Range Regulations 7-3-1, Chapter 18, Annex F and range standing orders to engage steel at this distance.
- 12 Proponents of MRDS-equipped pistols contend that achieving quick target acquisition and engagement requires learning how to use the co-witnessed iron sights to 'pick up' the dot on presentation of the pistol, from which point the dot is (it is argued) as quick or quicker than the iron sights. Without using the iron sights in this way, it becomes necessary to 'hunt the dot' (which is not visible in the viewing window if the pistol is not properly aligned to the eye), which slows down the process considerably. While this method was explained to the subjects, it was evident that most resorted to hunting the dot — not surprising given their near total lack of practical experience with this type of sighting system. In fact, using the iron sights to pick up the dot was not even possible with the Glock, as the front sight had broken off in the first session of testing. The question of whether MRDS-equipped pistols are generally faster, slower, or equal to iron-sight equipped pistols therefore remains unresolved, a question for further research.

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## Book review

### *Defence Planning and Uncertainty: Preparing for the Next Asia–Pacific War*

Stephan Frühling, Routledge, 2014  
ISBN 9780415605731, 240pp, \$160

Reviewed by Lori Lucietto

As the Indo–Pacific region continues to grow, both economically and militarily, a growing number of countries in the region and beyond are facing challenges in their strategic planning. Stephan Frühling asks, ‘How can countries determine what kind of military force is needed if threats are uncertain and history is full of strategic surprises?’ For the defence planners in both the Department of Defence and the Services who are tasked with implementing the soon to be released Defence white paper and capability plan, *Defence Planning and Uncertainty* can provide guidance in mitigating these future threats and uncertainties.

Frühling acknowledges that uncertainty in defence planning is inevitable, but insists risk can be managed and uncertainty reduced. Different types of uncertainty mean that countries need to approach decisions about military force structure, acquisition, maintenance, or disbanding of military capability in different ways. Frühling proposes four defence planning frameworks that can be used by defence planners, covering various types of strategic risks that a country may face:

- Net assessment based planning is based on one dominant and immediate strategic risk. In this scenario the threat can be well understood because it can be identified and defence planners can manage the risk by preparing a counter force posture.
- Mobilisation planning involves one dominant strategic risk where the threat is yet to develop. Force structure planning needs to be based upon countering this threat if and/or when it rises.
- Portfolio planning is about structuring the defence force to respond to a variety of risks that may materialise.
- Task-based planning is based on many unknowns and a multitude of possible risks. Therefore their identification is not possible at the current time and additional information to assist planners is not available. In this case, the risks are either unknown, unexpected or not well understood.

Upon assessing the strategic risk/s and selecting the most suitable planning framework, Frühling details a number of subsequent steps that planners need to consider, including: developing a strategy to manage these risks, codifying this strategy into military requirements, choosing the most appropriate force structure approach and ensuring a conceptual fit between the risks, the strategy and the capability requirements, to ensure a coherent approach.

Frühling draws on a number of case studies from the United States, Australia and New Zealand to demonstrate the frameworks. While they offer a practical application of the theory detailed in the book, they tend to be the exception rather than the rule. Each case study fits a little too neatly within the specific frameworks highlighted. Frühling acknowledges this point and advises defence planners to use more than one framework where needed. In contrast, chapter seven's case study of the evolution of US defence planning between the 1990s and 2000s is useful in demonstrating how defence planning is influenced by the dynamic and often unclear nature of strategic risks. It highlights both strengths and weaknesses of the US approach to defence planning during these two decades.

The book concludes by considering the enduring issues with defence planning. Frühling explains that the frameworks should inform and help communicate, rather than direct, practical efforts by planners. These frameworks are intended to encourage clarity and coherence in defence planning through establishing the necessary steps to better understand the strategic environment. He asserts that



successful defence planning requires clear political guidance on the objectives and strategic adversaries and needs to be a constant effort in times of both peace and conflict.

*Defence Planning and Uncertainty* provides a clear and logical approach for the strategic community, from students of strategic studies and international relations to senior planners and policymakers within government. Instead of predicting future threats, it reflects on past strategic policy decisions and planning methods in order to learn from them. It provides a guide to thinking about defence planning, rather than offering all of the answers.

Changing global dynamics is shaping the twenty-first century and, for Australia, the Indo-Pacific pivot means an uncertain future, where there are no distinct threats, but a multitude of multi dimensional risks. This book offers a coherent way forward for the country's defence planners and policymakers in a period plagued by uncertainty and fiscal austerity. ■

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## Book review

### *Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia–Pacific*

Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson (eds), Naval Institute Press, 2014  
ISBN 9781612514642, 226pp, US\$29.99

Reviewed by Andrew Carr

There's an old joke military officials like to tell: amateurs do strategy; professionals do logistics. For most of us self-proclaimed 'amateurs', how the United States positions itself in the Asia–Pacific is one of the key strategic questions of our time. As Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson's new book *Rebalancing U.S Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia–Pacific* admirably demonstrates, this is also fundamentally a question of logistics.

This is a very timely and important book given the many questions that are being asked of the US role in the Asia–Pacific. Among allies, questions focus on how the 'pivot' or 'rebalance' is being implemented, and how force presence translates into promises of protection. For those concerned about US presence, the questions are whether the United States is targeting them and whether its intentions are offensive or not. Finally, for the United States itself, there are questions about the long-term capacity of America to afford and sustain an expanded presence in this remote region.

Whatever your viewpoint on these questions, this book is a rich source of details and data to help guide assessment. Foremost, the eight case studies demonstrate the substantial presence the United States already has in the region. One-fifth of all US forces are in the Asia–Pacific, involving at least 330,000 civilian and military personnel, 5 aircraft carrier groups, 180 ships, 1,500 aircraft and substantial US Marine Corps and Coast Guard capacity. All this aptly demonstrates why many questioned how the United States could pivot to a region it had never actually left.

Yet, for those who doubt US commitment to the Asia–Pacific, the Obama Administration’s intention to situate 60 per cent of the naval fleet there and increase Marine presence in Australia does little to prove the US presence will endure. As several chapters clearly detail, the nature of US presence in these countries is as much about historical legacy as contemporary strategic policy. This is especially true for the base locations. As former US Defence Secretary Rumsfeld has noted of US bases in South Korea ‘our troops were virtually frozen in place from where they were when the Korean War ended in 1953’.<sup>1</sup>

This obvious point should help defray Chinese concerns that the United States is attempting to encircle it. As Toshi Yoshihara elegantly demonstrates in the chapter on Japan, Beijing has paid significant attention to the location and presence of US bases. It also seems to have come up with a worst-case ‘solution’ of attacking via ballistic missiles. While Yoshihara identifies a number of questionable assumptions behind this approach, it does encourage serious reading of the final chapter on sea-basing as an alternate approach. Yoshihara’s analysis also strengthens the merits of more remote and sustainable bases for the United States such as Guam, Australia and Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

Moving out to more remote bases, either outside China’s anti-access, area denial zone or a serious effort at remote offshore balancing as advocated by Barry Posen<sup>2</sup> and others, would require changes to the way the United States approaches regional security and its allies. The logistics at the heart of the US presence in the Asia–Pacific, and almost uniformly endorsed by the authors in this book, is that distance still matters and the shorter distance from base to crisis point the better. Continuing America’s preferred strategy of quick and decisive force will be much harder to sustain if its fleet has to move to locations five to seven days sailing time away. This is where the nut of strategy meets the screw of logistics. Close in means greater threat, but a quicker response; further away is more safety, yet less immediate capacity.

Complications also exist in the political circumstances of the bases themselves. While Guam and Diego Garcia are under US control, there are still tensions around US bases in Japan, South Korea, Singapore and Australia. As all the chapters, but especially Alexander Cooley's insightful chapter on Central Asia demonstrates, those who host the United States are not mere passive recipients. Leaders in host countries argue between themselves and with Washington over locations, they seek political pay offs, and they 'cheap ride' in the provision of their own security forces. Some, like South Korea, have even tried to claim a veto over what the United States can and can't do with American forces based in its territory. Important questions such as the support the United States receives from its allies can only be answered with a clear understanding of just how much the United States does for its allies today.

Inevitably, an edited book like this will have stronger and weaker chapters. For those reading about their own countries, the bar for authors to say anything new or important will be that much higher. Any Australians who is likely to pick up this book is likely to be aware of most of the details Jack McCaffrie and Chris Rahman outline. The Australia chapter also feels one of the driest, in terms of listing names and places, as much as the authors try to dress it up.

Still, the most significant step in the US–Australia relationship in the last few years has been a question of basing, and understanding how the Darwin deployment fits into the wider picture of US presence. The message the United States tries to send with its force posture is vital. Too many arguments around the US approach to the Asia–Pacific still treat military force as something that is entirely a question of will or desire. If nothing else, this book demonstrates how short sighted this view is.

As the authors rightly argue, 'it is puzzling that serious students of American national security policy have paid so little attention to the subject of overseas basing over the years'.<sup>3</sup> This is not just a question for those interested in the sharp end of conflict. As the debates over the pivot and the South China Sea have shown, presence matters. Too little presence and your commitment comes into doubt, too much and your intentions can look menacing. All the while trying to manage the tension between the message you send to opponents and allies via your presence, with the inevitable trade-off between security, capacity and speed of response. This book deserves to be on the shelf of all those who want to move beyond amateur games of risk about the Asia–Pacific and contribute to the full scope of professional analysis. ■

## Endnotes

- 1 Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson, *Rebalancing U.S. Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific*, Maryland: Naval institute Press, p. 73.
- 2 Barry Posen, *Restraint: A New Grand Strategy for the US*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2014.
- 3 Carnes Lord and Andrew S. Erickson, *Rebalancing U.S Forces: Basing and Forward Presence in the Asia-Pacific*, Maryland: Naval institute Press, p. 2.

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## Book review

### *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*

Daniel P. Bolger, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2014,  
ISBN 9780544370487, 544pp, US\$28.00

Reviewed by Brigadier Simon Stuart

Recently retired US Lieutenant General Dan Bolger's provocatively titled book *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars* ultimately fails to prove its thesis. But, it does not matter. Counterintuitively, the value of Bolger's book does not rely upon congruence between its title and the argument that ensues. Dealing primarily with the US response to al Qaeda's series of provoking attacks that culminated in the events of the 11 September 2001, *Why We Lost* chronicles the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, declares strategic failure, and lays the blame at the feet of the Generals. Whether a 'disruptive thinker' or merely giving voice to the thoughts of others, Bolger starts the difficult conversation that America needs to have, but his themes should resonate with international audiences.

Often described as a 'soldier-scholar', a value-laden term against which he measures up well, Bolger has authored eight, mainly historical, military books. He earned a doctorate in history from the University of Chicago and taught the

same at West Point. He currently teaches at the North Carolina State University. Combined with his thirty-five year career in the US Army, including experience as a General Officer in both Iraq and Afghanistan, Bolger has a multifaceted grasp of his subject matter.

*Why We Lost* is arranged, quite deliberately, as a Greek tragedy. Between the strategically pitched prologue and the epilogue are the book's three episodes: Triumph, Hubris and Nemesis. In 'Triumph' he deals with the initial successes in Afghanistan and Iraq and concludes with President G.W. Bush's 'Mission Accomplished' speech. 'Hubris' and 'Nemesis' aptly describe the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, respectively. Equal treatment is given to each episode and, in contrast to the strategic bookends, they are rich in tactical detail. Bolger the thoughtful historian is present throughout the book. He draws on the likes of Thucydides and Clausewitz in the strategic analysis and many chapters present an historical tactical analogy. At the same time Bolger delivers a masterclass on the contemporary application of the theory of war and strategy, reignites the debate on the utility of force in the twenty-first century, argues the need for greater transparency in civilian–military relations, and provides compelling evidence of why students of the profession of arms ought to study history.

*Why We Lost's* crosscutting themes are woven into the chronology of the 'Global War on Terror'. They have broad application and will be familiar to military professionals and policymakers of most nations. The themes also afford access to the internal debate of Australia's most significant ally and provide a basis for similar introspection on Australian policy and strategy in Iraq and Afghanistan. Some important questions emerge, including on how Australia should weight its contribution to America's wars to best protect and promote Australia's interests, when and how to fulfil an ally's responsibility to speak frankly, and how to express limitations borne of fundamental differences in strategy, assessment and national interest.

While his style is engaging, digestible and underscored by a palpable conviction, a sense of urgency, and more than a hint of exasperation, Bolger's argument is contradictory and at times confusing. Nowhere in the book is the central thesis satisfactorily proven. There are contrary references; for example he states, 'many Generals, including some at the very top ...shared their views...with civilian leaders'. After blaming the generals, himself included, for poor strategy in the Global War Against Terror he concludes that 'the [US presidential] administration backed into two lengthy, indecisive counterinsurgency campaigns'. It is generally accepted that, in the formulation of national strategy, generals provide advice and the political leadership make the decisions about national purpose and

interests, and commission the means to achieve them. Some generals were clearly 'speaking up', but the realities of the political environment and the role that senior military leaders played in this complex tragedy is not dealt with in the necessary depth to convincingly make his point.

The other stark contradiction with the title's pronouncement lies in the book's ultimate paragraph. Using South Korea as an historical example, Bolger concludes that 'one of the features of such conflicts involves their indeterminate outcomes. It takes decades to be sure'. With US and coalition troops still on the ground in both Iraq and Afghanistan, and the inevitable run of successes and failures that accompany self-determination, it may be premature to diagnose failure.

Arguably, Bolger's main criticism of generalship during this tumultuous period is the failure at effective operational art; that is, the imposition of an organising logic that gives purpose and coherence to tactical actions, linking them to achieve the strategic ends and, most importantly, to the interests inherent in foreign policy. Alas, due to the overuse of inference in the book, this point is lost on all but a small audience of practitioners. The tactical-level vignettes and their historical accompaniments are difficult to link with the book's thesis. These are nevertheless extremely well executed and serve the higher purpose of providing US citizenry and their allies with a more textured insight into the competence and commitment of soldiers, the realities of war and their impact on the people who fight them. In an era where Australia's wars have little, if any, impact on the lives of the majority of its citizens, this is a worthy subject.

Whether or not one agrees with Bolger's point of view is largely irrelevant to the substance and value of *Why We Lost*. The book leaves the reader variously uncomfortable, angry, sad and with a sense that something is not quite right. If judging Bolger's purpose correctly, this is precisely what he set out to elicit: a feeling in the gut or a persistent thought in the minds of those who commanded, those who fought this war and those who will fight the next, that the political class will wear the heavy burden of their decisions among the citizenry in whose name this is done. Similar in approach to Australian Major General Jim Molan's 2008 book, *Running The War In Iraq*, *Why We Lost* derives its value from its divergent perspective. Bolger's book is a timely addition to the growing list of contemporary accounts of war written by insiders. These build on the substantial number of volumes dealing with similar subject matter in relation to the Vietnam War that have been studied for a generation in Australia's military training and education institutions.



*Why We Lost* is an intelligently crafted book that connects with all its intended audiences at different levels – no small feat. The gravity of the subject matter, Bolger's visceral articulation of the cost of war and his personal conviction and integrity are a compelling combination. ■

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## Book review

### *The Backroom Boys: Alfred Conlon and Army's Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs*

Graeme Sligo, Big Sky Publishing, 2013  
ISBN 9781921941122, 416pp, \$34.99

Reviewed by John Donovan

Although Colonel Graeme Sligo has written an interesting story about the Australian Army's Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs, the real story that needs to be told is that of the directorate's enigmatic director Alfred Conlon, at least beyond the glimpses into his personality that appear in the book.

The directorate started its existence as a small section reporting to the Adjutant-General, then Major-General Victor Stantke. Conlon, formerly the manpower officer at Sydney University, was commissioned as a major to head the directorate, and stayed with it through most of its tenure existence, being promoted progressively to colonel as the directorate expanded.

In an early excursion beyond the Adjutant-General's Branch, Conlon also chaired a Committee on National Morale operating under the Prime Minister's Department. The principal outcome of this committee seems to have been a

report on education, elements of which were later adopted through the Universities Commission. This set the precedent for other activities by the directorate, some not of direct relevance to winning the war. Some of these should have been conducted by other parts of the Army or by other organisations, but Conlon had access to resources and personnel they did not.

While, for example, it was appropriate that the directorate provide advice on the legal framework for contingency planning in regions of Australia that might be invaded, the Army's surveyors or the Department of External Territories could have conducted other projects, including construction of a terrain model of northern Australia and consolidation of Papua and New Guinea legal systems.

After nearly being sidelined by Stantke's replacement, Major-General Charles Lloyd, Conlon saved his organisation by having it moved to the CGS Branch. From there, he liaised with government ministers, including Eddie Ward, Minister for External Territories, and the erratic Bert Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, while supporting General Thomas Blamey in his roles as Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Land Commander under General Douglas MacArthur.

Sligo covers in detail the dispute in 1942 and 1943 between Blamey and then secretary to the Department of the Army, Frank Sinclair. Blamey, with Conlon's advice, was successful in delaying the re-introduction of the Military Board until after the war, yet the division of financial responsibilities between the secretary and the senior military commander, at the core of the dispute, remained unresolved for decades after the war.

Probably the directorate's most important achievement was the LHQ School of Civil Affairs, later the Australian School of Pacific Administration, which trained personnel for civil affairs units. Deployment of civil affairs staff to British North Borneo, however, was complicated by Conlon's willingness to support a plan by Evatt to bring North Borneo under Australian post-war administration. This plan seems to have involved first gaining Australian control over North Borneo, which would then be exchanged for Dutch New Guinea (West Papua).

Another example, which might seem outlandish to modern eyes, was a directorate proposal for increased Australian administrative responsibilities in Timor. Conlon's ambition was for Australia to become 'an almost "paramount power" in the South Pacific'. Sligo notes that Blamey, who had 'a practical view of "troops to task" and military priorities' probably told Conlon that the latter policy was impractical.

Sinclair's desire for greater scrutiny of the Army's activities could well have been justified given the tenuous connection between the problems of an army with limited resources and some of the directorate's activities. The resources directed into the Papua and New Guinea legal system consolidation project, and establishing the Australian National University and the John Curtin School of Medical Research might have been better directed as higher priority tasks.

While Conlon was intellectually brilliant, his attitudes suggest a less than reflective personality. His reported statement that Blamey 'did not have a clue who was up who in Canberra' indicates that Conlon was either inflating his own ego, or that he did not understand the degree to which Blamey had been immersed in politics before the war and in the Middle East. While, as Peter Ryan commented, Conlon might have had up-to-the-minute knowledge of 'who was up who', Blamey was no slouch in that department.

Sligo notes Churchill's comment that scientists (and by extension advisers like Conlon and his Directorate) should 'be on tap, not on top', but Conlon might not have shared that opinion. Indeed, while Conlon seems to have seen himself as some kind of puppetmaster, Blamey could actually have been pulling the strings.

Blamey was distrusted, in some cases actively disliked, by some Australian Labor Party ministers, and might therefore have used Conlon as a go-between. Conlon had influence with and kept close to senior Labor figures, including then prime minister John Curtin. Sligo records that Conlon was concerned that Curtin's death might cause all his plans to come to naught as he was not as close to Curtin's replacement, Ben Chifley, who also did not share some of Evatt's ambitions. Sligo notes that 'in many respects [Conlon] behaved as if he were a ministerial or political policy staffer', not an apolitical military officer.

Conlon's personality also caused dissent in the Directorate, with the anthropologist (and previous commander of the North Australia Observer Unit) Lieutenant-Colonel W.E.H Stanner, being posted to London to put distance between them. Some other staff members seemed less than convinced by Conlon's plans, as did some outsiders who dealt with him, including influential economist and powerful public servant H.C. Coombs. Many of the Directorate's staff, however, later went on to high academic or bureaucratic achievement (one, the later Sir Arthur Tange, becoming the *bête noire* of many military officers during his Department of Defence reform process).

In retrospect, it might have been better had Lloyd got his way, and Conlon and his then small group been despatched to the suburbs of Melbourne. Those tasks conducted by the directorate that really mattered, such as training civil affairs staff, would still have been done by other parts of the Army and the bureaucracy, while Conlon's assertive and manipulative personality would have been removed to the sidelines.

Overall, *The Backroom Boys* is an interesting book providing insights into the working of the Directorate of Research and Civil Affairs, but it leaves open too many questions about its long-serving director Alfred Conlon. ■

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## Book review

### *Climax at Gallipoli: The Failure of the August Offensive*

Rhys Crawley, University of Oklahoma Press, 2014  
ISBN 9780806152066, 384pp, US\$24.95

Reviewed by Brigadier Chris Roberts (Ret'd), AM, CSM

Mounted to break the deadlock resulting from the failed April landings, the August Offensive at Gallipoli was the largest operation undertaken on the peninsula. In the eyes of many contemporaries, and several subsequent historians, it came close to success; an offensive that failed by a whisker to bring the Allies victory at Gallipoli, the stuff of Churchill's self-serving 'ifs' in his *The World Crisis*. Yet in the enormous literature on the Gallipoli campaign, little has been devoted to a separate study of this momentous event. Eliot Cohen and John Gooch's chapter in *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* provides a relatively short, analytical discussion of what they see as the systemic reasons for failure at Suvla Bay, while David Cameron's two recent narratives (*The August Offensive at Anzac, 1915*, and *Shadow of Anzac: An Intimate History of Gallipoli*) focus on the ANZAC attempt to seize the Sari Bair Range. Elsewhere, the offensive is covered in a few chapters in histories of the entire campaign. With *Climax at Gallipoli*, Dr Rhys Crawley offers the first analytical study covering the whole offensive, from the British diversions at Cape Helles, the ANZAC breakout, to the IX Corps landing at Suvla Bay.

Rather than a narrative history telling the tragedy blow by blow, Crawley delivers a thoroughly researched, analytical study on a canvas stretching across the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war. He convincingly argues that the August Offensive was doomed to failure before it started, and effectively dismantles the view it came 'so close to success'. In doing so, Crawley adopts a new approach to studying a battle. Instead of the normal chronological narrative interspersed with analysis, he explores the elements associated with mounting and conducting operations up front — planning, mobility, fire support, combined operations, lines of communication, and supply and transport. Through a detailed examination of how these elements impacted on the operation, and how they were affected by other issues, Crawley considers whether the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) had the capacity to undertake the offensive, highlighting the difficulties they faced.

In the 'Mobility' chapter, for example, Crawley considers the potential impact of force size, command structure, health and morale, communications, terrain, and the Ottoman defensive capabilities on the MEF's mobility in the offensive. Under 'Planning' we learn how the campaign unfolded from an initial objective of enlarging the restrictive ANZAC beachhead, into a full-blown, four-phase offensive to sweep across the peninsula to achieve the original objectives of the campaign, although recent research indicates the full-blown offensive was the initial intent, and the enlarged beachhead the result. Nonetheless, Crawley argues convincingly it was a plan based on highly optimistic assessments, and a gross underestimation of Ottoman capabilities.

Most campaign histories neglect the vital element of logistics, but Crawley devotes two chapters to this fundamental factor of operations. While some may disagree with some of his assertions, such as the impact of several levels of command on the supply of water, the depth and breadth of his consideration alone make this book an immensely useful contribution to the historiography of the Gallipoli campaign, and to modern military planners. In the penultimate chapter, a narrative of the salient events of the offensive as it unfolded provides an easily followed overview of the tragedy. Crawley wraps up his work with a chapter considering the feasibility of the subsequent three phases had the British and ANZAC forces been successful in the first. In the end, the thrust of his case is proven — the offensive came nowhere near to success, as borne out by the reality of the failure to achieve even its initial goals. He achieves this without reverting to the 'Lions led by Donkeys' school of Great War history, acknowledging that, while Hamilton and his subordinates produced a flawed and highly optimistic plan, they were not fools, but

intelligent men who were the product of their upbringing, training and experience, holding the Europeans' contempt for non-Caucasian races, and caught up in an abruptly changing character of war.

While Crawley delivers a compelling and convincing case, some of his judgements reveal perhaps a limited knowledge of broader military history, and inexperience with the practice of military operations. In fairness, this is a common trait in a good many other historical accounts that seek to determine why a military action failed. For example, his dismissal of Birdwood's suggestion to send a light horse regiment into the Ottoman rear as a distraction as 'absurd' disregards similar highly risky, but successful uses of cavalry, such as Stuart's ride around McClellan's army during the Peninsula campaign, Grierson's ride through Mississippi to distract the Confederates during the Vicksburg campaign, and Sheridan's ride to the outskirts of Richmond during the Wilderness campaign. These examples may well have been in Birdwood's mind when he suggested his 'wildcat scheme'. While soldiers would wholeheartedly agree with many of Dr Crawley's deductions, with a practical knowledge that war is a business of managing difficulties, of taking calculated risks, and a choice of problematic options, they would be less critical of other assessments, or as disturbed with some of the difficulties he raises. There is a sense the author considers *Field Service Regulations* were prescriptive rather than a guide tempered by training, experience, and the situation at hand they were meant to be. But his very referral to them grounds his discussion in the thinking of the day rather than by the practices of a century later that we so often see.

Nonetheless, these are relatively minor issues and matters of opinion which do not detract from the fundamental case Crawley presents: that the August Offensive was a flawed and overly optimistic operation that was doomed from the start, and rather than coming 'so close to success', it never came close to achieving even its phase one objectives. In this he succeeds, and provides a well presented and easily digested study that today's soldiers would do well to read. It provides a timely reminder that hope is not a method, of the need for pragmatic assessments in planning major operations, of resourcing them properly, and of the consequences of underestimating one's enemy. For the general reader, *Climax at Gallipoli* provides considerable insights into the complexities of planning, supporting and undertaking military operations that other studies ignore. Free of the usual hyperbole that shrouds the Gallipoli campaign, this book is well worth reading. It is a welcome addition to the literature on the Gallipoli campaign, presenting as it does the first analytical study of this tragic operation. ■



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## Titles to note

### *The Next Great War?: The Roots of World War I and the Risk of U.S.–China Conflict*

Edited by Richard N. Rosencrance and Steven Miller, The MIT Press, 2015  
ISBN 9780262028998, 313pp, US\$27.00

A century ago, Europe's diplomats mismanaged the crisis triggered by the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria, plunging the world into the First World War, which killed millions, toppled dynasties, and destroyed empires. Today, as the hundredth anniversary of the Great War prompts renewed debate about war's causes, scholars and policy experts are also considering the parallels between the present international system and the world of 1914. Are China and the United States fated to follow in the footsteps of previous great power rivals? Will today's alliances drag countries into tomorrow's wars? Can leaders manage power relationships peacefully? Or will East Asia's territorial and maritime disputes trigger a larger conflict, just as rivalries in the Balkans did in 1914? In *The Next Great War?*, experts reconsider the causes of the First World War and explore whether the great powers of the twenty-first century can avoid the mistakes of Europe's statesmen in 1914 and prevent another catastrophic conflict. They conclude that only a deep understanding of the differences between today's world and the world of 1914, and early action to bring great powers together, will enable the United States and China to avoid a great war.

## *Warrior Elite*

Robert Macklin, Hachette Australia, 2015

ISBN 9780733632914, 375pp, \$35.00

*Warrior Elite* is the story of Australia's special forces and intelligence operations, ranging from the early days of Z Force in the Second World War to the establishment of the Special Air Service and Commando regiments as the elite fighters of today, and from the Australian Secret Intelligence Service to the Australian Signals Directorate and the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation. It stretches from small operations of the past to the sophisticated military, police and intelligence machine of the present and future. Through dozens of exclusive interviews within special forces and intelligence agencies, Robert Macklin has uncovered daring and sometimes heartbreaking stories of Australia's elite troops.

## *One Shot Kills: A History of Australian Army Sniping*

Glenn Wahlert and Russell Linwood, Big Sky Publishing, 2014

ISBN 9781922132659, 220pp, \$19.95

The snipers of today's Australian Army have learned the lessons of history and are held in the same high regard by friend and foe as their Gallipoli forebears. Snipers have become an essential force multiplier and have deployed on every operation since Somalia. In this, the second of the Australian Army Combat Support Series, Glenn Wahlert and Russell Linwood, both qualified Army marksmen, tell the story of the sniper's journey from the South African veldt to the recent battlegrounds of Iraq and Afghanistan. It is also the story of the development of the modern sniper's combat weapon system in which technology has been harnessed to produce extraordinary results on the battlefield.

## *Death by Mustard Gas: How Military Secrecy and Lost Weapons can Kill*

Geoff Plunket, Big Sky Publishing, 2014  
ISBN 9781922132918, 228pp, \$34.99

In 1943, a top-secret consignment of chemical weapons, including deadly mustard gas, arrived in Australia by ship. But there was a problem — it was leaking. Military authorities quickly realised this, but in the interests of secrecy, sent unprotected and unsuspecting wharf labourers into a lethal environment. The result was catastrophic: permanent disability and death. Almost seventy years after war stocks of chemical weapons were apparently totally destroyed, mustard gas is still present on the Australian mainland, in her oceans and along her coastal fringes. These deadly weapons were incompletely destroyed, buried or simply lost. In this book, Geoff Plunkett, author of *Chemical Warfare in Australia*, brings to light how this consignment of a chemical that was not just devastating in war, but persistent in the environment, came to Australia during the Second World War, and the effect it had on those who came into contact with it. In the process, he presents a very real lesson for today's military.

## *To Kokoda*

Nicholas Anderson, Big Sky Publishing, 2014  
ISBN 9781922132956, 236pp, \$19.99

When the Japanese war machine swept through South-East Asia in early 1942, it was inevitable that conflict would reach Australian territory on the island of New Guinea. The ultimate Japanese target was Port Moresby. Conquering the capital would sever communication between Australia and her American ally and allow Japanese air power to threaten Australia's northern cities. The fourteenth publication in the Australian Army Campaigns Series, Nicholas Anderson's *To Kokoda* explores the campaign along the Kokoda Trail that is second only to Gallipoli in the Australian psyche. Access to previously untapped Japanese records has provided a new perspective to this campaign and to the bravery and exploits of the men who fought on the Trail. The Owen Stanley Ranges constitutes one of the harshest battlefields that have ever been encountered. The Australian soldiers who bore arms in such terrain can be forever proud of their service to their country.

## Centenary of Anzac

Australia commemorates the Centenary of Anzac between 2014 and 2019, marking 100 years since our nation's involvement in the First World War. The Centenary of Anzac is a milestone of special significance to all Australians though. The First World War helped define us as a people and as a nation. Reflecting this, the 'Titles to Note' section of the *Australian Army Journal* will highlight new publications on Australia's participation in the 'war to end all wars'.

### *The Grand Deception: Churchill and the Dardanelles*

Tom Curran, Big Sky Publishing, 2015  
ISBN 9781925275001, 318pp, \$34.99

### *The Ottoman Defence Against the ANZAC Landing: 25 April 1915*

Mesut Uyar, Big Sky Publishing, 2015  
ISBN 9781922132994, 181pp, \$19.99

### *Gallipoli: The Dardanelles Disaster in Soldiers' Words and Photographs*

Richard van Emden and Stephen Chambers, Bloomsbury Publishing, 2015  
ISBN 9781408856154, 352pp, \$49.99

Gallipoli 1915: In an attempt to knock Germany's ally Turkey out of the war, Allied forces secured a fringe of coastline on the sun-baked Turkish peninsula. The beaches were exposed on all sides and under continual fire. Fresh water was in desperately short supply. Searing heat, disease and exhaustion make impossible the clear-headed decisions upon which the lives of thousands depend. In total, there were more than 254,000 British, French, ANZAC and Indian casualties; the number of killed and wounded on the Turkish side is thought to have been even greater. These three books, covering differing aspects of the Gallipoli campaign, present fresh and divergent perspectives on a campaign that has been credited with forming Australia's nationhood.

In *The Grand Deception*, Tom Curran presents a detailed examination of First Sea Lord Winston Churchill's role in the decision-making process that led to the Gallipoli landings. Using unpublished British archival sources and a range of additional material, both contemporary and modern, his meticulous research casts new light on the lead-up to a campaign that would profoundly affect Australian military history. Mesut Uyar's book, *The Ottoman Defence Against the ANZAC Landing: 25 April 1915*, portrays the Ottoman experience of the landing based on previously unpublished Ottoman and Turkish sources, including military documents, regimental war diaries, personal accounts and memoirs. Until now, the lack of a Turkish perspective has made it almost impossible to construct a balanced account of the events of that fateful April day. Finally, in *Gallipoli: The Dardanelles Disaster in Soldiers' Words and Photographs*, leading First World War historian Richard van Emden and Gallipoli specialist Stephen Chambers combine personal accounts written by soldiers on both sides, with more than 130 photographs taken by servicemen themselves, to mark the centenary of the campaign.

## *Anzac Sons: The Story of Five Brothers in the War to End All Wars*

Allison Marlow Paterson, Big Sky Publishing, 2014  
ISBN 9781922132796, 688pp, \$34.99

The Marlow brothers served in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War – four served in the 38th Battalion and another in the 2nd Light Trench Mortar Battery. *Anzac Sons* follows five young Australian soldiers from Mologa, Victoria, through their experiences on the training grounds of Victoria, Egypt and England, to the Western Front battlefields – Pozieres, Bullecourt, Messines, Menin Road, Passchendaele, Villers-Bretonneux and the village battles of 1918. Written by the granddaughter of a surviving brother, the book is composed from a collection of 500 letters and postcards that tells the story of the brothers' Great War, but also the story of their family and the way its members coped with the tragedy that ultimately consumed their lives.

## *The Lost Legions of Fromelles: The True Story of the Most Dramatic Battle in Australia's History*

Peter Barton, Allen & Unwin, 2014

ISBN 9781742377117, 448pp, \$32.99

On Thursday 30 July 1914, warning telegrams from London arrived in Melbourne and Wellington: a European war against Germany and Austria-Hungary appeared unavoidable; Britain was mobilising. Three days later Australia followed suit, and the Gallipoli landing was the first test of its soldiers. After Gallipoli, the Australian Imperial Force reorganised, reinforced and reconditioned in Egypt, preparing themselves for their opening engagement in France, an assault that began at 6.00 pm on 19 July 1916 near the small village of Fromelles. The subsequent fourteen hours of combat were to prove the most catastrophic of the one thousand days of ANZAC presence on the Western Front. Peter Barton was the first historian to be granted access to Germany's war archives, and spent ten years researching the material that makes up this book. With his background as a documentary filmmaker, archaeologist and First World War expert he investigates the interrogation of Anglo-Australian prisoners, and the results of shrewd German propaganda techniques. He explores the circumstances surrounding the 'missing' Pheasant Wood graves, and along the way, dispels many myths surrounding one of the bloodiest battlefields of the Great War. ■

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## ***Australian Army Journal* Chauvel essay prize**

The Chauvel Prize is an annual award presented to an eligible recipient whose published *Australian Army Journal* article best contributes to the debate on future land warfare.

The prize is named after Sir Henry George Chauvel (1865–1945), more usually known as Sir Harry Chauvel, who was the first Australian to reach the rank of Lieutenant General and later General. He was also the first to lead a corps and, as commander of the Desert Mounted Corps, was responsible for one of the most decisive victories and fastest pursuits in military history.

Sir Harry Chauvel is remembered for his astute professionalism in leading Army during a time of increased austerity, even while the force addressed major modernisation issues and organisational change. With Army entering a similar period, the Chauvel Prize, the premier annual essay prize, is an important part of enhancing and husbanding its intellectual capacity — in thinking, writing and arguing about the employment of land power into the future.

The Chauvel Prize winners are selected by the *Australian Army Journal* Editorial Advisory Board from a shortlist of candidates compiled by journal staff. Eligible recipients are current members of Army's serving force and Australian Public Servants in the Army group. Awards are made on the basis of originality, logical argument, sound analysis, style, clarity and concision.

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## 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 feature articles, review essays and reviews. As a general guide on length, articles and review essays should be between 3000 and 6000 words, and reviews should not exceed 1000 words. Readers should note that articles written in service essay format are discouraged, as they are not generally suitable for publication.

Each manuscript should be submitted to the *Australian Army Journal* email address, [dfw.publications@defence.gov.au](mailto:dfw.publications@defence.gov.au). For more information see [www.army.gov.au/Our-future](http://www.army.gov.au/Our-future)

Please make sure your submission includes the following details:

- Author's full name
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Please also include the following fields in your submission:

- 100-word article abstract (please see the following abstract guidelines)
- 100-word author biography (please see the following biography guidelines)
- Acronym/abbreviations list



The article must be presented in the following format/style:

- Microsoft Word (.doc) or Rich Text Format (.rtf)
- 1.5 line spacing
- 12-point Times New Roman
- 2.5 cm margin on all sides
- Automatic word processed endnotes

### **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, book title, place of publication, publisher, year and 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. Numbers should be spelled out up to ninety-nine, except in the case of percentages, where Arabic numerals should be used (and per cent should always be spelled out). All manuscripts should be paginated, and the use of abbreviations, acronyms and jargon kept to a minimum. Australian English is to be used.

### **Abstracts**

The most immediate function of an abstract is to summarise the major aspects of a paper, but an excellent abstract goes further. It will also to encourage a reader to read the entire article. For this reason it should be an engagingly written piece of prose that is not simply a rewrite of the introduction in shorter form. It should include:

- Purpose of the paper,
- Issues or questions that may have arisen during your research/discussion,
- Conclusions that you have reached and, if relevant, any recommendations.

### **Biographies**

A biography 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.