



Expeditionary warfare and military operations under a maritime strategy

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Executive summary

As Army seeks to understand the institutional lessons of its last 15 operationally intensive years, it is timely to examine the concept of expeditionary warfare — an idea fundamental to the Australian approach to war. Such an examination becomes increasingly necessary as Defence progresses in its development of Australia's 'Maritime Strategy', a strategic policy approach based upon an operational concept proposed by Sir Julian Corbett in 1914. Expeditionary warfare is a contentious idea and the subject of numerous conceptual arguments within Army, let alone the broader Australian Defence Force (ADF). Despite the ideas renaissance following the end of the Cold War, Australian military theorists have yet to convincingly articulate the operational methods required to pursue expeditionary strategy, and translate these methods into capability development and modernisation. Without a coherent understanding of expeditionary warfare, described in the Australian context, implementing the operational concepts of the future will be equally confused. This is a trap into which Army has fallen in the past. Army must therefore inculcate interpretations of expeditionary warfare based on Australia's historical, geostrategic and organisational influences into its conceptual development. With expeditionary warfare addressed holistically, Australia's naturally expeditionary approach to warfare will evolve into mature and, more importantly, effective operational concepts.

Research suggests that, while the Australian approach to expeditionary warfare is influenced by maritime strategy, the small war tradition and the idea of limited warfare, it is an approach to war primarily defined by forward deployment, posturing and defence within a coalition or alliance-based context. This is not to say that Corbett's maritime strategy lacks relevance to the ADF as it faces an uncertain future, or that Army's considerable efforts to develop concepts, including archipelagic manoeuvre, are nugatory. Instead, this paper highlights the importance to Army planners of balancing capability visions for the future with Australia's military history and, of course, associated strategic requirements. It concludes

that the pursuit of a 'Maritime Strategy', and its relevance to future force structure and conceptual choices, must be based on the effective union of theory with the ADF's innate preferences and approach to waging war. In this sense, this paper encourages future discussion on expeditionary warfare to move beyond a now outdated and unnecessarily arbitrary debate between continental defence and expeditionary approaches. With strategic trends portending a time in which Australia's freedom of strategic manoeuvre becomes increasingly challenged, this discussion is crucial to the development of Army's capabilities and the operational concepts that define their use.

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We can thus only say that the aims a belligerent adopts, and the resources he employs, must be governed by the particular characteristics of his own position; but they will also conform to the spirit of the age and to its general character. Finally, they must always be governed by the general conclusions to be drawn from the nature of war itself.

Carl von Clausewitz¹

Introduction

Writing *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* at the height of the British Empire, Sir Julian Corbett, regarded as the father of modern maritime strategy, sought to produce a theory that reflected the character of imperial war. His theory of maritime strategy, its ‘paramount concern ... to determine the mutual relations of your army and navy in a plan of war’, has since become the dominant meme of the Australian Defence Force’s (ADF) strategic orientation.² This very British concept has been routinely adopted by the militaries of nations that depend on the sea for their security and defence. In recent times his ideas have taken root in Australian strategic and military thinking to the extent that they permeate current national strategic policy as expressed in the *Defence White Paper 2013*.³ With the geographic arc from Central Asia to the far reaches of the Pacific attracting increasing attention, Corbett’s strategy is regarded as a logical option for Australian strategists and military theorists as they seek to prepare the ADF for challenges in the Indo-Pacific through the 2015 Defence white paper.

While Corbett’s work has been picked over for maxims and worthy phrases, less attention has been paid to the intent that underpins his concepts. Dissatisfied with the ‘German’ or ‘Continental School of Strategy’, and the focus on Napoleonic ‘unlimited war’ as reflected in the works of Clausewitz and Jomini, he sought to develop a theory of war that reflected the ‘characteristic conception of the British tradition’.⁴ He developed a theory that described the requirements of his own country, primarily the limited wars that he felt Clausewitz had left largely unexplained in *On War* — wars with territorial objectives, wars for disrupting the plans of others, or wars for strengthening British positions.⁵ Using the British example of a maritime state and the virtues of a defensive geographical sea boundary, a key focus that defines contemporary Australian strategic policy, he

emphasised the utility of expeditionary warfare and maritime strategy. In contrast to 'wars of invasion', the idea of comparatively smaller 'expeditions' epitomised the often limited objectives of British warfare which were frequently tied to imperial coercion, thus ensuring that expeditionary warfare and maritime strategy earned themselves a perpetual association.⁶

In more modern times, expeditionary warfare and maritime strategy have become virtually synonymous. This relationship is particularly evident in the post-Cold War era in which the United States Marine Corps (USMC) affiliated maritime strategy with the concept of the 'modern expeditionary operation'.⁷ In recognising Australia's own expeditionary heritage, many Australian academics, military theorists and practitioners have proclaimed that, as an island continent, the concept of the modern expeditionary operation is similarly suited to Australia.⁸ More recently, authors such as David Kilcullen have sought to shape this concept to the Australian context, outlining the challenges of conducting operations in the urban littorals that characterise the Indo-Pacific strategic arc.⁹ No doubt history will decide whether this intellectual convergence on these potential littoral war zones of the future will prove prescient or otherwise. Nonetheless, it is far from surprising that maritime strategy has been mooted as a fundamental and significant pillar of contemporary Australian strategic policy.¹⁰

Yet despite these compelling reasons to imitate Corbett's maritime strategy using Army's own concepts, the uniqueness of the Australian approach to war may be lost in such a pursuit. The Australian Army is neither the USMC nor the British Marines, both military forces specifically designed to conduct modern amphibious expeditionary operations, and attractive models on which the ADF's present approach to achieving a 'Maritime Strategy' might be based. Furthermore, as described for the benefit of Australian parliamentarians over a decade ago, there remains a significant difference between implementing maritime strategy (an operational concept) and pursuing a 'Maritime Strategy' (which largely refers to an operating environment and strategic approach).¹¹ While Australia may share many of the conditions faced by Corbett's Britain, it is important that ADF's concept writers do not dismiss a broader view of expeditionary warfare more relevant to Australia's own strategic requirements to meet the imperatives of its 'Maritime Strategy'. At the point we properly implement strategic policy we must also reflect on the words of renowned strategist Colin S. Gray who notes that, all too often, militaries dissociate the development of operational concepts from the idiosyncratic conditions that should set their context.¹² An examination of strategic theory, history and organisational self-assessment is particularly useful as the ADF, and certainly Army under its own Plan Beersheba, takes the next steps towards defining the way in which it must fight.¹³

This paper contends that, while maritime strategy is an important concept worthy of significant attention by Army planners and force designers, it should not consume the notion of expeditionary warfare that defines the Australian approach to war. This thesis will be supported through analysis of a number of key questions based on Clausewitz's observation that war is characterised by objective and subjective components. With this in mind, the paper will take the first vital step, examining ideas that have fundamentally shaped the way in which expeditionary warfare has been imagined in the modern age of war. Second, the paper will develop a theoretical foundation with which the context of Australian strategic history, tradition and circumstances can be juxtaposed. Third, it will analyse the core ideas, philosophies and doctrine that have shaped the Australian approach to expeditionary warfare in the contemporary period. Finally, the paper will address expeditionary concepts based on assumptions made by the ADF and Army, cognisant of the changing character of war and 'spirit of the age' in which expeditionary concepts are set.¹⁴ In doing so, the paper will explore the underpinnings of Australian strategic development, arguing that strategy must be an absolute function of context.

This paper will address this thesis in five parts. Part one briefly examines expeditionary warfare, laying the foundations for subsequent analysis for the purpose of what Corbett describes as 'determin[ing] the normal'.¹⁵ From this point, the paper will examine expeditionary warfare in the context of ideas that have shaped the Australian approach to expeditionary operations. It will then describe the 'expeditionary age', a consequence of the dramatic upheaval that followed the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the subsequent response of Western militaries through the concept of the modern expeditionary operation. The ADF and Army response to the recent conceptual maturity of expeditionary warfare within the ADF and the transformation of ideas into operational and tactical doctrine will be examined, leading to an analysis of how expeditionary warfare is expressed in the 'Maritime Strategy' of present and future strategic policy. In closing, the paper will explore a number of geostrategic trends which portend a possible 'post-expeditionary age' that may require Army and the ADF to rethink their assumptions on expeditionary warfare. In concluding its analysis, this paper will contend that, in order to be 'expeditionary', the ADF will need to balance the competing demands of maritime strategy and its traditional expeditionary preference for forward posturing as it prepares for future warfare. This challenge will demand the closing of significant intellectual gaps, at the very least addressing what truly defines an Australian approach to war.

Expeditionary warfare and its theoretical origins

The delicate interactions of the land and sea factors produce conditions too intricate for such blunt solutions. Even the initial equations they present are too complex to be reduced by the simple application of rough-and-ready maxims. Their right handling depends upon the broadest and most fundamental principles of war, and it is as a standpoint from which to get a clear and unobstructed view of the factors in their true relations that a theory of war has perhaps its highest value.

Sir Julian Corbett¹⁶

While at first glance expeditionary warfare appears to encapsulate a simple idea, deeper analysis reveals that it is a confused topic with various interpretations. If 'expedition' is considered in terms of its basic use within the English language to mean 'a journey undertaken for a specific purpose', expeditionary warfare could conceivably encompass virtually any form of deployment from a force's home location.¹⁷ Such a definition suggests that expeditions could even be conducted domestically and, as such, would arguably offer very little as an idea. At its most abstract, expeditionary warfare has been a useful concept for militaries to exploit in order to portray images of readiness and posture rather than offer a meaningful contribution to an understanding of warfare. This conflation makes it difficult to define expeditionary warfare using simple, easily comprehensible principles and terms. Nonetheless, it is important to understand such abstract ideas so as to appreciate the intellectual and conceptual pressures that shape current defence planning.

There is a risk inherent in any over-reliance on a theory. Michael Evans once famously described Australian strategic culture as 'overly theoretical and, as a result, has seldom provided a sound guide to military practice', a dissonance 'that neglected context at the expense of abstract ideas' and 'geostrategic determinism over history and culture'.¹⁸ Corbett himself wrote of the relevance of theory in the context of his own strategy, noting that it 'appear[ed] more unpractical, less promising of useful result' because war was 'so much a personality, of character, of common sense ... that it seems incapable of being reduced to anything like true scientific analysis'.¹⁹ While this may be true, as Antuilo Echevarria writes, extrapolating trends from history or assuming that culture is an immutable force on strategy is equally problematic.²⁰ However, abandoning geography or geostrategic principles as a determinant of strategy and force posture, perhaps the only truly 'independent variable' in defence planning, could also prove problematic.²¹ Strategy must be understood from all perspectives in order to develop what Basil Liddell-Hart termed an 'anticipated flow of cause to effect', a theory that describes the way military means are applied to achieve an objective.²²

By its very nature, expeditionary warfare is a product of a number of influential contextual and situational factors such as geography, logistic capabilities including modes of deployment, and force posture. Moreover, expeditionary warfare has been regarded by the greatest theorists as primarily concerned with force projection to achieve strategic or operational objectives on land. Since air transport is a relatively new phenomenon in the broader context of military history, and is inherently limited by its lack of permanence and mass, it is unsurprising that expeditionary strategies have been primarily defined by naval writers and in the context of a maritime (sea, air and land considered conjointly) setting. As Alfred T. Mahan notes in *The Influence of Sea Power on History 1660–1783*, 'it learns to profit by all opportunities of settling on some chosen point of a coast, and to render definitive an occupation which was at first only transient', adding that, 'in peace it may gain its most decisive victories by occupying in a country ... excellent positions which would perhaps hardly be got by war'.²³

The 1897 *Military Expeditions Beyond the Seas* by Colonel George Furse is one of a mere handful of expeditionary-oriented classical works produced by an army author of the same vintage as Mahan and Corbett, and thus worthy of consideration by the modern Army. Unsurprisingly, it too captures the British approach to warfare, describing expeditionary warfare in terms of the unification of land and sea domains in largely amphibious campaigns.²⁴ But the works of Corbett, Mahan and Furse — whose ideas lie at the heart of modern strategic

theory on expeditionary warfare — should not be considered outside their context. These ideas were generated in a specific era of warfare, a period influenced by British military experience (and to a lesser extent that of the United States) of the Regency, Victorian and Edwardian periods, of imperial small wars of choice against ‘savages’, to quell rebellions or punitive campaigns waged against other adversaries.²⁵ In the context of those experiences, such ideas offered contrasting concepts of invasion, large-scale conflict or even the forward posturing or deployment of military forces in foreign lands.

Thus expeditionary warfare carries a historical legacy that reflects the small, limited wars of an era broadly similar to the present day. The tremendously influential *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice* published by Major-General Charles Callwell in 1906 promoted this thesis in the mindset of British and American military planners for the next century. While considering the problem distinct from, and providing little reference to maritime strategy, Callwell regarded expeditionary ‘small wars’ as:

Campaigns of conquest or annexation, campaigns for the suppression of insurrections or lawlessness or for the settlement of conquered or annexed territory, and campaigns undertaken to wipe out an insult, to avenge a wrong, or to overthrow a dangerous enemy.²⁶

Through descriptions of the French conquest of Algeria to early wars of liberation in the Balkans, the Crimean War, the defeat of the Kaffir and Matabili rebellions in South Africa, and the British response to the Indian mutiny, Furse and Callwell portray expeditionary campaigns as wars of choice rather than survival, fought for limited but overwhelmingly political purposes. Callwell’s anthology outlined these wars with such clarity that it formed the basis for the first edition of the USMC *Small Wars Manual*, now considered one of the most important pieces of US expeditionary-oriented doctrinal work of the twenty-first century.²⁷ As will be discussed in later chapters, Callwell’s work shaped the USMC’s key concepts — and by extrapolation those of the Australian Army — of expeditionary warfare in the early stages of the post-Cold War era.

While the maritime perspective has held considerable sway over the ideas of expeditionary warfare, the global wars of the twentieth century clearly demonstrated the applicability of expeditionary warfare to other conflicts. The projection of military power onto the European continent or Pacific archipelagos during two world wars saw a reframing of expeditionary warfare, particularly in American doctrine and thought. The maritime approach to expeditionary warfare could not comfortably capture how continental powers might have pursued

objectives akin to the notion of the 'small war', far less the tremendous projection of predominantly land power by ancient nations such as Imperial Rome, Persia and Macedon.²⁸ This conceptual dissonance was apparent in many pre-Napoleonic European wars and border disputes which, small in nature and limited in scope, were characterised by expeditionary activity typically encountered in the 'maritime' setting. Even Clausewitz, famous for his depictions of continental total or unlimited war, recalled these smaller conflicts, defining them as either 'limited' or 'half-hearted' in nature.²⁹ These wars could be easily abandoned for reasons of political expediency or policy, and were a counterpoint to the unlimited warfare fought to utterly exhaust an opponent. In 'half-hearted' wars, the complete destruction of an adversary military force was only essential insofar as it led to the attainment of the 'limited object'.³⁰ Any consideration of the 2014 Russian annexation of the Crimean peninsula begs the question of whether expeditionary warfare is truly bound by Corbettian maritime strategy, or whether it is a much broader concept applicable to a wide variety of conflicts.

Furthermore, there remain two key conditions of these small expeditionary wars that are often challenged by historical experience. The first is identified by strategic thinker Edward Luttwak reflecting on the paradoxes inherent in strategy.³¹ Luttwak noted that success in warfare often changes the character of the conflict. While a vastly superior force — such as the Western armies of Furse or Callwell's time — might wage a campaign with significant early victories that achieve the desired limited objective, adversaries tend to adopt 'counter-conventional choices' in a 'reversal of opposites'.³² This abstract concept is useful for understanding the nature of expeditionary warfare as smaller conflicts tend to escalate rapidly, with initial advancements lost through a self-negating evolution.³³ In simpler terms, the strategic successes of powerful expeditionary forces tend to incur a proportional asymmetric response that continues the conflict beyond the initial objectives of the invading party. The high propensity for expeditions to degenerate into prolonged occupations and counterinsurgency campaigns is the well-known consequence of this phenomenon.

Second, and symptomatic of the first issue, while an expeditionary operation may be perceived as a 'campaign of expediency' by the initiator, this is certainly not the perception of the occupants of the country in question. In many cases, expeditionary operations will result in 'ultimate war' for at least one of the belligerents, as has been demonstrated in insurgent responses to military invasions throughout history. Nor will achieving the limited object by the expeditionary force assure completion of the war. In a particularly pertinent and ironic reference to the

contemporary reader, Callwell noted of Britain's nineteenth-century campaigns in Afghanistan that 'Kabul was occupied early in the campaign ... but its capture by no means brought the downfall of the Afghans as a fighting power, on the contrary it only brought about the commencement of the campaign'.³⁴ For these reasons, expeditions tend to be far more difficult and far lengthier than ever intended by the initiating force. Small wars are, as with any type of warfare, a matter of perspective.

The question remains whether maritime strategy, limited warfare and the small war tradition — concepts that have characterised the modern understanding of expeditionary warfare — are applicable to Australia. The expeditionary impulse of many Western nations is linked to these themes, with naval and small wars theorists routinely cited even within the ADF. Yet the expeditionary warfare concepts described here are quite clearly unique in time, purpose and, ultimately, subject. It is important to remember, as Liddell-Hart explains, that although there may be enduring theories of warfare, 'the physical factors are different in almost every war and military situation'.³⁵ No study of war reveals it as a topic without paradoxes, problems and contradictions, often created by subjective conditions. Nonetheless, the core ideas of expeditionary warfare have been an important intellectual and strategic foundation upon which subsequent doctrine and ideas have developed in armies such as our own. However, Australian strategic history, at least in the views of leading theorists and writers, reveals a considerable divergence from maritime tradition, and perhaps even from the idea of the small war. If expeditionary warfare is considered from the most basic of positions as the projection of military force (a journey) from one's homeland (for a specific purpose), the manner in which the Australian military has sought to prosecute such warfare has been quite different to that envisaged in the theory it so often quotes.

Expeditionary warfare in the Australian strategic tradition

For the defence of Australian interests wherever they might be threatened, the first essential was the sea supremacy, which was guaranteed by the Royal Navy. The second was the possession of a Field Force capable of undertaking military operations in whatever part of the world it might be desired by Australia to employ them.

Major General Sir Edward Hutton,
General Officer Commanding the Australian Military Forces, 1901³⁶

In advising the government of a newly federated Australia, Major General Hutton, a British officer under secondment as Commander of the Australian Military Forces, noted two important policy requirements for Australia's defence. Quite clearly, Hutton advocated for an expeditionary army prepared to support national interests abroad as a member of the Commonwealth. Even in the early days of Australian settlement, control of the sea — or more precisely, the archipelagic region to Australia's north — formed the basis for Australian defence, a view with which most contemporary Australian strategists would be familiar. It has been in seeking security from a great naval power in alliance that Australia's approach to expeditionary warfare has been profoundly defined. This has meant that there are limited grounds on which to base a maritime tradition that has seen the Australian Army and Navy trained and prepared to operate in unison as an expeditionary force in response to a given conflict. Second, and most importantly, the assurance of continental protection was, and remains, associated with significant strategic obligations and costs. To ensure the obligation of British imperial defence, and

later US assistance under the ANZUS treaty, the price has been expressed in expeditionary deployments in support of coalition commitments, deployments which, in many cases, are quite obviously wars of choice. 'Choice' is, however, a very subjective term and often understood only after an event.

Such strategic requirements have been foundational to the Australian conception of expeditionary warfare that sits at the core of its military philosophy; Australia's military, particularly the Army, has been defined by its conduct, its requirements and its experiences. As Russell Parkin notes, despite the propensity of successive Australian governments to view the ADF's role as regional in nature, the Army has consistently been deployed as an expeditionary force, employed to defend Australian interests further abroad than its immediate frontier.³⁷ Australia has, after all, long maintained a preference for and history of, countering threats at a geographic distance from the mainland, an idea emblemised in the 1960s strategic policy of 'forward defence'.³⁸ The way in which the ADF has conducted military operations has typically diverged from what might be considered a traditional view of expeditionary warfare, instead reflecting forward posturing, deployment or positioning unlike that commonly associated with the maritime ideal. While maritime strategy may have been the only logical conclusion for Britain according to Corbett, in the Australian context there are two often competing and arguably political traditions that have shaped the way in which expeditionary warfare has been viewed.

In an influential paper written in 2005, Michael Evans popularised the conceptual division in the Australian understanding of warfare as the 'Creswell-Forster Divide'.³⁹ Referring to a 1908 airing of views between Colonel Hubert Forster, the Director of Military Science at Sydney University, and Captain William Creswell from the early 'Defence establishment', Evans outlined a conceptual distinction in Australian strategic debate between proponents of nominally expeditionary strategies, and those like Creswell who advocated that national defence was best preserved through a strong navy that controlled access to Australia's north. While this implies a uniquely Australian strategic problem, such tension is also apparent in other maritime nations such as the United States, a country that has alternated between geographically based defensive isolationism and global military activism throughout its modern existence.⁴⁰ Certainly the Clausewitzian idea of the 'spirit' of an age reinforces the notion that strategic ideas are often associated with particular events, episodes and time periods.⁴¹ Nonetheless, the eponymous 'divide' with its juxtaposed schools of thought reflects a useful, though clearly reductive prism through which significant differences of opinion have been voiced in the Australian strategic debate.

Interestingly, Colonel Forster, a former aide to General Hutton, wrote in justification of an 'imperial' approach to Australia's defence, noting that Australian defence was assured by its contribution as part of an imperial coalition that acted 'in any part of the world in defence of Imperial interests'.⁴² Like his superior, he did not refer to any requirement for Australian military forces to possess a maritime, or explicitly amphibious orientation. This distinction is important given the vast bulk of Australian literature written on expeditionary warfare evokes maritime strategy, not expeditionary warfare more broadly. Undoubtedly influenced by the events of the Pacific campaigns of the Second World War, many modern historians regard history as validating the maritime approach to expeditionary strategy.⁴³ Examples frequently cited include the Rabaul campaign in 1914, the South West Pacific 'island hopping' operations of the Second World War, and more recently the interventions in Timor-Leste and the Solomon Islands.⁴⁴ While Australia has led or independently conducted a number of these operations, the most significant — the campaigns of the Second World War — were fought as a subordinate partner consistent with the tradition of Australian strategy. Thus, there are few examples in Australian military history in which Australia has unilaterally projected land power as could be expected under maritime strategy.

The limited frequency of Corbettian maritime strategy within Australian military history experience highlights the importance of examining the practice of expeditionary warfare from alternative strategic and operational concepts and methodologies. Whether under the rubric of imperial defence or coalition operations, Australia's expeditions and approach to war have been typically expressed through forward deployment, defence or posturing of Australian forces independent of amphibious operation or maritime strategy. Furthermore, many have occurred well beyond what is now termed the Indo-Pacific strategic arc and have almost always been coalition in nature. These have ranged from contributions to the large-scale continental campaigns fought in Africa, the Middle East and Europe during the First and Second World Wars, to the small wars and counterinsurgency campaigns in Malaya and Vietnam fought without consideration of maritime strategy.⁴⁵ As such, the views of the few authors such as Alan Dupont who regard Australia's historic obligations as global rather than specifically regional are particularly pertinent as they articulate ideas with clear implications for the logic of expeditionary warfare and the utility of maritime strategy within it.⁴⁶

The 'continentalist' or 'navalist' school of thought is often portrayed as a natural juxtaposition to expeditionary warfare, perhaps erroneously so.⁴⁷ Key proponents of this approach to Australian strategy include Desmond Ball, Ross Babbage,

Paul Dibb, Hugh White and Alan Stephens who have affirmed strategic geography and the primacy of defending the Australian continental mass as the major determinants of force posture and orientation.⁴⁸ This has been a view maintained since Australia's inception as a commonwealth, not only by Admiral Creswell but other notable officials such as Hutton who quite clearly regarded the sea — or more specifically, geography — as fundamental to Australia's protection.⁴⁹ While military expeditions and distant wars might represent a second-order concern for the 'continentalists', most do not deny their importance to Australian strategy, particularly in relation to contingencies within Australia's immediate region.⁵⁰ If expeditionary warfare is considered as requiring forces launched from a home base, a continental force posture — one in which no forward positions are maintained outside national borders — can set the preconditions for the emergence of an expeditionary approach to war. So, while it may be tempting to suggest that expeditionary warfare and continental defence are binary opposites, this is not always the case.⁵¹ As argued by former Defence minister Kim Beazley in recounting Australia's 20 years of commitments to Persian Gulf operations, the ADF has often deployed abroad with forces whose fundamental purpose was conceived as the defence of the Australian continent.⁵²

It is therefore in the specifics of expeditionary warfare, applied through force structure and practical strategy, where the difference truly lies. In the case of Australia, these factors come with a political flavour. Defence self-reliance, a force structure principle commonly associated with the 'continentalist' school, is an exemplar of this factor. This is a policy approach that grew from US and Australian disengagement from mainland South-East Asia following the conclusion of the Vietnam War.⁵³ While defence planners considered that regional military operations might require the ADF to operate outside the auspices of a 'great power' coalition in the local region as early as the Second World War, it was not until 40 years later that this would be described as a fundamental force structure principle.⁵⁴ It would be reasonable to assume that, under such arrangements, Australia might develop a maritime-oriented strategy so as to maintain the capacity to independently intervene or practise military diplomacy in its littoral immediate region. Tensions with Indonesia, most notably around its 1975 invasion of Timor-Leste, and military interactions with South-East Asian nations would have given planners good reason to seriously consider a maritime strategy as an expeditionary ideal for the ADF.⁵⁵ Instead, defensive self-reliance saw a significant reversal of the concept of forward defence (or posturing) and thus shifted the methodology by which expeditionary warfare would be conducted.

Defence self-reliance required the ADF to prioritise its limited resources and the development of its warfighting concepts towards its primary task — the defence of the continent — rather than preparation for the conduct of expeditionary ‘wars of choice’.⁵⁶ Despite the political and ideological influences on the generation of this idea, then Defence minister Kim Beazley sought to distinguish self-reliance from continental defence in his foreword to *Defence White Paper 1987: The Defence of Australia*.⁵⁷ Yet in rejecting such a ‘narrow’ defensive approach, the idea of ‘defence in depth’ ultimately prioritised operations within Australia or its immediate area of interest to its north over global deployments as force structure determinants.⁵⁸ *Defence White Paper 1994: Defending Australia* verified this approach, citing Australia’s successful deployments on United Nations (UN) missions and other global operations, but noted that ‘they do not determine the force structure of the Australian Defence Force’.⁵⁹ As Paul Dibb explained a decade later, this distinction between the defence of geography as a force structure determinant and its use operationally is an important one often forgotten by ‘commentators’.⁶⁰ Nonetheless, the practicality of defending the continent saw considerable investment in sea and air strike capabilities, as opposed to amphibious capabilities or the land forces typically associated with expeditionary warfare.⁶¹ With this policy view transferred to contemporary equivalents, it is understandable that Australia’s approach to the concept of expeditionary warfare has ever since been skewed by other primary commitments.

While the dichotomy between purportedly ‘continentalist’ and expeditionary viewpoints appears to be the overly reductive ‘shibboleth’ that academic Alan Dupont describes, it does reveal the pervasive uncertainty implicit in the Australian approach to warfare.⁶² Defence self-reliance gave birth to Australia’s modern aspirations to be a maritime power just as it did continental defence, and the two ideas have been inextricably intertwined ever since. Any confusion is only enhanced by strategic policy choices that see regional deployments as non-discretionary, just as operations within the Indo–Pacific strategic arc are likely to be.⁶³ While force structure decisions based on self-reliance for defence of Australia scenarios remain a feature of recent policy choices, essential strategic tasks such as humanitarian or security missions in Australia’s littoral north have always ensured that maritime strategy has never drifted far from the attention of the ADF. Whether this can be achieved through a broadly ‘continentalist’ approach to ‘Maritime Strategy’, as validated by *Defence White Paper 2013*’s assessment of the ADF’s principal tasks poses uncomfortable questions for the ADF to answer in its operational concepts.⁶⁴

Nonetheless, this very brief excursion through Australian strategic history illustrates that it is not unreasonable to confirm the 'characteristic conception' of the Australian approach to war as conspicuously 'expeditionary' in nature.⁶⁵ It must be said, however, that Australia's contextual influences, both historic and geostrategic, have ensured that this 'conception' cannot be easily theorised in terms of the maritime principles established in Corbett's work. Australia's approach to expeditionary warfare at the strategic level of war has historically favoured forward deployment, defence and posturing, often through purpose-specific or niche contributions under the auspices of a coalition led by a 'great power', and more often for globalist, alliance-based goals. This does not mean that expeditionary warfare based on maritime, small war and limited warfare traditions has been unimportant or irrelevant to Australia and the ADF. But it does suggest that those influences on expeditionary strategy that endow it with 'raiding characteristics' are less influential on the Australian approach to war than might be expected for an island continent.⁶⁶

General Hutton observed in 1901, and Colonel Forster described seven years later, that the purpose of the 'field force' was to deploy globally on the basis of the 'sea supremacy' of a larger ally; this remains the dominant narrative of Australia's military history.⁶⁷ While their ideas prompt analogies with maritime strategy, neither wrote of it in the same compelling way as Corbett, a British academic, or Colonel Furse, a military officer, did in terms of their own nation. It is only in more recent times, as Australia has grown and matured as a power that seeks a military capacity to act independently, that Corbettian maritime strategy has held real value. Of course, the force structure debates that erupted since the 1980s, some of which expose the politicisation of military strategy, have muddled the discussion of Australia's approach to expeditionary warfare. Yet in the absence of this concern, it is unclear whether an analysis of Australia's strategic history would necessarily result in demands that maritime strategy take precedence over any other aspect of an expeditionary approach to warfare. Noting that strategic history appears to enjoy revealing exceptions, Australian theorists and military practitioners have argued perceptively that Australia's practice of expeditionary warfare should align with Corbett's key ideas. Changing geostrategic conditions at the conclusion of the Cold War certainly gave Western militaries — including Australia — good cause to embrace the modern expeditionary operation and effusively promote their expeditionary credentials and imperatives.

The ‘New Anarchy’ and the rebirth of expeditionary warfare

The conclusion of the Cold War was a pivotal moment, heralding changing geostrategic conditions that inspired militaries to rapidly revisit many of their ideas and concepts on modern warfare. The USMC ushered in this expeditionary age by labelling it the ‘new anarchy’ in its *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 3: Expeditionary Operations*. Reflecting on the new strategic conditions, the publication argued that the world was entering an era of ‘widespread uncertainty, rapid change and turmoil’.⁶⁸ Rather than the ‘end of history’, as academic Francis Fukuyama famously proclaimed, the new anarchy instead brought with it what appeared to be an ‘end of geography’.⁶⁹ Globalisation processes and the human rights agenda saw Western militaries rapidly become embroiled in a flood of peace support operations, humanitarian interventions and security operations.⁷⁰ Logistics, and the economic dependency of Western nations on globalised supply chains, demanded the attention of governments and militaries, and national prosperity was increasingly recognised as a direct function of the security of global trade.⁷¹ Yet these new, distant challenges to the strategic interests of Western nations emerged as the desire to maintain forces in strategically important forward bases diminished, their militaries now faced with the prospect of protecting strategic interests through deployment from the homeland at extreme and global distances. The stagnation in strategic manoeuvre, which typified the Cold War, dissipated to reveal a new expeditionary age.⁷²

These new geostrategic conditions were strikingly similar to those in which Corbett’s maritime strategy was prepared. With unprecedented supremacy over the seas and air, the United States and its allies, including Australia, were afforded

the freedom to respond to threats abroad with little fear of major resistance, reflecting the dominance the British enjoyed in imperial times.⁷³ Alongside increasing strategic manoeuvrability, warfare was perceived to have substantially changed its character, and the focus of Western militaries shifted from fear of super-power confrontation to addressing new needs such as intervention in failing states.⁷⁴ Where warfare occurred, it was typically of low intensity and unconventional in manner, reminiscent of the bush wars of Callwell's time.⁷⁵ These geostrategic conditions of the post-Cold War period favoured, if not encouraged, the development of expeditionary forces. But warfare was also exported to Western homelands by new adversaries. The events of 11 September 2001 came a little over a decade after the conclusion of the Cold War; with the ensuing 'War on Terror', enemies of Western powers revealed that they too could take advantage of geostrategic change. New styles of warfare emerged that would substantially affect the way in which militaries would respond conceptually to this new age.

In a famous metaphor referring to US operational experiences in a collapsing Yugoslavia in 1999, former USMC commander General Krulak described the emergence of military operations in terms of a 'three-block war' in which military forces could be simultaneously providing humanitarian assistance, conducting peacekeeping operations, and engaged in a highly lethal mid-intensity battle.⁷⁶ Frank Hoffman's abstract concept of the 'hybrid war' is an equally well-known idea that describes the nature of such conflicts, as is British General Sir Rupert Smith's notion of 'wars amongst the people' and the concept of '4th generation war'.⁷⁷ Although subtly different, each of these ideas agreed that conflict had become more compound, a nexus in which small-scale stabilisation, counterterrorism, counter-crime, counterinsurgency and peacekeeping operations could exist alongside conventional offensives.⁷⁸ While these ideas purported to be unique, they were generally new names for older 'small war' theories or other historical approaches to expeditionary warfare. Nonetheless, the language of expeditionary warfare changed, with terms such as 'military intervention', 'peacekeeping' and 'peacemaking' entering military discourse.

Addressing these hybrid threats and strategic problems articulated in modern small wars and expeditions aroused considerable debate in Western militaries, which now deliberated on whether to remain primarily focused on conventional warfighting or prepare to meet new challenges. The US Army's move towards 'full-spectrum operations' and 'unified operations', for example, sought to better prepare the service for the challenges of modern expeditionary war, but also

proved highly contentious.⁷⁹ In the United States, a vocal movement against building purportedly balanced forces capable of performing the wide variety of mission types characterising expeditionary operations emerged, with theorists such as former US Army officer Gian Gentile and strategist Edward Luttwak citing the immense difficulties of preparing forces designed to 'do it all', and arguing instead that forces should be prepared for the conflicts of greatest intensity and consequence.⁸⁰ This is a debate that continues to this day.

The second key theme related to the notion of the pre-emptive war. Soon after the events of 11 September 2001, the strategy of pre-emption was argued as a 'just' approach to forestall potential aggression in a 'Global War on Terror'.⁸¹ As was apparent in then US president George W. Bush's subsequent decision to invade Iraq in 2003, pre-emption is usually associated with major conventional conflict rather than smaller expeditionary campaigns. This is due to the envisioned goal of such a strategy, a crushing military blow that promises rapid victory in an expected war.⁸² Many of the requirements for pre-emption such as strategic mobility are fundamental characteristics of the concept of expeditionary warfare, as is pre-emption's need for strategic freedom of action by the involved force. In the case of the post-Cold War era and the 'War on Terror' period that followed, the parallel was particularly clear.

Despite these important influences on the character of war, the practicalities of responding to global threats without the advantage of proximate forward positions would ultimately prove the most important influence on an era of military modernisation. Configuring and preparing forces to conduct expeditionary interventions over vast distances became the primary focus for military reorganisation.⁸³ In the 1990s, the US Air Force developed its own framework, the Expeditionary Aerospace Force, and in 2005, the US Navy established an expeditionary command to respond to the requirements of the national security strategy that was focused on the 'War on Terror'.⁸⁴ For others, the shifting focus to expeditionary warfare necessitated a complete revision of their existing posture. In abandoning continental defence, NATO formed a rapid reaction force to address several failings in deployability identified during the 1999 Kosovo campaign, adjusting to a type of warfare far removed from that which the organisation traditionally exercised and was configured to fight.⁸⁵ Strategic mobility and expeditionary deployment became the prime virtues of Western forces and were reflected in a new wave of doctrine and ideas. Of these, the USMC's 'modern expeditionary operation' would be the exemplar.

The modern expeditionary operation

While new strategic requirements led militaries to renew the ideas and concepts of expeditionary warfare, there were other equally important developments that would affect this approach. The Western examination of the operational level of war was a key influence in the rebirth of expeditionary warfare. Described as the 'ways' in which strategic goals are met, it formed a mental structure that enabled military planners to unify multiple tactical actions in a military campaign.⁸⁶ The idea of the operational level of war would, however, prove messy and chaotic, with many competing ideas and thoughts contending for intellectual authority and relevance.⁸⁷ It was in the association of new military imperatives to the development of the operational level of war by the USMC that the notion of the modern expeditionary operation, an imitative concept based on Corbett's maritime strategy, coalesced.

The idea of an expeditionary operation was only one of a number of concepts that embraced the equally novel idea of the operational level of war that emerged in the late years of the Cold War. Expeditionary operations were defined and analysed alongside air power, sea power, peace support, and complex, counterinsurgency and counterterrorism operations among numerous others, each with its own language, ideas and methods.⁸⁸ Furthermore, and rather confusingly, many of these ideas were characterised by an expeditionary orientation and reflected aspects of the theoretical underpinnings of expeditionary warfare. The consequence of this proliferation was the gradual divorce of expeditionary warfare from its primary roots in maritime strategy, generalising the topic to a point that it once again reflected a constituent part rather than a sole determinant of strategy. Nonetheless navies, and in particular marine forces, promoted the uniqueness of the expeditionary operation and developed doctrine accordingly.

From the basis of an unmatched tradition in amphibious manoeuvre, the USMC created a purpose-built operational concept to suit its role as the US pre-eminent expeditionary force.⁸⁹ The doctrine known as 'operational manoeuvre from the sea' became emblematic of the concepts and ideas of modern expeditionary warfare, a renewal of Corbett's maritime strategy.⁹⁰ 'Operational manoeuvre from the sea' and its affiliated concepts, 'military operations other than war' and 'maritime prepositioning force operations', viewed the sea as an avenue for manoeuvring against an operational-level objective that existed within the range of military operations from major theatre conflict to military interventions.⁹¹ Most importantly, they embraced the Marine preference for high-readiness, mission-specific and variable forces, capable of long-distance sustainment in operations far

removed from their own territory.⁹² This approach was a considerable adaptation, significantly removed from the amphibious assault missions pursued by the USMC for much of the twentieth century, and represented a return to its foundation in the small wars of the 1800s and early 1900s.⁹³

While the doctrinal efforts of the USMC exemplified the modern approach to expeditionary warfare, they were not the only forces to make substantial adjustments to their views on the topic. After 50 years in which their maritime empire crumbled, and in which limited military resources had been devoted to a posture that emphasised support to NATO on the European continent, the Falklands conflict with Argentina in 1982 encouraged the United Kingdom to reinvigorate concepts largely left dormant.⁹⁴ This strategic shock, and the subsequent end to the Cold War, began a dramatic process in which the British focus on warfare eventually returned to the maritime.⁹⁵ In 1995, *Joint Doctrine 10-1: British Maritime Doctrine* was released with support from all military services, the first of three iterations of capstone doctrine that implicitly addressed maritime-centric expeditionary warfare at all levels of war.⁹⁶ As with American doctrine, the expeditionary operation competed for interest with other operational concepts, but the basic ideas of maritime strategy, limited warfare and the small war tradition gained renewed emphasis.

Beyond the work of military practitioners and doctrine writers echoing history, sea power theorists became central to focusing planners on the traditions behind the theories and ideas of modern expeditionary warfare. Foremost among these, Professor Geoffrey Till, Director of the UK Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies, connected theory, the nature of contemporary conflict and maritime strategy in a coherent theory of the modern expeditionary operation. Till described such operations as being joint operational-level campaigns of short duration, limited aim, self-contained, with deployments to distant urban-littoral environments by typically Western forces against varied opponents in a highly politicised environment.⁹⁷ Many of his ideas and observations have since been replicated elsewhere, including in the Australian Army's contemporary approach to the urban littoral. Acknowledging that, despite his efforts, 'definitions of expeditionary operations remain imprecise', Till also admitted that not every expeditionary operation conducted by Western forces in the modern expeditionary age possessed the same characteristics.⁹⁸ Nonetheless, his idea served to improve the coherence of the discussion on expeditionary warfare and, in doing so, contributed to its validity for Western militaries.

In spite of these attempts to define the expeditionary operation and expeditionary warfare in general, it remains a controversial topic. The idea of a modern expeditionary operation has been tarnished by its connection to a range of buzzwords and to military faddism.⁹⁹ It has been argued that, by shaping expeditionary ideas to conditions and militaries beyond the original intentions of their creators, expeditionary concepts have been diluted to the point of becoming dogmatic philosophies offering little more than platitudes on the importance of military forces possessing the 'mindset' of readiness.¹⁰⁰ In response to a recent article on the ADF and its nominally expeditionary character, Australian academic Peter Dean commented that 'one of the main problems with expeditionary as a concept [is that] it means different things to different people'.¹⁰¹ Even within the ADF, the term 'expeditionary' causes confusion, with the ADF glossary alone containing 53 references, 51 of which are naming conventions, while just two reflect acceptable yet differing definitions of expeditionary warfare.¹⁰² The fact that there is no agreement on the meaning of 'expeditionary' in the ADF, a military force generally quick to promote its expeditionary orientation, shows how conflated an idea it has become.

If modern expeditionary operations are considered in terms of their historic connection to maritime strategy, the topic acquires far greater significance for military study. While there are a number of apt descriptions of expeditionary operations, that of academic and former US Navy officer Sam Tangredi stands out as particularly succinct and appropriate to this context: 'military operations on land that are exclusively or primarily initiated, supported and supplied from the sea'.¹⁰³ Still despite the temptation to approach expeditionary warfare from the basis of modern expeditionary operations, it is important to remember that many of its ideas related directly to the US military, which boasts prodigious self-deployment and sustainment capabilities far greater than any other force. This renders its perspective virtually unique. In recognising this issue, Canadian Defence analyst Thierry Gongorra offers a distinction between expeditionary forces by describing a 'robust' model that reflects the USMC and other US services, and a 'baseline' model of much lower capability.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, there are very few nations — Australia included — that can independently conduct an expeditionary operation on a par with the USMC. Understandably therefore, these smaller forces seek to explore expeditionary warfare from a different perspective.

There are other equally legitimate criticisms of the concept of the modern expeditionary operation. Since the end of the Cold War, the term 'expeditionary' has been frequently exploited by forces to justify expenditure in times of reduced

defence budgets.¹⁰⁵ The USMC has certainly been guilty of such exploitation over the last 20 years, although it is by no means alone in this regard. Australian writer Alan Stephens criticises the Australian Army for its 'self-serving preference' in exaggerating its expeditionary credentials to attract increasingly limited resources.¹⁰⁶ With former chief of Army, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling — architect of the Army's push towards an expeditionary orientation — suggesting that the Army's push into expeditionary warfare corresponded with its need for resourcing, it is no wonder that the current drive for expeditionary capabilities in Army has been contested.¹⁰⁷

A further criticism of post-Cold War expeditionary warfare casts doubt over the requirement for such specialist concepts and the likely success of these expeditionary forces.¹⁰⁸ Whether or not they reflect expeditionary operations as defined by Till or Tancredi, the ongoing conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are potent reminders that expeditionary warfare is intrinsically demanding and difficult, and seldom as rapid as intended. These two operations typify an enduring characteristic of expeditionary warfare — a propensity for such operations to degenerate into prolonged and unpopular military campaigns that require enduring long-term commitments.¹⁰⁹ Despite expeditionary warfare in general, and modern expeditionary operations in particular, purporting to offer governments an ability to influence events and protect and promote interests abroad, recent experiences have confirmed that this confidence can be both fleeting and illusory.

Finally, while it may be easy to become enamoured of the seemingly positive changes occurring within the ADF, there may be a 'dark side' to expeditionary operations.¹¹⁰ As Commander McKearney notes with reference to the US Navy, to tailor a force on the basis of a force structure optimised for expeditionary warfare creates a false conviction that it can actually cover the 'hot spot when needed' by virtue of its mobility.¹¹¹ This is a logic repeated by Australian critics of the ADF's emphasis on capabilities designed to enhance its capacity to conduct expeditionary operations. Alan Stephens contends that the expeditionary rationale behind Australia's maritime strategy belies the likelihood that current ADF forces can actually achieve their desired operational objectives.¹¹² Stephan Frühling takes this point further in the context of maritime power, suggesting that the small size of Australian sea and land forces 'is not anywhere near the size required to hold territory' against likely opponents, and hence provides nothing more than a 'lure of decisiveness' to Australian military planners.¹¹³ Such criticisms suggest that the concept of the expeditionary operation is ultimately a valueless proposition, a concept that is unsuited to the challenges of modern war.

Despite the serious criticism directed towards the concept of the modern expeditionary operation, expeditionary warfare remains an important locus for Western militaries in understanding and preparing for the challenges of modern warfare. Hybrid wars, pre-emptive action and a wide variety of new military tasks emphasise the need for Corbettian maritime strategy to be reinvigorated and its theory elevated to a new form — the modern expeditionary operation. This operational method is just one of many in this expeditionary age of war, and not all Western militaries can easily meet its requirements. As such, many have sought to adapt the concept of the expeditionary operation to their own circumstances and to fit the type of operations they conduct. The ADF, and in particular the Australian Army, has sought to develop its concepts and ideas on expeditionary warfare in the shadow of the work completed by the USMC during the immediate post-Cold War period. However, the ADF's approach has proven imitative, not innovative, and this has had a considerable impact on the quality of its doctrine and its understanding of expeditionary warfare in general.

Army and the expeditionary impulse: Embracing maritime strategy

While the strategic imperatives of the post-Cold War era caused considerable shifts within the militaries of Australia's allies, Australia's historic attention to the regional 'arc of instability' and its preferences for a particular style of warfare made the adjustment to expeditionary operations less difficult.¹¹⁴ Defence of the continent and defensive self-reliance were powerful themes in Australian strategic policy at the end of the Cold War, but a series of contingencies arose that provided the ADF the opportunity to practise its ability to conduct maritime operations. In 1987, Operation Morris Dance prompted the ADF to deploy forces to Fiji to prepare for the potential evacuation of Australian foreign nationals, and in 1997 ADF forces deployed again, this time to Bougainville under Operation Lagoon. Both contingencies provided defence planners reason to revitalise the ADF's expeditionary inclinations.¹¹⁵ It was the Australian Army, enthusiastically seeking to transition from the continental defence focus of the 1980s and 1990s, that became the primary agitator for a revision of Australia's strategy and approach to warfare.

In an important paper, Michael Evans, then an Army academic, outlined the rationale for the Australian Army's posture for an expeditionary-focused maritime strategy.¹¹⁶ Writing in 1998, soon after the release of *Australia's Strategic Policy* and the introduction of Army's modernisation program known as *Restructuring the Australian Army* that aimed to produce a 'continental' force, Evans extolled the virtues of maritime strategy.¹¹⁷ He noted that Australia's operational concepts at the time emphasise 'a restrictive and navalist division of strategic labour: the sea and air forces will be primary; the land force will be secondary'.¹¹⁸ Like the USMC in *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 3*, Evans pointed to the importance of power

projection to reflect the requirements of a 'transoceanic era' based on the premise of joint land-sea-air operations.¹¹⁹ In advocating expeditionary warfare, he primarily argued a maritime strategy — similar to the USMC adaptation — as the means to provide the ADF greater operational manoeuvre.¹²⁰ Evans's work became a widely cited impetus, which Army and the wider ADF would use to address the concept of expeditionary warfare. Moreover, his view appeared particularly prescient given that, in the year following the publication of this paper, the ADF embarked on its most significant expeditionary operation since the Vietnam War — an operation that was clearly maritime in its orientation.

The East Timor 1999 intervention, and the subsequent International Forces East Timor (INTERFET) deployment, validated Army's 'opportunistic' push towards an expeditionary orientation.¹²¹ Given that the ADF was not properly postured for this operation, its success has been attributed to the adaptability of ADF personnel and 'whole-of-government involvement' rather than any fundamental change that had occurred within the ADF itself.¹²² The campaign exposed weaknesses in the level of joint cooperation within the ADF, alarming deficiencies in readiness, logistics and other enablers crucial at the operational level of war and for military force projection. The INTERFET deployment also highlighted the deficiency in ADF doctrine and understanding of the conduct of expeditionary campaigns.¹²³ As military historian Bob Breen writes, 'intuitively, one might have expected that a force-projecting island nation like Australia would have become increasingly proficient' in such operations, but 'the ADF was neither proficient as it was, nor competent as it should have been'.¹²⁴

The deficiencies highlighted by the INTERFET deployment presented grounds for significant developmental work within the ADF, and in Army in particular. The 2000 edition of Army's capstone doctrine, *Land Warfare Doctrine 1: The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, published in 2002, described the fundamental importance of an expeditionary orientation to Army. Soon after, *Entry by Air and Sea* was produced as a concept paper within Army's research directorate.¹²⁶ It would be subsumed into the innovative developing doctrine *Land Warfare Doctrine 3.0.0: Manoeuvre Operations in the Littoral Environment*, a significant adaptation of the USMC's operational manoeuvre from the sea released in 2004.¹²⁵ Of the concepts produced at this time, 'manoeuvre operations in the littoral environment' is perhaps Army's most far-reaching attempt to develop an operational-level expeditionary concept suited to the Australian strategic context.¹²⁷ Nonetheless, it also had its drawbacks, notably the failure to address sea control aspects of maritime strategy. Thus it better reflected an expeditionary approach to continentalist strategy than a

maritime approach to war.¹²⁸ While it was conceived to sit within the broader ADF future warfighting concept known as 'multi-dimensional manoeuvre', as a single-service doctrine, the utility of manoeuvre operations in the littoral environment was not acknowledged by the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) which, at the time, were addressing their own unique challenges and concerns.¹²⁹

For the RAAF and the RAN, the expeditionary impulse was far less profound compared with their explicit support for the 'Maritime Strategy' of today. Although amphibious capabilities had been noted by then Chief of the Defence Force, General Peter Cosgrove, as 'capabilities of first resort', neither service saw amphibious warfare or a maritime strategy as a fundamental reason to shift from its 'defence of Australia' tasks.¹³⁰ As the *Maritime War in the 21st Century* papers attested, the RAN instead focused on the considerable challenges associated with its ability to remain effective and provide support to a new range of global tasks such as counter-piracy, crime operations and border control rather than the maritime strategy sought by Army.¹³¹ In the RAAF, attention was focused on all aspects of deployability although, like the RAN, the priority of effort remained with addressing internal weaknesses in extant missions and tasks.¹³² While this priority of effort could be regarded as misdirected, a navy and air force capable of asserting effective control in their domains remains an essential criterion for the conduct of successful expeditionary operations.

Had the ADF not joined wars in the Middle East in support of the United States in 2002 and 2003, the formative concepts and ideas of modern expeditionary operations might have been developed as envisaged by Army. Instead, the attention of military practitioners and writers, including those from Army, turned immediately to hybrid warfare, counterinsurgency and 'complex' operations, despite the conduct of other operations in Australia's immediate region such as Operation Astute in Timor-Leste and Operation Anode in Solomon Islands. While these concepts offered an ostensibly new interpretation of warfare, they were expressed in an expeditionary strategy that was very familiar to the ADF and Army in particular. For a period, the maritime orientation of concept development gave way to new emphasis in the ADF's interpretations of expeditionary warfare; the focus on small wars and the concept of limited warfare was evident in both *Complex Warfighting*, published in 2004, and *Adaptive Campaigning: Future Land Operating Concept*, published in 2009.¹³³ In contrast, the RAN experience in the Arabian Gulf reaffirmed the importance of sea control to power projection, although much of its work was considered beyond the bounds of a maritime strategy

approach.¹³⁴ Although both services acknowledged operations in the Middle East as expeditionary in nature, these deployments resembled previous operations in that they were single service, tactical-level contributions to a larger coalition operation rather than discrete expeditionary operations on the Timor–Leste model.

As its commitment in the Middle East drew down, and Australia and its allies returned their focus to the Indo–Pacific region, the trend towards a maritime approach to strategy renewed in strength. The minds of strategic thinkers turned to divinations of new threats, and with this the capacity for the ADF to operate in the littoral gained credence. The need for the ADF to develop an ‘expeditionary orientation’ became a key feature of strategic policy and doctrinal development as potential operations were considered.¹³⁵ A key feature of this renewed attention, however, was the joint approach to conceptual development as Army sought greater interaction with the RAN and RAAF in doctrinal development. In late 2009, for example, Army’s Capability and Modernisation Committee endorsed a paper titled *The Land Force: Expeditionary in Orientation*, which proposed the creation of a conceptual bridge between draft doctrine, the developmental work of the three services and Army’s equipment and capability programs.¹³⁶ Yet this new direction has encountered considerable challenges.

The ADF’s joint doctrine has been demonstrably deficient in addressing the mechanics of an expeditionary orientation, despite considerable improvements and developmental work undertaken in recent years. Expeditionary operations are described in comparatively basic terms compared with the doctrine of other militaries. This is despite the almost slavish adoption of foreign ideas including ‘ship-to-objective manoeuvre’, ‘multi-dimensional manoeuvre’ and ‘distributed manoeuvre’, all of which include aspects that are beyond the capacity of the ADF acting independently of a coalition.¹³⁷ The poorly understood concept of ‘sea basing’ is particularly indicative of this state, and is an idea that even the USMC is having immense difficulty implementing. This is a concept that will require significant, and expensive, force structure modification to successfully implement.¹³⁸ It is worth noting that Army’s current amphibious concept of employment considers this largely logistic activity as a philosophy rather than a planning determinant for logistic support to expeditionary operations. While foreign doctrine has been useful as a catalyst for further development, it is evident that the ADF requires concepts reflective of its unique military conditions.

The development of the Future Joint Operational Concept (FJOC) and its subordinate single-service concepts represents an important tentative step in transitioning from basic amphibious tactics to something more meaningful to

military practitioners.¹³⁹ Prepared by the Joint Capability Coordination Division within Headquarters ADF (Vice Chief of Defence Group), FJOC is indicative of attempts to unify disparate efforts across Defence at the operational level of war. Unfortunately, like other operational-level doctrine, FJOC is characterised by the absence of prescriptive operational-level direction. Moreover, as is profoundly evident in the Army's *Adaptive Campaigning: Future Land Operating Concept*, many of the ideas contained in aligned concepts such as effects-based operations are complex, with the concept described by Evans as confused 'Foucauldian post-modernist' thinking.¹⁴⁰ As such, these operational-level concepts are extremely difficult for Australian military practitioners to apply in their present form, despite considerable efforts to remediate their weaknesses. Acknowledging this, former Chief of Defence Force Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, in his preface to the FJOC, observed that the concept was more a 'starting point for reflection', a 'vision for our future operations' than a prescriptive method for fighting wars.¹⁴¹

The concepts produced in association with the introduction into service of two Landing Helicopter Dock amphibious vessels offer greater promise that expeditionary warfare will be better addressed by the ADF.¹⁴² Foremost among these is Australia's amphibious concept, supported by an amphibious concept of employment, both of which seek to deliver a concept to articulate the requirements for the deployment of an amphibious battle group on a variety of tasks.¹⁴³ These concepts are described as an Australian approach to amphibious warfare, although once again they leverage off US and UK conceptual and modernisation development initiatives (such as 'littoral manoeuvre', 'ship-to-objective manoeuvre' and sea basing).¹⁴⁴ However, the ADF has a very good chance of producing effective doctrine grounded in empirical analysis and experimentation through exercises, training and development conducted within Army's nominally joint deployable headquarters, Headquarters 1st Division, and the use of the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, as a test-bed for the Australian amphibious concept.¹⁴⁵ Yet, because these developments address expeditionary warfare only in the context of amphibious operations, they reflect merely the thin veneer of a much broader topic worthy of deeper study.

This fledgling renaissance in expeditionary warfare shows that the development of effective doctrine and operational concepts has been challenging for the ADF and Army. From the scattered ideas of Army planners and writers seeking to address the requirements of interventions in Australia's immediate region, to more theoretical and perhaps unnecessarily complicated ideas in other papers, ADF doctrine and concepts have wholeheartedly embraced expeditionary warfare.¹⁴⁶

But it is also clear that, while these ideas might all be linked, the haphazard way in which expeditionary ideas have been addressed, the poor state of understanding or acceptance of its concepts, and the proclivity of the Army concept writers to imitate the ideas of others, suggest that there is good reason for remediation in the immediate future. The same period has seen the emergence of inventive doctrine such as manoeuvre operations in the littoral environment though — doctrine that has nonetheless since been overlooked and discarded in favour of concepts largely borrowed from foreign militaries.

It is surprising that the ADF has a chequered record of developing effective expeditionary concepts given the numerous expeditionary operations conducted over the last three decades.¹⁴⁷ This is potentially a consequence of the ADF's tactical focus, its preference to treat warfare too broadly and, to an extent, its habit of engaging in military 'faddism'.¹⁴⁸ It may also be that maritime strategy simply failed to resonate as a worthwhile idea given that the ADF's traditional approach of forward deployment was reinforced by coalition wars in the Middle East. While it may have been tempting for Defence planners to espouse a maritime approach in the aftermath of Timor-Leste, it is evident that the ADF's intellectual effort has been focused on a different character of expeditionary warfare in the decade since, the experiences of wars in Afghanistan and Iraq having left an indelible impression on the ADF's most recent operational concepts such as the Future Joint Operating Concept and *Adaptive Campaigning: Future Land Operating Concept*. However, new strategic requirements may end this dearth of understanding of expeditionary warfare. Certainly authors such as David Kilcullen provide reasons for planners to link Australia's more recent operational experiences, particularly those in urban warfare, with new strategic imperatives. Many of these ideas are filtering into new developments, including a new issue of Army's future land operating concept scheduled for release in 2015/16. As attention returns to Australia's littoral frontier, maritime strategy has gained renewed emphasis in the Australian approach to war.

The new divide

Much defence policy lies in the mind; and what may seem no more than a slogan can be made a powerful directing influence on more material matters.

Sir Arthur Tange, former Secretary of Defence¹⁴⁹

Almost 30 years of regional and global operations have given the ADF compelling reasons to embrace expeditionary warfare, and it is logical that this frenetic pace of activity would ultimately influence the formulation of Australian strategic policy. With the release of *Defence White Paper 2013*, and the announcement of the Australian ‘Maritime Strategy’, it appeared that the resurgence of expeditionary thought within the post-Cold War ADF was at its zenith. While proponents of an expeditionary orientation for the ADF may appear to have won Australia’s perennial strategic argument between ‘continental’ and ‘expeditionary’ approaches to strategy, uncertainty remains over what being expeditionary actually entails. Corbettian maritime strategy may be an important focus for the present-day Army as it prepares for its tasks within the region, yet Australia’s recent wars in the Middle East have necessitated an entirely different response.¹⁵⁰ With renewed interest in expeditionary warfare, and as Defence prepares a new white paper, there is another divide — between globalists and regionalists — that has confused contemporary Australian strategic debate and the development of operational concepts.

Despite significant regional commitments in Timor–Leste and the Solomon Islands, global alliance commitments were perceived as the primary form of Australian expeditionary deployment at the end of the twentieth century. Speaking in 2002,

and after refuting the geography-centric continental strategy of the 1980s and 1990s, former Defence minister Senator Robert Hill observed that 'it probably never made sense to conceptualise our security interests as a series of diminishing concentric circles around our coastline, but it certainly does not do so now'.¹⁵¹ Hill stressed that Australia's strategic circumstances were fundamentally changing, and that the debate remained 'firmly rooted in the past'.¹⁵² This was a view supported across the government of the time as increased global activism, particularly in the context of its alliance with the United States, saw Australia become engaged with its global interests.¹⁵³ But in diminishing the role of geography in Australian strategic policy, one of the most basic reasons for maintaining an ADF suited to maritime strategy — operations in the 'sea-air-land' gap — could also be regarded as less relevant.

In contrast to the view of the former minister, and perhaps even to the actual conduct of Australian military operations, the practical application of Australian strategic policy has seen a downplaying of the globalist impetus as a determinant feature of force structure and conceptual development. Instead, policy documents such as *Australia's National Security: A Defence Update 2007* and *Defence White Paper 2009* view the projection of military power from the continent and into its immediate region as a critical function of the ADF, the latter commending the ADF to maintain an 'expeditionary orientation'.¹⁵⁴ Writing prior to the release of *Defence White Paper 2009*, and in rebuttal of Hill's comments, Paul Dibb saw strategic policy direction as reflecting a hybrid of two 'different species of strategic guidance', with a force configured for expeditionary warfare despite the nominal importance given to continental defence and defensive geography.¹⁵⁵ Acknowledging that his comments predated the issue of *Defence White Paper 2009*, which saw 'Force 2030' promote an arguably maritime-oriented force structure, Dibb omitted a third 'species' of strategic direction: a force primed for expeditionary operations within the Indo-Pacific strategic arc.

At first glance, the 'Maritime Strategy' prescribed in *Defence White Paper 2013* may have settled this particular debate on Australia's strategic approach. Alongside other policy initiatives such as the 2012 *Australia in the Asian Century* white paper and the 2013 *National Security Strategy*, the 'Maritime Strategy' has been part of a wider Australian grand strategic pivot to the Indo-Pacific with significant repercussions for the ADF.¹⁵⁶ Given these documents were produced by a Labor government typically associated with 'continentalist' visions of strategy, they reflected a transition away from long-held views. Anticipating the policy release, there were conspicuous efforts by service chiefs to extol the virtues of a joint

service approach to maritime strategy as the forerunner of a policy that formalised the concept.¹⁵⁷ But as described earlier, there is a noticeable difference between the 'Maritime Strategy', reflecting an orientation of strategic policy, and the conduct of Corbettian maritime strategy with which it is so often associated.¹⁵⁸ Conceived as part of a 'defence in depth' approach to defending the Australian continent, the 'Maritime Strategy' is a strategic orientation based on the projection of joint task forces into the Indo-Pacific and to support regional powers as required.¹⁵⁹ Yet while it may be a policy, it is not a strategy in itself, nor does it explicitly explain how the ADF will achieve the desired policy outcomes.

While *Defence White Paper 2013* emphasised expeditionary objectives, there was a substantial down-playing of the idea of expeditionary warfare. To an extent this reflects concerns as to the language employed in the prior White Paper, and the fear of offending Australia's neighbours. Consequently, no longer would the ADF adopt an 'expeditionary orientation'; instead, the expeditionary concept was employed only to assertions that Western militaries are likely to be more selective in choosing to conduct expeditionary operations, and that Australia has had an historical preference for generating expeditionary capability.¹⁶⁰ In a somewhat ironic fashion when considering the tone of *Defence White Paper 2009*, Australia's concern over the ability or commitment of other nations to generating their own expeditionary capabilities was instead mentioned.¹⁶¹ Others argue that the reason for the paucity of references to expeditionary warfare is a consequence of the general uncertainty of the details of the topic. Academic Peter Dean argues that the term 'expeditionary' is misunderstood within the Department of Defence, a point of view generally confirmed within this paper.¹⁶² Language is important to definition and, in the interests of an effective 'Maritime Strategy', this confusion must be addressed. Even a brief examination of recent academic debate shows that the Department of Defence's views are but a reflection of broader doubt over its meaning.

Most recent discourse on expeditionary warfare as it relates to policy outcomes distinguishes between regional or globalist commitments (tasks 2 and 3 versus 4 of strategic policy articulated in *Defence White Paper 2013*).¹⁶³ Alan Dupont believes as Hill did, that ADF commitments will not be geographically determined, and as such the ADF must be prepared for contributions to coalitions formed from the willing as part of a global agenda rather than regional, maritime-based, commitments.¹⁶⁴ Conversely, others suggest that regional commitments demand the ADF posture itself as a credible, amphibious, maritime power.¹⁶⁵ In this respect, an autonomic capacity to 'initiate and sustain coercive actions' becomes

particularly important.¹⁶⁶ Commentators such as Michael Evans have concluded that the ADF has to be prepared for both; that, although conflict has ‘diffused’ globally, a maritime orientation remains necessary so that the ADF can act as a regional security leader and a global security contributor.¹⁶⁷ Finally, in other works expeditionary commitments have been reconciled with the naval preferences of the ‘continentalist’ period in the belief that maritime denial capabilities and light land forces are the best solution to perform the full array of the ADF’s tasks.¹⁶⁸ While a consensus in the debate may not be required, it is important that consensus is achieved in strategic policy with an agreed expeditionary orientation reflected in appropriate guidance, supported by the requisite funding.

A consistent rationale for strategic policy may be reflected in the next white paper, with the government choosing to make expeditionary commitments a genuine force structure determinant and apply an expeditionary logic to strategic policy.¹⁶⁹ This, in turn, would require new questions to be answered, each with dramatically different consequences for the orientation, operational concepts and force composition of the ADF. If the maritime approach to expeditionary warfare holds true within the ‘Maritime Strategy’, it is likely that the resurgence of traditionally focused maritime strategy will continue to gain momentum, even though the present ‘hybrid’ strategic logic of preparing for the defence of Australian may remain.¹⁷⁰ Recent work by Army in concepts such as ‘archipelagic manoeuvre’, including force structure review submissions, attest to the impetus of this approach.¹⁷¹ Alternatively, globalist alliance ambitions — as Hill intended and Australian Coalition governments typically tend to favour — may commend a force structure optimised for interoperability with predominant Western powers, enabled for niche tactical-level commitments and with less emphasis on maritime strategy as a consequence.¹⁷² While the latter of the two options may be too great a leap given the preference for force structure decisions based on continental defence imperatives in the policy of the last 30 years, it is not an idea that should be readily dismissed if strategic policy is to be based on conclusions drawn from Australian history.

Of course, and perhaps consistent with the way its global commitments have been discharged with a force structure based on continental defence, the ADF might take the expedient, yet ultimately difficult path of designing a force for all eventualities. In this sense an ‘amphibious-aware’ force, one capable of limited amphibious operations, yet primarily designed for a more generic expeditionary orientation, seems sensible. This too has its complications. For one, amphibious warfare is an exceptionally difficult operation to master. Second, it would be

prudent for the ADF to consider the difficulties experienced by the USMC in returning its focus to maritime expeditionary warfare following forward deployments to the Middle East. Forces designed to perform every conceivable task are unlikely to master any single task. At a conceptual, doctrinal and even philosophical level, the distinction between maritime strategy and other forms of expeditionary warfare require very different approaches if either is to be conducted effectively.¹⁷³

While the uncertainty over Australia's approach to expeditionary warfare may suggest that Australia's 'Maritime Strategy' is nothing more than a slogan, it is reflective of a continued trend in Australian strategic policy towards an expeditionary orientation. As the association of Army's *The Land Force — Expeditionary in Orientation* with the issue of *Defence White Paper 2009* suggests, broad ideas found in strategic policy can have a significant influence on concepts and doctrine far below the strategic level of war.¹⁷⁴ If this is the case, potential changes in future strategic policy are also likely to place demands on ADF concept writers. Yet conscious strategic policy choices are not the only influences that will compel the ADF to review its concepts and doctrine, nor will addressing the differences between globalist and regionalist approaches to expeditionary warfare make developing new expeditionary ideas particularly easy. Changing strategic circumstances often confound defence planners eager to apply their preferred visions of the future to contemporary events. With signs of the emergence of a potential post-expeditionary age, geostrategic shifts may once again act as the catalyst for changes to Australia's approach to the concept of expeditionary warfare.

Preparing for a post-expeditionary age

The concepts of expeditionary warfare, as with any other form of warfare, are infinitely variable and susceptible to changes in context. As occurred at the end of the Cold War with the beginning of a period described as the ‘new anarchy’ by the USMC, strategic inflection can provide the basis for challenges to the assumptions on which strategy and operational concepts are based.¹⁷⁵ Colin S. Gray observes wryly that ‘strategic history likes to be ironic and paradoxical ... [when] we believe we have found the answer, someone changes the question’.¹⁷⁶ While strategic change has always been an issue for defence planning, over recent years trends have emerged that test many of the assumptions that underpin the present preference of Western militaries, including the ADF, for expeditionary warfare. If they come to fruition, these trends could significantly reduce the utility of maritime-centric expeditionary forces to achieve strategic requirements. If this is the case and the ‘spirit of the age’ does change, it is conceivable that present attempts to revitalise an expeditionary approach under the auspices of maritime strategy within the ADF might well prove ill founded.

Geoffrey Till concludes his chapter on expeditionary operations in his volume *Seapower: A Guide to the Twenty-first Century* with a number of key questions concerning the permanency, and relevance, of the many expeditionary ideas, concepts and doctrine to Western militaries.¹⁷⁷ Till contends that there is a very real possibility that Western militaries, including the ADF, might unexpectedly encounter what he calls a ‘post-expeditionary age’ in the near future.¹⁷⁸ Discussion within Australia’s own strategic policy of the proliferation of sea denial capabilities and the diminishing propensity of Western nations to conduct military operations abroad echoes Till’s concerns.¹⁷⁹ In recent years these ideas have been captured in the US debate concerning the notion of ‘force projection’, which has drawn authors

and theorists to critique, and many to defend, the US military's modern-day expeditionary approach as it begins a 'pivot' to the Asia-Pacific.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, these debates are fuelling discussion within militaries as they continue to develop existing doctrine, concepts and ideas on expeditionary warfare.

Of considerable interest to futurists, strategists and militaries in these arguments is what G. Copley describes as 'strategic manoeuvre'.¹⁸¹ While the USMC regards the post-Cold War era as anarchic and chaotic, it is an environment in which the United States and its allies have been able to exert global power unhindered by any real competition.¹⁸² With Australian global reach and participation in military operations largely underwritten by the freedom of action afforded by its major alliance partner, it is understandable that the perils of force projection have been downplayed in Australian doctrine, capability modernisation and force structure, despite developments underway. As revealed in an abundance of insightful, albeit highly speculative literature, the emergence of new rivalries at sea, most notably between the United States and China but also Japan and India, threatens this environment, particularly with reference to the Indo and Asia-Pacific regions.¹⁸³

Within this broader issue, 'anti-access, area-denial' (A2AD) capabilities have become a well-known topic for military practitioners and the next generation of expeditionary-oriented operational concepts.¹⁸⁴ Weaponry that threatens amphibious forces such as submarines, rocketry and unmanned aerial vehicles has become increasingly inexpensive, but more technically dominant over force projection capabilities in recent years. As such, new ways to counter these threats have become essential. Addressing A2AD is already significantly influencing US military posture, with new concepts such as the *Joint Operational Access Concept* and its subset popularly known as the 'AirSea Battle' invigorating the concepts of large-scale theatre warfare, arguably at the expense of expeditionary concepts such as the USMC's operational manoeuvre from the sea.¹⁸⁵ While these new threats seem uniquely ominous, it is prudent to remember that militaries have long grappled with the conduct of expeditionary warfare in contested environments, a point made emphatically in Colonel George Furse's nineteenth-century history of expeditionary warfare.¹⁸⁶ Nonetheless, the intellectual response to A2AD among modern militaries symbolises a significant transfer of focus in the study of expeditionary warfare.

In Australia, the response to the A2AD threat — if not the challenge of force projection in the contemporary Asia-Pacific more generally — has been more muted. Some, such as academic Alan Stephens and former Defence deputy

secretary strategy, Hugh White, attack the ADF's present focus for its failure to adequately address the issue of sea control in all but benign strategic settings, a precursor to the successful implementation of maritime strategy.¹⁸⁷ Retired brigadier Justin Kelly suggests that, in terms of new A2AD threats, critical questions need to be answered if Australian force development can claim to be rational.¹⁸⁸ It is worth asking under what scenarios the ADF is most likely to operate, even in a 'post-expeditionary' future and whether it is conceivable that it will independently project military force into highly contested regions. Recent Army analysis in its *Future Land Warfare Report* and the newly developed Army in a Joint Archipelagic Manoeuvre Concept, certainly views manoeuvre as increasingly contested.¹⁸⁹ This concept asserts that Army can contribute to A2AD against an adversary through maritime expeditionary warfare. With future Australian operations conceivably coalition in nature, based primarily on the premise of regional cooperation, military diplomacy and humanitarian intervention, it is important not to overstate the threat of A2AD without considering the context in which the ADF's expeditionary capabilities are likely to operate.¹⁹⁰

The second category of concerns that may impact on how the concept of expeditionary warfare is approached by the ADF relates to the way in which military force is perceived in strategic policy. As cited in the US government's 2010 *Quadrennial Defense Review Report*, the ability of globally launched threats to target formerly isolated nations has influenced the way risks are measured and the means of response.¹⁹¹ Recent terrorist, cyber attacks and the continued proliferation of weaponry capable of strategic effects has suggested to Western populations that they are both vulnerable and in a perpetual state of imminent crisis, forcing governments to focus primarily on such concerns.¹⁹² In the Australian context, this broad theme can be linked to the growing importance of national security when juxtaposed against strategic policy, and increased military consideration of activities such as multi-agency, anti-crime, counterterrorism and, most significantly, border protection operations such as Operation Sovereign Borders launched by the Abbott government.¹⁹³ At its most extreme, this trend has led to a gradual militarisation of security, and encouraged investment in homeland protection to the point where some militaries have felt the need to justify their posture as 'expeditionary homeland defence'.¹⁹⁴

According to Canadian analyst Thierry Gongorra, the growing importance of homeland defence is likely to have a significant impact on the way in which expeditionary warfare is approached by governments.¹⁹⁵ For example, in outlining its new 'Strategy for homeland defense and defense support of civil authorities',

the US government referred to the need for an 'active, layered defense — a global defense' in which expeditionary military forces would play an important role.¹⁹⁶ Australia's own inclinations within the 'Maritime Strategy', and other government policy, suggest a similar view on the utility of expeditionary forces in addressing Australian strategic requirements.¹⁹⁷ In arguing for a transformation of the ADF, Alan Dupont recommends extending the ADF's strategic reach to address these distant challenges to Australian security.¹⁹⁸ Such a view of homeland defence is consistent with Australia's previous approach to expeditionary warfare, with forward deployments used as a means of mitigating strategic risk at home. Nonetheless, with the growing role of inter-agency commitment and the diminishing role of purely military outcomes in national security, the use of the term 'expeditionary operation' could very well have different meanings within Australia's commitment lexicon in the immediate future.

Finally, and perhaps of most immediate relevance to militaries, is the growing awareness in Western nations that military expeditions are difficult and demanding, leaving nations reluctant to participate.¹⁹⁹ In Matthew Flynn's anthology of pre-emptive expeditionary campaigns, and William Lanham's analysis of military interventions, this issue appears as a recurrent theme in recent conflicts.²⁰⁰ William Linn is far more direct on this issue, viewing recent operations in the Middle East as confirming the devolution of expeditionary wars into prolonged and unpopular military occupations is now a significant disincentive for governments to invest in and employ expeditionary forces.²⁰¹ Although the French military's recent efforts in Mali suggest that joint expeditionary operations remain relevant for Western militaries, the far more measured response of European and US governments to operations in Libya, and conflict zones such as Syria and Ukraine, indicate a growing unease towards committing ground forces to these difficult missions.²⁰²

Western nations are certainly more cautious about becoming embroiled in long-term conflicts, with the financial cost of mounting these operations a further discouragement. Expeditionary forces have always required considerable investment, even prior to the global financial crisis and the dramatic budget cuts that have characterised its aftermath. They demand well-resourced logistic capabilities; capabilities that more often than not have been targeted for rationalisation by Defence and the services rather than being a recipient for concerted investment with expeditionary outcomes in mind. Albert Palazzo has persistently warned the ADF of the high cost of preparing and exercising forces for expeditionary operations to distant locales.²⁰³ Gongorra's distinction between 'baseline' and more capable 'robust' expeditionary forces implicitly confirms

Palazzo's view, dividing militaries into the few that are able to conduct expeditionary operations in higher threat environments, and those — arguably including the ADF — that potentially cannot.²⁰⁴ It is therefore unsurprising that this is a problem given much consideration within Australian strategic policy. In noting that 'Western nations are likely to be more selective in participating in expeditionary operations', *Defence White Paper 2013* also takes the example of the US military which, in its own strategic guidance in 2012, announced that its forces would no longer be configured to mount large expeditionary operations for reasons of cost.²⁰⁵ If the will of governments to wage expeditionary war is diminished, this perhaps more than other factor may be reason enough for the manifestation of a post-expeditionary age.

The three strategic trends identified here provide good reason for militaries to once again revise their concepts and ideas on expeditionary warfare, to consider the changing character of war and the 'spirit of the age'. When considered collectively, these trends suggest that the utility of maritime-centric modern expeditionary operations will diminish in the future and the approaches of Western militaries to warfare should be adapted as a consequence. More significantly, it may suggest that the most expeditionary forces can do is act as a symbol of force posture, prestige and coercive influence in peace, as they did during the Cold War, rather than as a realistic tool for projecting power.²⁰⁶ It remains likely that expeditionary forces, and through extension expeditionary ideas and concepts, will remain important for militaries to consider. It is certainly ironic that, as the freedom of action of Western nations purportedly diminishes, and with ever-increasing pressure for militaries to return from posts far from their homeland, the idea of expeditionary warfare has become particularly important. After all, if forward posturing and basing becomes less appealing to governments, there is no other option for militaries than to project its forces directly from the homeland. While expeditionary warfare may be overshadowed by 'classic peer-to-peer conflict', the requirement for militaries to be well prepared for expeditionary warfare in the future is therefore likely to continue.²⁰⁷

In Australia's case, it is unclear whether these 'post-expeditionary trends' will make a fundamental difference to any strategic policy option or consequential operational concepts in the future. Even when military contingencies are non-discretionary, as operations within Australia's 'inner arc' may be perceived, Australia's existing preferences in waging war are likely to be sufficient to meet its commitments in this relatively benign environment, even in the face of powerful post-expeditionary trends.²⁰⁸ Even in higher intensity warfighting it is likely that

operations in coalition will mitigate Army's weaknesses in terms of the strategic mobility and logistic capabilities required in a maritime setting. Equally, it would be remiss of military practitioners to expect assumptions reflected in modern concepts of expeditionary warfare to be equally relevant in the future. While we may correctly predict that future wars will occur within the urban littoral, we cannot assume that amphibious-centric maritime strategies will be the only method of successfully prosecuting such campaigns. Expectations of the ADF and its capacity to project power within the region could change rapidly and without notice, even to the most astute of commentators. In considering new concepts and ideas of expeditionary warfare, planners must remember that it may not be sufficient to reinforce what the ADF already does well. Australia's approach to the concept of expeditionary warfare in the future must reflect the conditions and the requirements of what may be an entirely new and extremely challenging age of warfare.²⁰⁹

Conclusions and recommendations

This research paper has sought to confirm that Australia's approach to warfare is sufficiently different to Corbett's idea of maritime strategy to warrant a greater appreciation of the concept of expeditionary warfare. It has shown that, despite the perennial discussions that have driven military debate, Australian warfare demonstrates a clear consistency in its uniqueness. Although maritime strategy is an exceptionally important and an undoubtedly tempting basis for understanding the Australian approach to war, it is not easily shaped to the Australian context. Australia's approach to expeditionary warfare demands its own theories and, by extension, concepts that truly reflect its own needs and capabilities. An examination of first principles, while useful, is not a precondition. It is possible though to draw meaningful themes and ideas from theory, history and the analysis of Australian geostrategic conditions to provide a sense of coherence to this topic. Understanding these themes and ideas of expeditionary warfare will be critical if the ADF is to prepare for the wars of the future.

Encapsulating modern ideas of expeditionary warfare into meaningful strategy, doctrine, force structure and operational concepts has been confounded by a number of issues. First, there has been a propensity to reduce expeditionary warfare to merely a counterpoint to continental-oriented or self-reliant strategies in what are at times overstated philosophical arguments. The fact that expeditionary warfare only occurs because strategic circumstances force a power into launching operations from its own territory nullify this argument. Second, the ADF's typical approach to warfare as a subordinate member of a coalition, or within the context of great-power leadership, has largely inhibited the development of methodologies and the capacity to prepare for independent force projection and sustainment at the operational level of war. In combination, these issues have promoted

conceptual imitation rather than innovation in doctrine development, and have resulted in a dearth of the detailed operational concepts that are critical in shaping a joint approach to war. Third, and most importantly, these issues have revealed that the propensity to consider expeditionary warfare as an aspect of maritime strategy unnecessarily narrows Army's historical range of military options. This research paper has aimed to inform and support the works of military planners who shape Army's and the ADF's conceptual responses to these challenging and at times confusing issues.

While expeditionary warfare is predominantly understood on the basis of the three key ideas of maritime strategy, limited warfare and the small war tradition, the Australian approach to expeditionary warfare has its own flavour. Australian scholars have tended to peg expeditionary warfare to amphibious warfare or maritime strategy, either in their support or their criticism of the concept. Instead, the weight of historic example shows that Australian expeditions have been predominantly conducted through forward deployment or posturing, and in the context of operations as a subordinate member of a coalition in which many of the operational challenges regarding force projection have been overcome by a great-power ally. This has implications for Australian doctrine and, most importantly, for force design and generation. Furthermore, the defensive self-reliance imperative has ensured preparations for 'wars of choice', indicative of an expeditionary approach to war, remain subordinate to the prime strategic requirement of defending the Australian continent. Despite attempts of theorists and military practitioners to periodically sway Australia's approach to expeditionary warfare towards a maritime orientation, Australia's natural strategic tendencies, if not wartime experiences, have exerted a powerful control over the achievement of lasting change.

Even so, the modern expeditionary age has been characterised by a convincing maritime orientation and has seen a modern revival in traditional approaches to expeditionary warfare within Western militaries. The collapse of the Soviet Union marked the end of an almost 100-year period in which large-scale continental conflict captured the attention of militaries. The concepts and ideas of maritime-centric expeditionary warfare — while featuring in a number of Western contingencies and short-notice conflicts — were overshadowed by the expeditionary strategy defined by continental warfare. New conflicts, ranging from counterinsurgency operations to humanitarian interventions, encouraged Western militaries to develop new ideas for this expeditionary age. Foremost among these ideas was that of the expeditionary operation formulated by the USMC, an

adaptation of Corbett's maritime strategy. While the idea of a modern expeditionary operation suited the USMC's own style of warfare, it was slavishly, and perhaps inappropriately, adopted by many other militaries ill-suited to a number of its central principles.

Availing itself of the often-derided 'defence of Australia' strategy, Army quickly promoted the idea of maritime strategy which brought expeditionary warfare to the fore. However, its introduction into ADF doctrine and conceptual development has been somewhat haphazard. Arguably, it has been an uncomfortable fit for a nation unsuited to maritime strategy. Despite efforts to change, the 'continentalist' view of expeditionary warfare was largely maintained. A flirtation with concepts associated with maritime operations such as 'ship-to-objective manoeuvre' and 'sea basing' has modestly reflected the prodigious powers and capabilities of Australia's allies, yet in many respects has been unsuited to ADF circumstances and capabilities. As such, seeking to define the Australian approach to expeditionary warfare in the same manner as other commentators suggests aspiration rather than actualisation. With this in mind, it is perhaps more appropriate for the ADF to prepare for those wars it has fought, expeditionary campaigns conducted on a global scale and as part of a coalition, while limiting its maritime ambitions to supporting those contingencies essential to meet its regional obligations.

It is, of course, impossible to ignore the requirements of a new 'Maritime Strategy' given the growing importance of Australia's region to global security. With the development of concepts such as Army's Joint archipelagic manoeuvre, the Australian approach to expeditionary warfare is approaching a reconciliation between navalist ideas based on sea control, and the utility of land power in the denial of regional operational access to an adversary. Nonetheless, expeditionary warfare is likely to remain a much-debated topic as defence planners and military practitioners seek to balance a broadly maritime approach oriented towards regional outcomes with the globalist-oriented forward defence or posturing-style strategies with which the ADF is so familiar. Further complicating the debate is that it is occurring at a time when trends increasingly suggest that strategically asymmetric responses and other factors will inhibit Australian and other Western nations' capacity for strategic manoeuvre. With diminished willingness to wage wars on foreign soil, and with strategic, operational and tactical weaponry apparently favouring defensive strategies, the operational options available to the ADF will undoubtedly be affected. If sea control is a primary determinant of success within maritime strategy, there are many factors that may dissuade the ADF from

truly embracing any leaning towards amphibious warfare. Such factors will exert a significant influence on many of the assumptions that underwrite the operational concepts developed to enable the 'Maritime Strategy'.

Rather than being intimidated by the prospect of addressing these complex higher order issues, the ADF must resolve its conceptual weaknesses concerning expeditionary warfare. This should come, as Clausewitz commented, from a basis of understanding the ADF's 'own position', the 'spirit of the age', and the 'nature of war itself'.²¹⁰ Historian Sir Michael Howard observed that, in applying lessons learned from history, their analysis must be sufficiently deep, wide and appreciative of context.²¹¹ This research paper has demonstrated that it is not sufficient for Australia to simply adopt Corbett's maritime strategy as the next in line in a history of concepts and ideas formulated for other militaries and other conditions. Australia's newly outlined 'Maritime Strategy' requires its component strategies to fully reflect all the paths on which Army may be led by expeditionary warfare. Tangled logic in strategy will only translate to confused conceptual implementation. It is therefore imperative that the ADF devote its efforts to developing unique operational concepts and an underpinning expeditionary philosophy that suit its unique circumstances. These must inform the processes that enable the effective generation of forces, such as Army's Plan Beersheba.

In any case, examining expeditionary warfare is an extremely powerful self-assessment for the planners and practitioners within the ADF and Army. At its heart, it is an assessment of the many contradictions and confusions that exist in our understanding of the Australian way of war. This paper has argued that examining a comparison between continental and expeditionary points of view does not articulate the fundamental aspects of Australia's approach to war. The Australian approach represents a balance of maritime and forward posturing or positioning, particularly in the context of a coalition setting, endowed with additional meaning by Australia's history and predictions of future war. Australia has always been, and most likely will remain, a power that seeks to engage threats or support operations well beyond its boundaries. Nonetheless, and despite the immense importance of maritime strategy and concepts such as 'manoeuvre operations in the littoral environment' or 'archipelagic manoeuvre' in defining the orientation and structure of Australian forces, there are other expeditionary imperatives that quite clearly deserve continued attention. With this in mind, it may be that the most important lesson from Sir Julian Corbett's *Some Principles of Maritime Strategy* is not his concept of maritime strategy, despite the fact that it is considered by many as the basis for expeditionary warfare today. Rather it is

what he intended to achieve — to create a theory reflective of the ‘characteristic conception of the British tradition’ — that suggests the most to the modern operational planner.²¹² As the ADF faces a future that is inherently uncertain, it remains fundamentally important to understand the concept of expeditionary warfare both objectively and subjectively. If not, those crucial questions intrinsic to determining the Australian approach to warfare are likely to go unanswered.

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