Australian Army
Research Centre

Australian Defence Force International Engagement and Re-engagement with Fiji

Dr Michael O'Keefe

Australian Army Occasional Paper No. 18

Australian Army
Research Centre

Australian Defence Force International Engagement and Re-engagement with Fiji

Dr Michael O'Keefe

Australian Army Occasional Paper No. 18

Serving the Nation

ISSN (Online) 2653-0406
ISSN (Print) 2653-0414

All enquiries regarding this publication should be forwarded to the Director of the Australian Army Research Centre.

To learn about the work of the Australian Army Research Centre visit researchcentre.army.gov.au.

Contents

Executive Summary

- The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has a long history of defence international engagement in places as diverse as Fiji, Uganda and Vietnam. Most of this is routine, but some occurs on operations where it can be a critical factor in achieving strategic objectives.
- Fiji is a useful case study to review international and operational engagement practices. Routine international engagement was a key component of the broader bilateral relationship with Fiji prior to the 2006 Coup. This was suspended when sanctions were imposed from 2006, lasting until the September 2014 national elections. In February 2016 Cyclone Winston occurred and Australia's response, Operation Fiji Assist, involved a high tempo of operational international engagement.
- The sanctions era coincided with a concerted effort by China to increase its influence in the region, and countering this became a core Australian strategic interest. Fiji's strategic position and pivotal place as the 'hub of the Pacific' made it a priority to renew relations after elections occurred.
- One legacy of the 2006 Coup was that significant numbers of political leaders, from presidents to prime ministers and ministers, were ex-military. Many in this group felt particularly aggrieved by sanctions and displayed a lack of trust and a deep suspicion of Australian attempts to re-engage.
- Australia's emergency humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) to Cyclone Winston in 2016 provided an opportunity to accelerate the rapprochement. Behind the scenes of high-level Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade activities, several ADF personnel were integral to ensuring that Operation Fiji Assist was a tactical and strategic success.

- Success was measured through the close collaboration between ADF and Fijian military personnel at the command level and on the ground/sea. The effective delivery of HADR resources and the rekindling of the *esprit de corps* between the militaries was pivotal in the rapprochement with Fiji that supported the achievement of Australia's broader strategic objectives.
- Success was dependent on the willing cooperation of senior Fijian officials. Their reengagement benefited from the alignment of interests and objectives achieved through careful international engagement.
- The lessons to be drawn from this case study include:
    - Defence, and specifically Army, international engagement is a longstanding strength that has evolved through numerous operations and routine defence cooperation.
    - The evolution of international engagement mirrors the experience of allies and partners such as the UK and US, with whom Australia has often operated. International engagement is now identified as a force-multiplying, or more accurately an *influence*-enabling, approach to achieving strategic objectives.
    - International engagement has risen in prominence in Defence doctrine, with greater emphasis than ever being placed on it in the Defence Strategic Review.[1]
    - International engagement works best when integrated with broader public diplomacy aimed at achieving Australia's strategic objectives.
    - When collaborating with the Fijian military, Australian defence personnel have an advantage over other potential partners. There is an *esprit de corps* that was damaged by sanctions but has recovered through military diplomacy—through HADR (Cyclone Winston) and the provision of equipment (Bushmaster vehicles and patrol boats) and infrastructure (Blackrock Camp).
    - The quality of personnel in key roles is central to successful international engagement. Specialised defence international engagement practitioners should be treated as critical enablers and their selection and training should be institutionalised.

Introduction

This paper seeks to extend the policy literature on international engagement. It demonstrates how a successful approach to international engagement with Fiji from 2014 to 2017 contributed to achieving Australia's broader foreign policy goals. The Australian Government's commitment to a 'Step Up' in relations with the Pacific is underpinned by international engagement. Policy pronouncements are backed by key Australian policy documents, such as the *2016 Defence White Paper* and the *2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*, which highlight the role of international engagement in achieving Australia's national interests in the Pacific.[2] Such cooperative activities include peacekeeping and humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR) and these are areas where the Australian Army has played a leading role. The Australian Defence Force (ADF), and specifically the Army, have a strong track record of partnering with uniformed forces in the Pacific (for instance in the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and post-cyclones Pam and Winston HADR). Enhanced international engagement supports the government's broader foreign policy objectives.

A commonplace contention in policy guidance and the academic literature is that strategic partnerships are central to achieving Australia's foreign policy interests. In this light, this paper explores the Army's engagement with Fiji since the elections in September 2014. As most Australian Government reviews of relations are classified and/or have necessarily focused on the Australian perspective, this paper is unique insofar as it aims to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of the partnership by engaging closely with Fijian perspectives.

Australia's diplomatic relations with Fiji normalised after eight years of isolation prompted by the coup in December 2006 and sanctions imposed by the Australian Government from 2006 to 2014. Sanctions were lifted after democratic elections were held in September 2014. Elections and the lifting of sanctions heralded the beginning of re-engagement, but the process was tentative and potentially fraught. This paper tracks how international engagement was integral to the successful renewal of relations.

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when relations could be said to have normalised. By the time Prime Minister (PM) Scott Morrison announced the Pacific 'Step Up' in May 2019 relations were on a firm footing and the 'lost' sanctions years from 2006 to 2014 were slowly fading. However, the 'Step Up' simply accelerated a trajectory that was set in motion by some careful diplomacy in 2014–2017, and this period forms the focus of this paper.

The process of re-engagement was tentative and potentially fraught from 2014 to at least 2017 due to the political legacy of the sanctions years. A key element of this rapprochement was Australia's sensitive and persistent international engagement and political will displayed in the years after 2014, including most notably the response to Cyclone Winston. Furthermore, this paper's focus is on the pivotal people on each side of the Pacific who worked tirelessly to rebuild trust and respect and whose legacy can be found in the strong relations evidenced between Australia and Fiji today. This international engagement covers a period when senior leadership of the Army, in particular Chief of Army (CA) Lieutenant General Angus Campbell and Deputy CA Major General Rick Burr, created an enabling environment that supported innovation in relation to international engagement. Therefore, re-engagement with Fiji actually straddles a period when the Army elevated international engagement into the mainstream and integrated it operationally in a way that was unprecedented.

Australia's re-engagement with Fiji involved comprehensive international engagement including high-level multilateral meetings, such as the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, numerous bilateral reciprocal visits at all levels, training, and equipment projects (namely the donation of Guardian Class patrol boats, the acquisition of Bushmaster protected mobility vehicles [PMVs] and the development of Blackrock HADR training facility). The largest joint operation between the two states was the HADR response to Cyclone

Winston from February 2016, which was also the largest such response by the ADF since the Boxing Day tsunami struck Indonesia in 2004.[3] That said, the ADF was regularly and routinely involved in smaller activities in Fiji, such as Exercise Longreach, that anchored international engagement and also paved the way for the rapprochement.

This paper includes background on the field of international engagement in general and its specific application to Australia. Policy guidance and the academic literature are divided on the question of whether international engagement is an effective strategy to achieve broader foreign policy goals, and this debate will be briefly reviewed to deepen later analysis. The analysis then shifts to provide an overview of practice by core allies, the UK and US, and of Australian past practice with respect to international engagement, particularly in Indonesia, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Afghanistan. These sections provide insights into the evolution of international engagement from the Cold War to post-Cold War interventions. Finally, a detailed summary is provided of the role of defence international engagement in re-engaging with Fiji. It follows a largely chronological approach to present essential historical context and to detail four liminal moments in the re-engagement; Exercise Longreach, Cyclone Winston, the Bushmaster Acquisition, and building Blackrock HADR facility.

This analysis was informed by the input of numerous key actors who played significant yet (often) unsung roles in the re-engagement between Australia and Fiji. Many of these actors were reticent to comment on the public record but generously offered their time to be interviewed. Many spoke anonymously and the paper benefited from their frankness. It might be said that these actors were involved in *a* 'Step Up' before *the* 'Step Up' and it is their vision from both sides of the South Pacific that is on display in the strong health of relations today. That said, this paper also highlights the fragility inherent in international engagement and provides lessons that might assist in reducing the broader diplomatic fallout if tensions arise in bilateral relations. The analysis benefited from the support of and critical review by Dr Andrew Richardson of the Australian Army Research Centre and the constructively critical insight of several anonymous subject-matter experts. Any errors and omissions in this paper are, however, entirely the author's.

The Place of International Engagement in Foreign and Defence Policies

'Defence diplomacy' is often described in Australian Government documents as 'international engagement'. For the purposes of consistency, this paper treats these terms as interchangeable but uses the latter throughout. By definition, international engagement is a subset of public diplomacy, a subset of defence policy, or simultaneously both, and one contention of this paper is that when it is treated as both it can have the greatest impact. That is, when international engagement is elevated within defence doctrine and integrated into bilateral diplomatic relationships conducted by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), it can provide the greatest value in achieving broader foreign policy goals.

Most routine public diplomacy conducted by democratic states does not focus on defence issues unless a crisis presents itself. Public diplomacy in general involves the management of foreign relations by emissaries of the state abroad, most of whom work in foreign ministries and deal with the broad gamut of foreign policy, security and trade issues. The overarching aim of public diplomacy is to understand and influence other states and to shape international organisations to suit national preferences.[4] Historically, international engagement was treated as a small subsidiary aspect of foreign policy and the day-to-day work of foreign missions. In reality, it often involved much more than met the untrained eye.[5]

Similarly, within national defence policies, international engagement generally had a minor role. This was certainly the case in Australia until the approach was elevated in the *2016 Defence White Paper* (see below). Warfighting and preparing to fight wars was, and remains, the core business of defence.

Yet, until relatively recently, international engagement was not prioritised in achieving this end. In fact, within foreign policy and defence establishments alike, the emphasis and resources devoted to international engagement was often contested. Doctrine almost exclusively focused on the core business of defence, and international engagement was not generally formalised as a strategy to support the achievement of these aims.[6] Accordingly, defence attachés were routinely dispatched on foreign missions, with their efficacy often dependent on the personalities involved and the strategic context within which they were operating. At this point a worthwhile distinction might be drawn between routine international engagement and activities during wartime or active operations. The role of international engagement was elevated during the latter, but nonetheless it generally had a narrow emphasis on *Realpolitik*: transactionally using military assistance to influence recipients to act in the interests of the donor.[7]

International engagement has overlapping aims and methods in relation to public diplomacy and is also directly focused on achieving the unique requirements of the core business of defence.[8] Defence is generally associated with 'hard power' but international engagement is a form of 'soft power', so eloquently detailed by Joseph Nye. Nye's view was simply that 'hard power can rest on inducement ("carrots") or threats ("sticks"). But sometimes you can get the outcomes you want without tangible threats or payoffs'.[9] Soft power is also viewed this way by some defence practitioners: 'Defence diplomacy strives to use defence as a vehicle of "soft power" to build trust and common ground through increased familiarity and cooperation.'[10] During the latter part of the Cold War, the concept of soft power revolutionised how the instruments of statecraft were viewed, but the efficacy of these approaches was contested. Claims about the efficacy of soft power are a major source of debate and division over the place of international engagement in defence policies. Much of this debate rests on a concern that soft power might be treated as a replacement for hard power, which caused a counter-reaction.

If a Clausewitzian view of the core business of defence and soldiering[11]—that war is 'an act of force to compel our enemy to do our will'[12] is adhered to, the debate over the efficacy of soft power is inevitable. However, zero sum debates may be unnecessary especially if defence practitioners acknowledge that, short of war, other diplomatic options involving the use of military force are available. This paper does not seek to enjoin debates about

the utility of force in the 21st century.[13] It does not question the military's prime role in warfighting, and its operational focus on preparing to fight wars, but rather it seeks to analyse the place of international engagement in Australia's re-engagement with Fiji and, by doing so, reflect on its position in Australia's 'way of war'.[14] From this perspective it might be more accurate to treat skilfully executed defence diplomacy as a strategy that 'can help to avoid conflict, can help to avert a crisis, and can leave a nation better postured in the event that conflict unfortunately develops'.[15]

In this paper the aspects of international engagement that can be viewed as soft power are viewed as a complementary extension of traditional hard power. For example, in the Cyclone Winston case study below, Australia's significant capabilities, such as HMAS *Canberra*, were connected to the needs of Fiji by Australian and Fijian defence officials who had built relationships through exercising and training (in particular Exercise Longreach). Simply put, in a HADR contingency of great importance to Fiji, the Australian Government wanted to respond effectively, and international engagement facilitated the application of soft power in a timely manner. Most of these capabilities were designed for traditional military security contingencies where they would provide decision-makers with hard-power options. Some are dual use, but few are specifically designed to counter new threats arising from issues such as climate change or natural disasters.

When these traditional capabilities are deployed for HADR they demonstrate their dual-use character to the benefit of all parties, which is an essential attribute of successful international engagement. This is a dynamic that analysts have identified in relation to the US[16] and highlights the geopolitical value of military diplomacy when used to support larger foreign policy priorities. In this paper the diplomatic priority attached to re-engagement with Fiji is the focus, and how international engagement supported this aim is discussed in several case studies.

International engagement grew in importance over the Cold War as security issues came to frame not only divisions between the opposing blocs but also the connections that bound the blocs in alliances. For Australia, this meant international engagement focused on links with the UK and US militaries. In recent times the narrow view of international engagement as a small, separate aspect of foreign policy was overtaken by operational practice in peacekeeping and the 'war on terror', and this says much

about the need to treat international engagement as complementary to hard power. The increasing complexity of interactions brought about by asymmetrical warfare and counterinsurgencies in Iraq, Afghanistan and elsewhere highlighted the important force-multiplier effect that international engagement could have on the ground, and its role in cementing Australia's aim to remain the security 'partner of choice' in the Pacific.[17] Furthermore, the difficulty of developing and maintaining international engagement during times of political tension is clear from the ADF's extensive collaboration with the Indonesian military.[18]

Modern International Engagement in Policy and Practice

In recent years, militaries and international analysts have shown an increasing interest in international engagement.[19] The UK and US militaries have highly developed approaches to international engagement and, as the ADF shares doctrinal and operational experience with these two militaries, commonalities are worth identifying.

The UK military has gone further than any of Australia's defence partners in elevating the role of international engagement in foreign policy. International engagement has a long history of institutionalisation in the UK.[20] Organisational learning from deployments in Afghanistan and Iraq mirrored Australia's experience with respect to the evolution of population-centric approaches to building influence rather than active warfighting.[21] Operational experience and innovative approaches to aid delivery led to a comprehensive review of the British approach to foreign policy in 2019. The outcome was a joint international defence engagement strategy that involves close collaboration between Defence and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.[22] The policy is currently being updated and the UK Government has foreshadowed an even more integrated approach. The present UK Ministry of Defence (UKMOD) approach is captured by the following diagram:

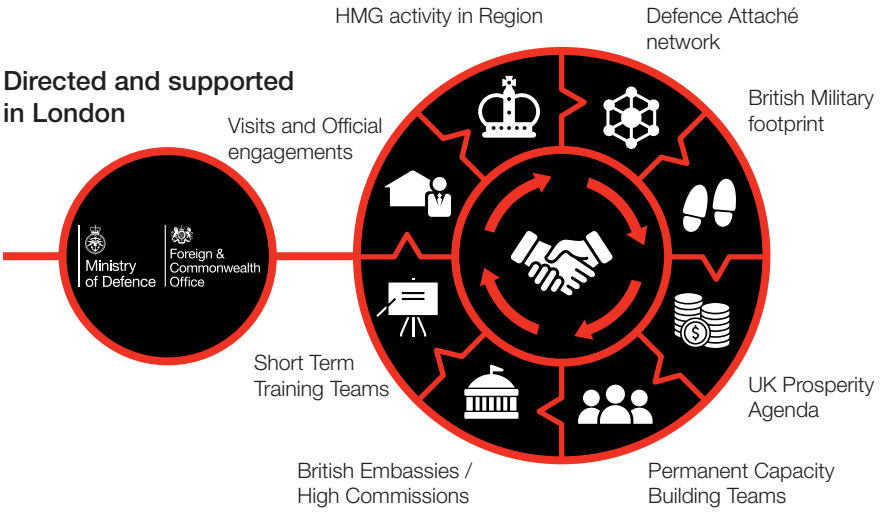

Figure 1. The UK's approach to defence diplomacy. (Source: derived from Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office)[23]

This UK diagram displays a highly integrated approach that elevates the importance of whole-of-government interagency cooperation in the achievement of foreign policy goals. The US also treats international engagement as a key role. This role is closely integrated with relevant US departments and agencies involved in the delivery of foreign policy such as the Department of State, the Department of Defense and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).[24] Practically this means that, for USAID the '3Ds', diplomacy, development, and defence 'are the three pillars that provide the foundation for promoting and protecting U.S. national security interests abroad'.[25] Furthermore, the Joint Chiefs of Staff have directed that defence support to public diplomacy is now reflected on in operational design.[26]

Operational lessons from Afghanistan drove the US approach to international engagement. Specifically, the US learned that on operations commanders can develop independent relationships with local leaders 'bringing their influence to bear on issues that significantly blur the lines between diplomacy and security policy'.[27] This reflection on practice identified close collaboration between military commanders and ambassadors as key elements in successful counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. It means that the pivotal role of military personnel who are on the ground when operations are underway—whether active combat, or HADR—must be acknowledged and nurtured.

More recently, the US military has focused on its role in responding to rising strategic competition in non-kinetic ways. As with the UK example, the importance of interagency cooperation has been recognised as essential in harnessing all of the instruments of national power. From this perspective, the persuasion facilitated by international engagement is highly valued. In recent planning documents, such as the 2023 Joint Chiefs of Staff *Joint Concept for Competing*, 'Joint Force military diplomacy' is highlighted as an important tool to build influence and 'shape the competitive space'.[28] This aligns with Australia's core defence objective to 'Shape the Regional Strategic Environment'.[29]

The UK and US approaches are relevant because of historical doctrinal links with Australia, because of the extensive history of joint operations—most recently in Iraq and Afghanistan—and because the institutionalisation of bilateral international engagement has been extensive. There are many shared outlooks between these alliance partners and Australia, including an increasing focus on whole-of-government approaches to international engagement involving interagency cooperation.[30] These approaches were evident in Australia's responses to crises and disasters in East Timor, the Solomon Islands and, this paper argues, most recently Fiji. Most of Australia's international engagement has occurred with the UK and US with the aim of improving standardisation and interoperability.[31] The latter point is significant as in most of these interactions Australia has been the 'junior' partner, 'walking among giants' as one analyst terms it.[32] By contrast, this paper focuses on when Australia undertakes international engagement independently with partners 'junior' to itself.

The approaches to international engagement by Australia's 'senior' partners are influenced by their strategic cultures, where military preponderance and advanced technology are married. Australia's strategic culture has not benefited from a sense of military preponderance,[33] and fears of indefensibility and abandonment by allies are an essential attribute of Australian strategic culture.[34] Therefore, some of the partnership approaches developed by the ADF have differed from those of the US and UK (in theatres such as Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq) and some of this difference is on display in Australian international engagement in the Pacific.

ADF personnel have also noted that the differences between the ADF and the US military provide opportunities for the ADF to engage militaries with similar historical backgrounds, such as Fiji's.[35] That is, the US is an unrivalled superpower with global reach and a long history of military intervention to support its strategic interests, those of its allies and the 'rules-based order'.[36] Australia does not have this history or the military preponderance required to intervene independently far from its shores, and this fact inevitably shapes ADF doctrine. Instead, the ADF has developed a partnership approach to international engagement that has been viewed positively by the US as an 'Australian experience can bring a fresh perspective and opportunities for collaboration to an already vibrant alliance',[37] which is another reason to document and analyse ADF international engagement. However, despite international engagement being elevated by Australia's allies to become an intertwined subset of more orthodox approaches to public diplomacy,[38] this does not mean that the approach is not without its critics in Australia. This debate is briefly discussed below, but before going further it is useful to provide a working definition of the subject at hand.

Defence International Engagement Defined

Defence diplomacy is a term used predominantly by European and US defence practitioners. For example, in their minimalist definition Cottey and Forster argue that defence diplomacy is the 'peaceful (non-confrontational) use of armed forces and related infrastructure (primarily defence ministries) as a foreign policy and security tool'.[39] In Australia, Defence practitioners use the term 'international engagement' to describe strategy of this kind. Accordingly, this is the term used throughout this paper.

UK and US planning guidance highlights the importance of harnessing interagency collaboration. International engagement involves all service branches and the Department of Defence. In practice, it is also supported by other relevant departments, such as DFAT, which aligns with the US and UK experience mentioned earlier. The case studies developed in this paper demonstrate the whole-of-government approach that is required to effectively use international engagement as a tool of persuasion. International engagement ultimately places uniformed personnel in the role of diplomats. Notably, the focus of these personnel is on achieving Australia's national interests through the use of military instruments, short of their use in conflict or war. A central aim is to gain influence, which, while often intangible, is integral to engineering successful foreign policy outcomes.

International engagement is most effective when mutual security interests are being fostered. In this context it involves a range of the following activities:

- Military diplomatic representation through defence attachés
- The development of shared strategic outlooks with allies and partners
- Fostering shared tactics to respond to mutual and separate challenges
- Practical cooperation and exchange at all levels in intelligence, education, training, exercising, port visits etc.
- Provision of specialist equipment, logistics and through-life support
- Joint responses to security challenges and threats.

All of these activities may be institutionalised in various ways, but stronger relations are usually characterised by the development of formal bilateral defence agreements.

The Australian *2016 Defence White Paper* defined international engagement partly in terms of the influence it aims to generate:

> *Defence's international engagement—its physical footprint overseas and pattern of collaborative activities such as joint exercises and training—is an integral component of Defence's posture. Defence's international engagement also contributes significantly to Australia's strategic weight—our perceived global standing and our ability to exert influence in pursuit of our interests.*[40]

This policy statement highlights the elevation of international engagement in defence posture and acknowledges the integral part it plays in achieving broader foreign policy goals.

The *2023 Defence Strategic Review* (DSR) emphasises the role of defence partnerships in achieving Australia's interests. The review recommends 'deepening cultural ties and developing enduring people-to-people links' with Indo-Pacific militaries and highlights that 'the Pacific is critical to the security of Australia and the region'. Furthermore, the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP), under which all of the activities in this paper occurred, is considered 'an exemplar of defence diplomacy'.[41]

Beyond Transactional Interactions: Partnerships and Relationships

Central to achieving the aims of international engagement is a partnership approach whereby the interests of both parties in fostering cooperation are identified and achieved. This means that activities occur at all levels—from PMs and ministers to corporals—and must occur in both donor and recipient states. Furthermore, while activities often occur in the host state, respecting the sovereignty of the partner is central to building trust. Major General Bilton notes that 'successful partnering requires us to be respectful of sovereignty, respectful of culture and alive to the needs, wants and desires of our partner. A genuine and successful partnership requires nothing less'.[42] These elements were central to overcoming tensions between Australia and Fiji caused by the imposition of sanctions in 2006.

From a Fijian perspective, interviews with then Deputy Secretary of Defence (Lieutenant Colonel, retd) Ilai (Jack) Moceica and other Fijian military personnel reveal a view of international engagement that focuses on authentic interactions and respect for local culture.[43] Deputy Secretary Moceica emphasises the importance of both developing an *esprit de corps* between soldiers and building trusting relationships founded on collaboration:

> *You cannot compare soldiers with people out in civvy street for all good intents and purposes because they share things … this is something universal about them, with the uniform, even through different uniforms, green and gold and pure green, and whatever camouflage or even—but there's something about soldiers … soldiers are soldiers.*[44]

Deputy Secretary Moceica is of the generation of soldiers who trained in Australia prior to sanctions and, as such, captures the foundation upon which re-engagement could occur. He observed that:

> *Military diplomacy starts on … how you cultivate that friendship. In soldiering, because if you are part of the team together, then you're confronting an opposition, then, you should be unified as one, you should be united, and you need to empower each other, you need to compliment whatever you provide, you support to reinforce, and when it comes to that, the element of trust has to be there and you need to work to cultivate that relationship and build the trust. Once you build the trust, you continue to work on it every day. You have to be honest with what you engage, sharing, you have to be true to them and tell them what puts you off and what to expect from you. You have to be forthright with them, you have to be forthcoming in the way you engage, and that is how you build a strong relationship, you have to look at win-win.*[45]

There are clear commonalities in the approach taken to international engagement amongst Australian and Fijian military officers, and this theme will be developed in more detail below.

Australia's Present Policy on International Engagement and the Pacific

Since the end of the Cold War, Australian Defence White Papers have consistently showcased ADF international engagement as a key aspect of defence policy, with the 2013 paper noting unequivocally that 'Australia's international engagement is both a strategic necessity and a strategic asset'.[46] The *2016 Defence White Paper* reshapes defence posture with an emphasis on 'strengthening Defence's international engagement and international defence relationships and arrangements'.[47] An increased budget allocation was also foreshadowed as part of this 'more active' and 'enhanced international engagement' and it was treated as an 'investment':

> *Defence will increase its investment in international engagement over the next 20 years to help reduce the risk of military confrontation, build interoperability with key partners and improve the coordination of responses to shared international challenges including terrorism and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief.*[48]

The White Paper notes that the frequency of military diplomatic activities with the present 28 partners should be increased, and emphasises activities in the South Pacific. The practical goals of the program are clearly identified, including a doubling of training provided to partners over the next 15 years. These goals have seen expansions to existing institutional links such as the Defence Cooperation Scholarship Program, under which foreign officers study in Australia. Furthermore, DFAT also identifies international engagement as contributing to achieving the government's broader foreign policy goals by increasing Australia's 'strategic weight', which improves 'global standing and our ability to exert influence in pursuit of our interests'.[49]

Accordingly, Defence works closely with DFAT's Office of the Pacific when engaging with Fiji and other Pacific island countries (PICs).

The *2016 Defence White Paper* announced that 'international engagement will become an integrated core function across the entire Defence portfolio, aligned with the Strategic Defence Objectives'. This was a clear statement of how international engagement was being elevated in defence policy. Furthermore, as the strategic objectives guiding the White Paper strategy include the capacity to effectively militarily support Pacific island governments 'to build and strengthen their security',[50] this new emphasis had a direct bearing on relations with Fiji.

DFAT has collaborated closely with Defence to try to improve coordination and currently uses a 3Ds approach (diplomacy, development and defence) similar to that of the US noted earlier.[51] In practice this means enhancing the emphasis on building international partnerships by DFAT and other relevant departments and agencies.[52] Key goals of the program, such as coordination and delivery of HADR, are relevant to re-engagement with Fiji and will be discussed in relation to the case studies below.

In announcing the *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, PM Morrison noted: 'Our sharpened focus will see Defence forming even deeper links and trust with regional Armed Forces and a further expansion in our defence diplomacy cooperation, capability and capacity-building.'[53] The PM also identified the Blackrock base redevelopment as the type of 'bricks and mortar' infrastructure project that 'speaks of a deep relationship, a commitment we've made to all members of our Pacific family, our vuvale'. These sentiments were echoed by the Minister for Defence, Marise Payne, and the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), General Angus Campbell. The update itself particularly identified cooperation to support partners' 'resilience to coercion' and prioritised HADR, defence infrastructure, and maritime security, which are priorities for PICs.[54]

International engagement supports the core defence objective to 'Shape the Regional Strategic Environment'.[55] In recent years the geopolitical contest between Australia and China in the South Pacific has become more overt[56] and successive governments have introduced a range of initiatives designed to counter perceptions of China's increasing influence.[57] The 2023 DSR reinforces this trend,[58] and the 2023 federal budget backed the thrust of the review by allocating an additional $2 billion to countering Chinese influence.

Army Strategic Guidance

Defence produces an annual (classified) Defence International Engagement Plan (DIEP). In turn, all service branches have international engagement initiatives that are tailored to their respective domains to achieve the objectives of the DIEP—the Army's being the longstanding Army International Engagement Plan (AIEP).[59] Army updated its AIEP in 2015 to conform with the new Defence International Engagement Strategy which was developed as part of the planning for the *2016 Defence White Paper*. The AIEP was produced by the Army's small international engagement team for the CA. The AIEP predated the White Paper and predicted its emphasis on international engagement. The AIEP acknowledged its role in supporting Australia's re-engagement with Fiji by growing the relationship with the Republic of Fiji Military Forces (RFMF), aligning with the international engagement objectives that form the focus of the latter half of this paper.

A key aspect of the literature on international engagement in Australia is a focus on the lead role played by the Army, especially in the Pacific. Joyo Sanjal has noted:

> *The Australian Army's role is particularly significant, as it's the service with the greatest focus on people. It routinely engages in operations, sometimes in collaboration with civilian actors that shape the military's role in the region.*[60]

This observation has several facets related to the role of the Army versus other services, including the focus on the land domain (that people inhabit), which necessitates greater face-to-face/people-to-people interaction.[61] In Australia, brigades conduct a form of international engagement by partnering with foreign militaries. An example is the Army's 7th Brigade partnering with the RFMF in 2016, which reinforced the relationship between armies.

As the Army has been identified as a major actor in international engagement, it is worth reflecting on present strategic guidance. It is clear that the Army's leadership has been pivotal in developing military diplomacy as a force multiplier. The previous CA, General Angus Campbell, was a strong supporter of international engagement and provided leadership and encouragement to personnel inclined to develop the area and test its capacity to support the Army's mission and Australia's broader foreign policy goals. Significantly, Lieutenant General Rick Burr was deputy to General

Campbell at this time and shared the same philosophy. Burr went on to become CA and this appointment provided some continuity in the Army's focus on international engagement. Both leaders recognised the value of ideas and encouraged applied research that prompted greater priority being afforded to international engagement. The value of this continuity and leadership from the top cannot be underestimated as it provided an enabling space for innovation to occur.

The *Army in Motion: Strategic Guidance 2019*[62] document provides a clear statement of the importance of international engagement to the Army's mission. *Army in Motion* refines thinking on international engagement and integrates it into the broader public diplomacy in a manner that reflects ADF experience and best practice, while also aligning with UK and US doctrinal shifts in this direction noted earlier.

Army in Motion also introduces the term 'persistent presence', which can be treated as a specific application of international engagement tailored to present Australian conditions. Persistent presence is one of three key concepts guiding the Australian Army and, as such, the way it is envisaged influencing operations is worth detailing at length:

> *Army enables and maintains **access** through persistent presence. As a people force, Army provides this persistent presence through our people to people links. We develop partnerships, underpinned by mutual respect and trust. This provides Australia with strategic options to understand, shape and influence the operating environment … Persistent presence undermines threats directly and indirectly, increasing our influence, building our own partners' capabilities and setting information conditions favourable to national interests.*[63]

This practical conceptualisation of international engagement aligns neatly with the use of the term by other militaries and represents the ADF keeping pace with Western military best practice. It also aligns with what the present CA, Lieutenant General Stuart, describes as 'teaming' within the Australian military and with regional partners.[64]

Operationally there are numerous international senior defence leadership meetings every year, extensive training and exchanges, and thousands of Army personnel stationed overseas on diplomatic missions and undertaking training and exchanges. The following graph from *Army in Motion* highlights the extent of the Army's military diplomacy, which involves activities in over 25 countries.

WHO WE ARE: An Army in Motion

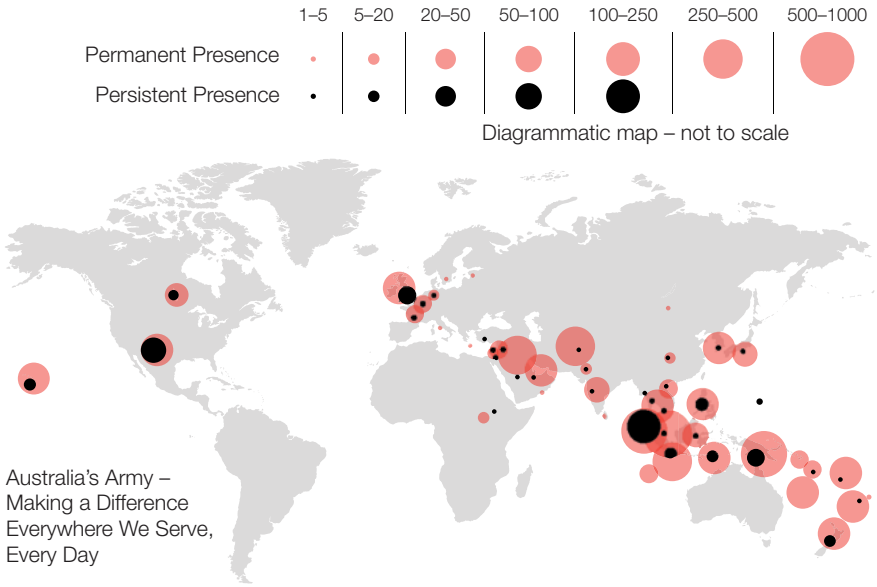

Figure 2. The Australian Army in motion (Source: derived from Department of Defence)[65]

The Effectiveness of International Engagement in Australia

> *An effective International Engagement program fundamentally builds trust, understanding and capacity, and reduces that perennial feature of international relations—friction. Established relations are invaluable in time of crisis, increasing the speed and effectiveness of response options in the face of conflict, terrorism, or natural disaster. The program can also provide an enduring channel for dialogue that can reinforce political and economic relationships, and offer an alternate line of communication during times of diplomatic tension.*
>
> Major General Rick Burr, 25 June 2015[66]

The strategies of allies and recent Australian defence policy supports the contention that international engagement can buttress attempts to influence friends and potential adversaries alike. However, this approach is contested. A particular focus amongst policy analysts in Australia has been whether in fact international engagement is a 'foreign policy force multiplier'.[67] On the one hand, proponents of international engagement, often associated with Defence, argue that 'when it works it works well and can be a force multiplier of considerable impact'.[68] For instance, CA Rick Burr noted: 'International Engagement is an integral component of military strategy, and it makes an essential contribution to Army capability.'[69] They focus on the constraints on efficiently using international engagement and the practical ways of overcoming them.[70]

On the other hand critics, such as Baldino and Carr, focus on the lack of tangible/measurable benefits from past activities and, at best, assert operational and tactical but not strategic benefits.[71] In contrast, supporters such as John Blaxland, argue that there are strategic benefits based on accessing networks and influencing key actors in foreign military establishments.[72] Both sides in the debate in Australia strongly advocate a position: either not building expectations about the usefulness of the strategy, and therefore concentrating on other tools, or ramping up an integrated whole-of-government approach to international engagement.[73] Hugh White is good example of the former and Blaxland a representative example of the latter. A few analysts, such as Nick Bisley, argue for a realistic middle ground, but in general the debate in Australia moves quickly to opposing poles.[74]

Analysts often express a tone of advocacy that acknowledges the intangible characteristics of international engagement, which complicates program evaluation. A representative example of the asserted benefits of international engagement and their intangible character is provided by Nicholas Floyd:

> *Because it embodies the values of the profession of arms—shared by military colleagues across national boundaries—military-to-military engagement has the quality of being somewhat removed from the more transient aspects of politics and diplomacy. Soldiers speak a common professional language that strives to be apolitical. More broadly, defence diplomacy places a high premium on the reputations and informal networks of senior individuals. This can count for more than formal agreements and dialogues, especially in a crisis.*[75]

In Australia's case, international engagement has been linked to numerous successful operations, as the following quotation from Alan Gyngell attests, but the direct relationship to success is also contested (more of this later).

> *The success of operations like the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands and East Timor depended on long patterns of contact between our forces and often on relationships between individuals in them, cemented by decades of defence diplomacy.*[76]

In practical terms, it is difficult to identify ***precisely*** how foreign participation in defence education programs in Australia is linked to increased Australian influence.[77] However, the key is to identify where individual recipients of training—who have aspired to professional 'military emulation' of Australia[78]—have also risen to positions of influence in their respective militaries, and have exercised influence in ways that suit Australia's interests.[79] In the context of the current geopolitical competition with China, emulating Australian doctrine means that China does not gain influence in this regard.

The military leadership of PNG provides a case study of military emulation. As a junior officer, former Chief of the Papua New Guinea Defence Force (PNGDF) Brigadier Gilbert Toropo was posted to Australia (1993–1994). He was an instructor at Royal Military College Duntroon. In 2001 he gained selection to the ADF Command and Staff College in Canberra and returned to undertake year-long training at the ADF Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies in Canberra in 2007. Blaxland notes that 'he is the quintessential

example of the utility of investing in defence diplomacy through scholarships, exchanges and exercises'.[80] Brigadier Toropo himself is clear about the benefits of partnering and the need for it to be based on 'familiarity and long-standing personal relationships'.[81] In 2018, with Canberra increasingly concerned about the prospect of China setting up a base in the South Pacific, Toropo publicly supported Australia as the partner of choice in rebuilding the Lombrum naval base on Manus Island. In doing so he appeared to connect this to concerns about China.[82]

Presumably, critics of international engagement would argue that the precise benefit of this extensive interaction throughout Brigadier Toropo's career is intangible. As Hugh White claims, 'the idea that plain-speaking military men, talking soldier to soldier, can resolve differences and build trust' is based on 'myths and misunderstandings'.[83] However, participants' claims about benefits of international engagement, especially in Fiji, are convincing.

There are questions over the place of international engagement in contexts where geopolitical tensions are rising and competition over influence is intensifying. This is especially so in the South Pacific. As noted earlier, the Australian Government has elevated the profile of international engagement as a potential enabler to achieve Australia's unique defence policy goals in the present complex strategic environment. This paper focuses on the rapprochement with Fiji from 2014 as a case study of how international engagement contributed to achieving Australia's broader foreign policy goals. However, before moving on to detail this recent case, an overview of past practice is included to provide context.

Australian International Engagement in Practice

The ADF has a long history of international engagement, even if it was not called this at the time (or even conceptualised as such). Since World War II, participation in numerous interventions and advisory missions has built an awareness of the value of international engagement as a force multiplier. Notable early examples include the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (1962–1973) and the Commonwealth Military Training Team Uganda (1982–1984),[84] but the long-term benefits of these initiatives are difficult to judge due to the subsequent political upheavals that engulfed these countries.

This history does not provide solid evidence with which to engage in debate over the efficacy of international engagement, but some insights are provided in the following section in relation to Indonesia and Afghanistan and then in more detail in relation to Fiji. Australia's long history of international engagement does not suggest that the ADF's experience is necessarily cumulative and linear, but rather that operational insights have led key actors to innovate and institutionalise international engagement approaches in ADF doctrine, especially in the Army, which was involved more intensely 'on the ground' than other services.

Lessons from International Engagement with Indonesia

In the literature on international engagement, Australia's long relationship with Indonesia stands out.[85] Given the 31 years of military dictatorship in Jakarta up to 1998 it is hardly surprising that international engagement is an important part of the broader diplomatic relationship. International

engagement with Indonesia has always been multifaceted but the 'people to people links' built through the DCP identified in the DSR are exemplified by the enduring relationships built between Australian and Indonesian personnel of all ranks, through activities such as exercises or education in Australian military training establishments.

The literature on bilateral relations with Indonesia is contested and this reflects the often turbulent state of play in the diplomatic relationship.[86] Protagonists use Indonesia as an example of both success and failure in Australian international engagement. Guy Wilson, for example, notes the 'limited success' of international engagement in the last three decades but nonetheless argues that it 'should increasingly be employed, not least so that when the next crisis occurs, as history portends it will, international engagement will reveal its value as providing substantial ballast for relations between the two countries'.[87]

In the 1980s and 1990s it was commonplace to reference the close rapport between senior Australian and Indonesian officers to explain how regular diplomatic breaches were smoothed over.[88] The prevailing argument was that shared regional security interests would bring the two disparate states together and that international engagement would be the enabler in building closer and more sustainable relations.[89] The obvious critique of this position is that this optimism has existed for decades and has always been dashed when relations have regularly deteriorated. Don Greenlees has highlighted the precarious nature of the relationship, including the weakness of international engagement in mending relations. He has also noted the failure of international engagement to improve the professionalism of the Indonesian military in relation to human rights abuses, most evident in Aceh, East Timor and West Papua.[90] If a key aim of Australia's extensive international engagement with Indonesia over the decade before 1998 was to curb human rights abuses, then the conclusion would be that respect for universal human rights was not necessarily engendered in Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI) ranks. However, this may not have been the prime concern of international engagement. For political reasons, Australia has been less interested in holding Indonesia to account than some other states. Similar leniency in relation to maintaining international engagement is also evident in relations with Myanmar and Thailand, but curiously not in relation to Fiji from 2006 to 2014.[91]

East Timor's independence referendum provides a worthwhile example of the strengths and weaknesses of Australian international engagement with Indonesia. The outbreak of violence by TNI-backed militias could provide a sharp example of the limitations of international engagement in developing shared values in relation to the professionalism of the military, and constitutionally mandated military-civilian relations. However, the collaboration and cooperation between the TNI and the ADF, especially in the early days of INTERFET (International Force East Timor) was essential to its success. The worst-case scenario could have involved combat deaths on both sides and a complete potentially unrepairable breakdown in relations. This did not eventuate and a key part in the smooth intervention has been attributed to the close networks developed by defence attachés in Jakarta[92] and by senior military commanders through education and exchange in Australia and Indonesia. Effective military commanders, such as Colonel Ken Brownrigg, have also been identified as integral to effective liaison with the TNI.[93] More broadly, supporters of international engagement also use INTERFET as a positive example, noting that it would have been far more difficult for Australia to form a coalition to intervene in East Timor if it had not been undertaking international engagement with states such as Thailand for years.[94]

Australia's support for the independence referendum in 1998 and leadership of the INTERFET peacekeeping operation led to a significant rupture in relations, but this has largely been rebuilt and the ADF's significant participation in Australia's response to the 2004 Boxing Day tsunami played a key part.[95] ADF HADR capabilities provided essential supports for the TNI that were generous, timely and invaluable. Significantly, the loss of nine Australian lives in a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Sea King helicopter crash on the island of Nias highlighted the danger of routine international engagement and the strength of the commitment from the Australian Government to supporting Indonesia after this disaster, with over a billion dollars in overseas development assistance over the next decade.

This Boxing Day tsunami operation, and its diplomatic payoff, is very similar to the 2016 Cyclone Winston operation detailed in a case study below. However, while there is no doubt that diplomats in Fiji took advantage of both situations, there is little evidence of any direct connection between them in the ADF's approach. Rather there is evidence of the enduring willingness to engage in international engagement that has become part of Australian doctrine.

Lessons from Afghanistan: Mentoring Task Force Case Study

International engagement has existed as long as armies, but the focus was most often on building links and capacity between allies and friends in the face of common threats. These traditional activities could be characterised as *Realpolitik*: war being the extension of politics by other means. The rise of the challenges posed by asymmetrical insurgency tactics in the so-called 'new wars'[96] of the post-Cold War era have increased the importance of building authentic relationships with allies and friends, and local populations and potential adversaries alike. The focus on the international engagement conducted by 'interveners' such as the US, UK and Australia while on COIN operations shifts emphasis away from the routine role of attachés working with allies and partners.

Post-Cold War interventions (where complex political transitions are underway) involve working with multiple partners, some of whom occupy an ambiguous position between friend and threat, with the hope that they can be influenced to be at least benign. At best shared interests can be developed with these 'allies of convenience'.[97] Achieving such commonality requires a range of skills on the part of operational commanders that extends the remit of international engagement. The literature highlights that there is a link between successful COIN operations and engagement on the ground, and that this requires a range of skills that stretch the orthodox focus on warfighting.[98]

Australia's long involvement in Afghanistan began in 2001 and, before it ended in 2021, it altered and adapted to suit the political and operational context on the ground and domestically. Regrettably, over this period 41 personnel died and over 250 were wounded.[99] The Army's mentoring role involved supporting the 4th Brigade of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to build its capacity to control an area. Mentoring the ANA was a challenge itself and, according to the commander of the second Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force (MRTF-2) (Uruzgan 2009), Lieutenant Colonel Peter Connolly, progress was 'slow, costly and difficult, but nevertheless worthwhile' with respect to achieving operational objectives.[100]

From the perspective of international engagement, the Army's experience from successive MRTFs and Mentoring Task Forces (between 2008 and 2013) is instructive insofar as operations shifted to more closely integrate hard and soft power tactics which fit the remit of operation international engagement. However, it would be a mistake to treat this example as representing a coherent doctrinal shift. One of the commanders in Iraq, Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Rawlins, has noted the strategic-tactical dissonance that shaped operations. Rawlins also relayed a similar reflection from Lieutenant Colonel Roger Noble, the commander of the Al Muthanna Task Group in Afghanistan.[101] Regardless of the command context, operational international engagement reflected the response of operational commanders to circumstances on the ground and was not necessarily reflected in operational orders.

In addition to the ANA and other Afghan agencies, the Australian Task Forces worked closely with other elements in the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) led International Security Assistance Force including the Dutch Battle Group, special forces, the Australian Special Operations Task Group and US Special Forces Task Force 31, US aviation assets, Australian DFAT and Australian Federal Police representatives and the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID). The MRTF assisted local leaders and communities within which the Taliban operated with greater or lesser support, and engaged the Taliban in active combat. Finally, the MRTF also had a domestic Australian audience in government, the military establishment and public opinion, and needed to maintain domestic support and limit negative impressions of the mission.[102] Clearly this was an extremely complex operational environment, more so due to the intense fighting season of 2009 in 'green zones' populated by potentially friendly villagers and insurgents alike. A better test-bed for the application of international engagement ***on operations*** can probably not be found.

Connolly's perspective of the operational challenges provides useful context:

> *[C]ounterinsurgency requires a careful balance between the ability to win the support of the people, and the application of close combat to destroy the enemy with precision whenever and wherever the opportunity arises.*[103]

This being the case, the stakes were high as combat operations impacting civilian populations could damage community trust in ways that could have both tactical and strategic consequences. In brief, the philosophy employed included interconnected lines of effort which incorporated the need to 'influence the population, the insurgency and the coalition'.[104] The complex nature of operations involving so many actors and stakeholders—where the aim focused on local capacity building (mentoring) and partnered operations, rather than independent combat operations—demanded a level of international engagement beyond that which the ADF had been required to undertake previously. MRTF-2 used human dimension analysis of local society and culture to attempt to understand the interests of multiple stakeholders, prepare responses and pre-empt potential problems. They also created a human atmospherics card to acquire real-time intelligence from every patrol/interaction with stakeholders.[105]

Figure 3. MRTF-2 soldiers conduct Shura with ANA personnel and tribal elders, Baluchi Valley, Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, 2009 (Source: Department of Defence)[106]

Lessons learnt from Afghanistan included the need to manage a wide range of stakeholders and actors with a focus on 'community mobilisation', and to develop and cultivate a range of diplomatic skills from the command level down to the individual soldier. The need to cultivate relationships and trust 'emphasises the great importance of soldiers' actions at the local level to influence and convince the people', and soldiers drove much of the innovation in relation to 'community mobilisation' while learning on the job.[107] Accordingly, success devolved to the flexibility and adaptability of 'strategic corporals'[108] who understood the important of nurturing influence. Indeed, it was asserted that Australian soldiers were excellent at 'switching from a hearts and minds focus to killing the enemy, and then switching back just as quickly to caring for the people'.[109] The innovative approach of MRTF-2 did not involve increased resourcing in order to emphasise persuasion.[110] Connolly also went on to work as the Army's Director of International Engagement and his team engaged with Fiji during the timeframe of this research project, so his perspective is worth quoting at length:

> *[W]e adopted the philosophy that all of our actions (including manoeuvre, construction and key leader engagement) would influence perceptions for many different audiences. The aim was to ensure that we achieved a positive influence that contributed to the achievement of our objectives and mission, without developing unintended consequences. This was facilitated through the development of a system of human dimension analysis so that we better understood who we were influencing, and the employment of a targeting system to allocate priorities to the generation of key effects (both 'soft' and 'kinetic').*[111]

Balancing soft power (where influence is the goal) with the more orthodox application of hard power focused attention on the value of international engagement on operations. The lessons from Afghanistan are evidenced across the Defence organisation, not least in the policy and strategic guidance noted earlier.

From Afghanistan to PNG and Fiji

The ADF has a long history of international engagement with PNG, preceding independence itself.[112] However, while explicit links are difficult to establish, more recent military diplomacy appears to have been influenced by operational experience in Afghanistan. The focus on mobile training teams (MTTs) in the Pacific aligns with ADF operational practice, but was driven by the PNGDF's awareness of professional and discipline deficiencies. This recognition led to the development of the 'companies of excellence' program, which has seen ADF officers mentoring whole companies to the point where the Commander of the PNGDF acknowledged a rise in standards: 'the full regeneration of two infantry battalions' has been achieved.[113] In 2019, Australian Army surveillance and target acquisition specialists trained members of the PNGDF in the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which have the capacity to greatly improve their tactical awareness over the rugged, mountainous terrain that characterises much of PNG. As a result, PNGDF soldiers became the first qualified operators in that country and the Australian Army cemented Australia's position as a security partner of choice.[114]

These activities have been connected to the ADF Pacific Mobile Training Team created under the Morrison government's Pacific 'Step Up'. It is worth remembering, however, that they have a much longer lineage in PNG. For example, the Defence Attaché (DA), Colonel Dick Parker, introduced mentoring and training teams in 2014 but the lineage of such partnerships extends back as far as the Australian Army's command of the Pacific Islands Battalion during World War II. The Army has been able to leverage influence with respect to uniformed forces elsewhere in the Pacific; as one senior Australian officer opined, '[M]ost Pacific Islanders respect a uniform'.[115] A key aspect of this is the tailoring to local conditions, as Foreign Minister Marise Payne put it:

> *There are lessons to be learnt from here in PNG in terms of how we listen and how we really understand what is important … Every nation is different. Every nation has different capabilities. Every nation has different sovereign challenges. But there are very similar ones.*[116]

The PNG example echoes the ADF's partnership approach to Fiji after the country's 2014 elections. However, the lineage goes back much further through Afghanistan to Vietnam and before.

Lessons Learned from International Engagement Practitioners

This brief background to Australian international engagement identifies the role of key practitioners who influenced the development of policy. Before moving on to focus on re-engagement with Fiji it is worth reflecting on the people behind the scenes who are integral to successful international engagement.

Much of the policy literature on international engagement does not reflect on the personal and professional qualities of uniformed personnel who conduct international engagement. There has been too little reflection about the importance of leadership and command, teamwork and team building. The best leaders are willingly followed by those they lead, and this may translate cross-culturally. For instance, a senior Australian Army officer noted that 'in a role like Defence Attaché or Defence Advisor there's no command relationship. It's all influence in terms of getting outcomes'.[117] The foreign personnel whom international engagement tries to influence are commanded by a ***foreign*** military. The DA can attempt to influence senior staff but there are limits because much of the influence happens between peers. This places a premium on soft skills and emotional intelligence to persuade foreign personnel that a given action that is in Australia's interests is in their national interests.

DAs may be alone on the ground with few command responsibilities, but they are supported by a range of government departments and units in Australia, such as DFAT. It is clear from this paper that the roles of the Defence International Policy Division (IPDIV) and Army's Office of International Engagement were pivotal to the success of re-engagement with Fiji. The Director of International Engagement for Army, Colonel Peter Connolly, and his small team during the formative transition from the quiet years to frenetic activity were central to supporting the DA and making the connections within Australia. Similarly, key staff in IPDIV, such as Commodore Steve Woodall and Peita Spence, were extremely supportive and creative in ensuring that training and secondment opportunities could be offered to the RFMF, particularly in response to specific gaps in training identified by the Fijians.

On the ground, activities such as Exercise Longreach (discussed below) were expertly led by Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Baker, breaking down barriers and building relationships that were quickly utilised during Cyclone Winston. If sovereignty is valued in a partnership, then being responsive to needs is highly valued. Other states rushing to re-engage during this period, including many of Fiji's 'new friends' acquired during the sanctions years, had a vast array of training options but may have been more directive. In contrast, Lieutenant Colonel Lachlan Robertson, now promoted to DA, developed an edge by focusing as much on what the Fijians wanted as on what Australia could offer.[118] As the relationship grew, the response to Cyclone Winston and the leadership of Task Force Commander Lieutenant Colonel Scott (Scotty) Hill leveraged new relationships. As a consequence, the partnership with 7th Brigade became more important and remains central to the maintenance of a strong relationship with the RFMF, as the joint deployment in response to the 2019–20 bushfires attests. Taking advantage of these opportunities involved a whole-of-government approach and this must be institutionalised to make the most of future opportunities.

It is clear that Defence recognises the importance of intergovernmental collaboration, as noted by CDF General Angus Campbell. Campbell points to the work of defence attachés in supporting a 'team Australia' approach:

> *They're building, daily, the relationship between nations and particularly between armed forces, strengthening cooperation and understanding and creating people-to-people links complemented by the exercise, training and activity program.*[119]

Furthermore, strategic guidance in the DSR sees these opportunities and also institutionalises this comprehensive approach to international engagement: 'National Defence must be part of a broader national strategy of whole-of-government coordinated and focused statecraft and diplomacy in our region.'[120] This emphasis is the product of decades of evolution in international engagement.

The Australia Defence Force's Long Legacy of International Engagement in the South Pacific

[A] more strategic and integrated approach to International Engagement and security cooperation must be a core component of Army's mission in the future.

Major General Rick Burr, 25 June 2015[121]

Australian international engagement with regional militaries is where Australia's strategic interests are most enduring. These relationships can be contrasted with operations further afield alongside the US where alliance considerations are often the motivating factor. The focus of Australia's international engagement as partner of choice has been on the 'nearer region', South-East Asia and the South Pacific.[122] According to the Lowy Institute's *Asia Power Index*, Australia ranks second in the region for defence networks, behind the US, which highlights the significant commitment over many years to defence cooperation with ANZUS allies and regional militaries.[123] Defence cooperation is a key strength and this category in the *Asia Power Index* is the highest score in Australia's aggregate of comparative power.

In the South Pacific, international engagement occurs through a range of regional institutions such as the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) and through bilateral relations, and these vary markedly due to a range of historical factors. Diverse factors include the legacies of past interventions and also the differences in local security arrangements, as only three states have militaries, namely Fiji, PNG and Tonga. In 2013, Australia inaugurated the South Pacific Defence Ministers' Meeting, which convenes biennially, and Fiji's participation was welcomed after elections in 2014.

Until recently the DCP contribution to the South Pacific was modest compared to other bilateral relationships, but this related as much to local requirements and capacity to receive this type of assistance as it did to Australia's priorities in the region. In recent years, DCP expenditure in the Pacific has exceeded other relationships, which reflects the government's Pacific 'Step Up' and especially re-engagement with Fiji. That said, the largest bilateral program by far in the Pacific is with PNG and a significant portion of the DCP contribution to the region is allocated to maintaining Pacific Maritime Security Program (PMSP) patrol boats donated by Australia.[124] The DSR highlighted the value of the DCP, noting:

> *In the Pacific and Southeast Asia, the Defence Cooperation Program brand is considered an exemplar of defence diplomacy. The assistance provided through the program is also a key pillar of our broader bilateral relationships in the region; deepening cultural ties and developing enduring people-to-people links.*[125]

A further factor specific to the Pacific is that regional militaries (in Fiji, PNG and Tonga) are dominated by army elements, with the former two having similar regimental organisations to Australia based on colonial legacies from the British Empire.[126] They also do not have air forces or significant navies. However, despite Fiji having a small naval service, its personnel play a disproportionate role in command positions. Operationally, South Pacific militaries have a strong domestic security role (on land) and limited navies. This situation is largely due to having been garrison forces protected by colonial navies in the past, and to the high cost of naval infrastructure, which Australia has addressed for over a generation with gifting of successive patrol boat projects. Furthermore, in the case of Fiji, the army has been heavily involved in peacekeeping since soon after independence, and this peacekeeping activity has directly shaped the growth of the army from 1978. Extensive peacekeeping experience has also ensured that the RFMF is acutely aware of the role of international engagement with local populations and partner coalitions alike. RFMF Commodore Humphrey Tawake, the former Director of Peacekeeping, noted: 'The last thing they say is whenever you leave our shores, you're an ambassador.'[127] Given the central place of peacekeeping in Fiji's nation-building strategy, this advice has been essential to the longevity of operations.

A final contextual point about Fiji that cannot be underestimated is the role of the military in Fijian society. From independence in 1971 the RFMF was a key institution in nation building and in maintaining internal security. This role was also taken advantage of through several coups where groups of soldiers removed democratically elected governments (1987, 2000 and 2006). Rather than quickly returning to barracks, the group that carried out the 2006 Coup put in office a government dominated by military and ex-military personnel. This produced a self-reinforcing dynamic between government and the RFMF. Many of these personnel were elected in 2014, thus becoming the legitimate government in the eyes of countries such as Australia that imposed sanctions during the Coup years. The same individuals became potential partners when sanctions were lifted.

For Australian diplomats, the practical reality was that, in the immediate post-election re-engagement, the high majority of Fijian officials had military backgrounds. This included those officials who were pivotal to the success of re-engagement through HADR following Cyclone Winston in 2016. This highly militarised civilian government is contrary to most country studies. Civil-military relations in Fiji are unlike those in Western states, where the military is largely separate from politicians and officials. In Fiji military-to-military engagement can have a significant impact on broader diplomatic relations. From 2006 presidents, prime ministers, most of the cabinet, and key officials such as police commissioners, permanent secretaries and ambassadors have had military backgrounds. The human dimension of bilateral relations is unique, and it provided a unique opportunity when it was embraced by the Australian Government or, more accurately, facilitated by the Australian Government and embraced by key international engagement practitioners and officials.

In light of these contextual points, the focus of this paper is on the Army, but it is acknowledged that international engagement is a matter for Defence including all services in the ADF. While some key actors during the re-engagement happened to be from the Army, it is clear that all services were integral to re-engagement. This fact was self-evident from the composition of the joint force that responded to Cyclone Winston.

The Fraught Legacy of Near-Intervention and Sanctions Against Fiji, 1987–2014

A key weakness in international engagement is inherent in its greatest strength; by relying on building trust and influence through partnerships it cedes some initiative to foreign forces. This weakness is most evident when trust is lost, and the challenges posed by historical context cannot be underestimated. Australian defence international engagement practitioners charged with restoring relations after 2014 were faced with a legacy of betrayal and distrust. While numerous governments had come and gone in Australia from 2006 to 2014, the newly formed democratically elected Fijian Government of 2014 was largely composed of ex-military personnel who had strong feelings about Australia's diplomacy from 2006, and these would be slow to repair. Lingering tension related to Australian diplomacy immediately prior to the coup and immediately after, and then to the long sanctions era.

Senior RFMF officers also had lingering memories of Australia's response to the 1987 Coup led by Sitiveni Rabuka.

Operation Morris Dance was the Australian Government's response to instability in Fiji in 1987. Australia was concerned about the removal of the elected government, curtailing freedom of the press and the arrest and detention of Australian journalists. A range of military options were considered by the PM, Bob Hawke, the more aggressive of which were reportedly greeted with shock on the part of the CDF, Peter Gration.[128] Defence did not (yet) have the capacity to undertake such independent operations and was acutely aware of the capability of the RFMF to manage internal security. However, the aggressive option was only ever a hypothetical.

The Hawke government and ADF did not want to inflame the situation by openly preparing to deploy forces to Fiji, but also recognised their responsibility to protect Australian citizens in an increasingly volatile situation.[129] The need to 'evacuate nationals' rather than any notion of restoring a legitimate government in Fiji won the day in the Australian Government. Non-combatant evacuation operations (NEOs) became a justification for intervention and an ongoing rationale for doctrinal and capability development. It was estimated that 5,000 Australian nationals might need evacuation, and planning proceeded on that basis.

The assumption in the Australian Government was that Fijian authorities would support a NEO, and it was not framed as a military intervention.[130]

Practical examples exist that help measure just how much the government tried to limit potential misunderstanding about an armed intervention. At the time, the Army's 3rd Brigade was the ADF's Operational Deployment Force, with a designated high-readiness unit in Townsville. When the Brigade Major (Peter Pursey) inquired about undertaking contingency planning and preparations to deploy, Land Headquarters responded that no action was to be taken.[131] Furthermore, the orders subsequently issued for the operation noted that Australian forces were 'not to be involved in offensive operations against Fiji Military Forces' and they were not armed to do so.[132]

The Australian Government had not predicted the 1987 Coup and therefore planning occurred with haste. Cabinet initially approved the deployment of a naval task force to international waters off Suva. However, after swift contingency planning indicated a need to evacuate thousands of nationals, elements of the 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR) were hastily deployed to Norfolk Island, where they embarked on HMAS *Success* and HMAS *Tobruk* to join maritime elements underway.

From a diplomatic standpoint, Prime Minister Hawke explicitly precluded a military intervention rather than a NEO.[133] It is not clear whether the coup leaders or the RFMF believed these declaratory statements detailing that the ADF had a self-imposed operational limitation with respect to a NEO. Certainly they acted to shore up their position with respect to a potential significant Australian military intervention. For instance, the RFMF pressured RAN vessels to leave Suva Harbour, citing expired diplomatic clearances, and challenged another vessel at sea.[134] This ambiguity lingered and fed into RFMF perceptions of Australian deployments to subsequent coups in 2000 and particularly in 2006.

Operation Morris Dance represented the first operational deployment since Vietnam. It sorely tested the capacity of the ADF to function in joint-force operations, and highlighted very significant weaknesses, such as the capacity to operate helicopters in all conditions.[135] These lessons were canvassed in numerous government documents, with capability deficiencies addressed in the 1987 and subsequent White Papers. However, the RFMF's sensitivity to threats to Fijian sovereignty were reinforced by Australian capability enhancements.

The Perceived Threat to Fijian Sovereignty in 2006

The December 2006 Coup was preceded by a period of tension that prompted a more orderly response from the Australian Government than the surprise of 1987.[136] This tension was similar to the situation in 1987 insofar as the Australian Government was responsible for approximately 3,500 nationals who might need to be evacuated if the situation deteriorated. However, 2006 was unlike 1987 in a number of other respects. From the Australian Government's vantage, the Fijian military appeared to be divided, with far greater potential for inter-ethnic violence.[137]

From the standpoint of the capacity to intervene, much work had been done on improving the ADF's capacity to respond to credible regional contingencies. In 1987 there were a handful of high-readiness infantry companies available, but by 2006 the Australian Government had deployed four battalion-sized task forces in Afghanistan, East Timor, Iraq and Solomon Islands. At the start of November, the Howard government authorised the creation of a task group to undertake Operation Quickstep and began the pre-deployment preparation of HMAS *Kanimbla*, an amphibious warfare vessel that had the capacity to deploy helicopters, landing craft and up to 400 troops. These preparations were unlike those in 1987, when a great deal of sensitivity was shown to perceptions in Fiji.

Operation Quickstep involved a task force of three ships deployed to international waters off Fiji to facilitate the evacuation of Australian and friendly nationals if the need arose.[138] Tragically, this deployment came at a great cost to Australia insofar as two soldiers—the pilot, Captain Mark Bingley, and Trooper Joshua Porter—were killed when a Black Hawk helicopter crashed while attempting to land on HMAS *Kanimbla* off Fiji on the day after the coup (7 December 2006).

In diplomacy, perceptions count, and in international engagement this is doubly so because of the notion that relationships are not simply transactional but are built on trust. As in 1987, the Australian Government made it clear that this was not a military intervention, but rather planning for a NEO.[139] However, this view was not commonly held in Fiji, and contemporary accounts identify strong perceptions amongst the coup instigators that Australia was about to militarily intervene: ostensibly evacuating citizens, while also protecting the government of Laisenia Qarase. There was context for this concern, namely the development of the

PIF's Biketawa Declaration after the 2000 Coup in Fiji, which justified regional intervention to maintain the rule of law, and the subsequent Australian-designed and led RAMSI intervention in Solomon Islands. In a statement to the US Representative for American Samoa, Coup Leader Commodore Josaia Voreqe 'Frank' Bainimarama noted:

> *The threat of an Australian invasion as shown by the inciteful and hostile remarks made by [Australian Foreign Minister] Alexander Downer, the unexplained presence of an Australian Defence Helicopter within Fiji's EEZ [exclusive economic zone] and the frequent references to the Biketawa Declaration made this threat a real one. Subsequent revelations confirmed this position.*[140]

Similarly, a report by the Fiji Human Rights Commission noted:

> *Australia dispatched three naval vessels apparently to evacuate Australian citizens, but the hardware reportedly carried by the ships raised doubts in the minds of observers about real reasons for such weaponry. The RFMF took seriously enough note of the arrival of the ships as well as the presence of SAS [Special Air Service] personnel, initially with the police and then with the Australian High Commission, to fire off some warning shots and flares into the sea a few days before the takeover.*[141]

This report is unsubstantiated, but its author levelled more accusations in the press. A particularly inflammatory claim was that SAS personnel arrived in Fiji on commercial flights and, when threatened with being identified as mercenaries, went to the Australian High Commission and were treated as Defence Supplementation Force staff.[142] Some commentary at the time even suggested that the coup instigators acted in part to pre-empt Australian intervention, which highlights the threat perceptions amongst the RFMF at the time. In the current diplomatic climate, Fijian officials note that 'it is beyond one's wildest imagination to see a Fijian and Australian soldier shooting each other in Suva'.[143] However, despite the fact that the Australian Government was invited twice to intervene by Fijian prime ministers and chose not to do so, the potential threat has had a lasting legacy in the RFMF.

The Practical Impact of the Suspension of Military Aid for Fiji (2006 to 2014)

The Australian sanctions abruptly ended defence cooperation and international engagement implemented after the coup. Defence aid to Fiji was used to fund a range of cooperative activities including training and exchanges. It was also used to maintain Fiji's three Pacific Patrol Boats, which were donated by Australia in the 1980s. Further, it funded equipment purchases, such as specialised equipment that the RFMF needed to conduct peacekeeping operations. In 2006–07 defence aid to Fiji was frozen from a projected $5.5 to 2.8 million (as the coup occurred in the middle of the financial year). Over this period, a total of $33.4 million was spent elsewhere on defence cooperation with the South Pacific (excluding Fiji).[144] Spending on Fiji had dropped to $410,000 by 2007–08, and then to $292,000 in 2008–09. This occurred against the backdrop of an increase in military aid to the region from $33 million to $47 million. Military aid to Fiji collapsed, while overall aid increased by 70 per cent.[145] By 2009–10 Australian military funding had shrunk to $20,000 and it was reduced to zero the following year.

The immediate political and practical impacts of the suspension of military aid were significant. Importantly, they had far-reaching implications for bilateral relations during the sanctions era and for the pace of recovery once sanctions were lifted in 2014. The suspension of funding affected all key elements of defence cooperation, including reciprocal high-level visits, training in Australia, maintenance of the Pacific Patrol Boats, and intelligence sharing gleaned from Australia's maritime surveillance patrols under Operation Solania.

Case Study: Ending ADF Support for Fijian Peacekeepers

A particularly hard-felt loss for the RFMF was the suspension of Operation Valiant, which involved the ADF training and equipping Fiji's contribution to the United Nations Assistance Mission Iraq. Fiji was required to return all donated weaponry and to prepare its contingent independently.[146] In the short term, arrangements were hastily made and RFMF forces were deployed, but the longer-term implications for relations with Australia were more profound. From a broad diplomatic perspective, Fiji was affronted by perceived efforts to pressure the UN to end its involvement in peacekeeping, and the resultant compromise whereby Fijian forces could only continue existing operations but not bid for new roles.

Peacekeeping has long been part of Fiji's nation-building strategy, providing specialist skills training and valuable remittances. So the Australian Government's pressure in this area was particularly unwelcome. From a practical standpoint, Fiji worked to fill the gaps opened by the ADF's suspension of support and found many willing suitors. This approach aligned with its 'Look North' foreign policy and eventually saw weapons, equipment and training sourced from China, Indonesia and Russia (amongst others). The diversification of supply reflected the longevity of sanctions and ultimately impacted Australia's strategic interests in relation to the entry of unwelcome powers into the Pacific. By the time sanctions were lifted, Fiji's 'new friends' were entrenched and geopolitical competition in the Pacific had grown significantly.[147] This meant that international engagement to rebuild relations became a key priority for Australia.

A number of senior Australian interviewees referred explicitly to the implications of re-engaging with Fijian military personnel who had 'come of age' professionally during the sanctions period 2006–2014. They were termed the 'lost generation' from the 'quiet years'.[148] The impact of sanctions was also referred to by several Fijian officials who were inclined to accelerate re-engagement post 2014, but were faced with internal division/hesitation on the pace of change and the implications for 'new' international engagement relationships built with other states during the sanctions era.[149] Due to the importance of an ***esprit de corps*** based on authentic relationships built on trust in international engagement, this concept of 'lost years' provides an important conceptual frame for the understanding of re-engagement with Fiji post 2014.

The threat to sovereignty (whether perceived or real) was a key barrier to Fiji's willingness to develop close relations with Australia during the sanctions era. This is an unwelcome reminder of history in the post-Vuvale era. The Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership agreement was signed between the Australian and Fijian PMs in September 2019. Perceived threats to sovereignty are part of the shared history of relations that strongly influenced Fijian foreign policy from 2006 to 2014. Indeed, it has not been completely erased. Fiji's sensitivity to threats to its sovereignty highlights the difficulties faced by defence international engagement personnel in 2014 and the success that has been achieved in rebuilding trust since then. It also confirms that statements affirming non-interference in the sovereign affairs

of Fiji are central to how the Vuvale partnership is framed and how future policy interventions must remain mindful of lingering sensitivities. It includes a strong focus on enhancing people-to-people links based on mutual respect and collaboration between sovereign equals, which captures the spirit of re-engagement efforts after 2014.[150]

Leaving the 'Lost Years' Behind (2014 to 2017)

Defence cooperation quietly resumed in 2015. The Australian Government's swift resumption after Fijian elections was evidence of its expectation that international engagement would play a significant role in rebuilding relations. The focus was 'training, maritime security and dialogue'[151] and it quickly became apparent that much dialogue and interaction would be needed to thaw relations with the RFMF. A key measure of the depth of engagement was the substantial increase in bilateral DCP funding from $0 to $3.6 million by 2018–19 (not including funds allocated to the PMSP and other scheduled DCP support).[152] Despite Australia's offers and the influx of funds evidencing its willingness to re-engage, relations were slow to thaw. This highlights the fact that a military ***esprit de corps*** represents a double-edged sword; if trust is lost it can take sustained effort to rebuild and simply cannot be bought.

When he was first appointed, the reception that Major Lachlan Robertson, Assistant Defence Attaché (ADA),[153] received was as frosty as could be conjured in tropical Fiji.[154] Due to ongoing sanctions, the DA for the Pacific, Colonel Peter Steel, was based elsewhere. While Steel provided his ADA with a great deal of autonomy with respect to Fiji, in reality Robertson did not have much to work with. When the ADA arrived in October 2013, defence cooperation was still suspended and the atmosphere of early official engagements, such as Remembrance Day 2013, was cool. Defence relations slowly thawed with the Australian Foreign Minister's announcement in March 2014 of the lifting of travel restrictions that had impacted the RFMF and members of the government associated with the 2006 Coup. Any hope that there would be a swift return to the tone of relations before sanctions, however, was quickly replaced by the reality of the significant challenges required to rebuild trust.

There was a long legacy of ill will with the High Commission from the sanctions years which did not make the ADA's role any easier. RFMF officers recognised that he was a 'political tool' but also that he was having 'a very tough time' due to politicking and the need to adjust to the requirements of international engagement, and they warmed to his attempts to engage.[155] This included learning about Fijian culture and learning basic Fijian. His wife too engaged with RFMF officers' partners through social activities including Fijian cooking classes.[156] The involvement of families and social activities cannot be underestimated due to their centrality in Fijian society. The ADA recognised that only an authentic partnership would lead to a thaw, which was a sentiment positively received by the Fijians he interacted with both professionally and socially.

At this early stage, the ranks of ex-military personnel in the newly elected government and RFMF could be described as containing three fairly distinct groups. First, were the 'believers' in international engagement with Australia who had experienced close defence cooperation prior to 2006 including education and training in Australia. The long-term impact of relationships built as cadets, junior officers and senior officers from exchanges at the Royal Military College Duntroon and other institutions should not be underestimated. These Fijians had also been embedded with Australian units and had operated closely together in joint-force operations such as RAMSI from 2003 to 2006,[157] the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (October 1999 – May 2002) and UN missions in the Middle East, such as Iraq. These RFMF personnel had an affinity with the Australian Army through this operational experience as well as shared doctrine and organisational structures, both containing light infantry regiments.

After a few breakthrough events, including an invitation to the ceremony in February 2014 where PM Bainimarama stepped down as Commander of the RFMF, and the celebration of ANZAC Day 2015, engagement with the 'believers' accelerated quickly. Fijian officers such as Commodore Tawake noted that this was not gradual but more like '400%' in a short time; 'It was not like the status quo we had back in 2006' before the Coup.[158] After languishing in isolation, the speed of the re-engagement surprised many. With no precedent or rule book to follow, the ADA was given the opportunity to lead. Exercising this role, the ADA positioned himself as a

facilitator between the IPDIV, Colonel Peter Connolly (the Army's Director of International Engagement in Canberra), the Fijian Ministry of Defence and National Security (FMOD) and the RFMF. By the end of 2015, over 100 training opportunities had been facilitated by the ADA with the support of two local staff.

The speed of engagement highlighted the natural fit between the 'believers' in the Fijian military and also those who inhabited the majority of senior positions in government (from the PM to ministers, including the defence minister, to permanent secretaries etc.). Despite the frosty beginning, numerous interviews confirmed the pre-2006 cadre's willingness to re-engage: 'There's a lot of that camaraderie … So it wasn't too difficult to re-engage, I think, on both sides.'[159] Of course, relations were not going to improve overnight and a number of Fijian defence and Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation (MOFA) officials mentioned this in interviews. For example, a senior MOFA official highlighted the singular role of the DAs in bridging gaps:

> *[T]he Australian High Commission has really had some very, very good officials, very good defence officials. So a lot of it has really come down to developed friendships between the DAs, and the defence officials, and I must say the DAs from the Australian government do their job, their engagement, the people-to-people.*[160]

There was, however, a reticence to re-engage amongst the second distinct group of RFMF officers, the 'lost generation'. This group needed open demonstrations from senior officers in order to drop their guards. The 'lost generation' came of age in a military sense at a time when Fiji was actively searching out 'new friends' to replace defence cooperation suspended due to Australian and New Zealand sanctions. Senior Fijian officials inclined to re-engage noted that 'a whole generation has missed out', which is one reason why ramping up training options at all levels was treated as a priority by the ADA and Fijians alike.

The re-engagement therefore occurred on a different basis than pre-2006 engagement. While it quickly accelerated, senior Fijian officials asserted that one reason for this was that they had demonstrated independence during the Coup years by diversifying sources of equipment, training etc. A key difference post 2014 was that Fiji was looking for defence cooperation to be much more closely tailored to their national interest—for example,

protecting EEZs and deploying peacekeepers. Fiji's Pacific Patrol Boats had a significant backlog in maintenance requirements, and peacekeepers needed updated force protection equipment due to the increasing lethality of operations.[161] This put more pressure on the ADA to ensure that options were provided so that slowly they could connect with the 'lost generation'.

The third and final group of RFMF officers who needed to be engaged was the post-2014 generation. These officers were very junior and had come through the ranks after relations thawed. This cadre were strongly influenced by Australia's rapid re-engagement after sanctions were lifted. Significant examples are the major support in response to Cyclone Winston and the provision of key infrastructure to support the RFMF in achieving Fiji's national interests.[162] These operational case studies are discussed in depth below.

Australia's swift re-engagement with Fiji provides direct evidence of the positive aspects of military camaraderie and the legacy of an *esprit de corps* developed prior to the isolation of the sanctions era. The pace of re-engagement highlights the fact that senior Fijian officials decided that it was in their country's interests to do so. There was a bitter element to this situation, and it took some effort for many Fijians to overcome:

> *We were like brothers. Just like lost brothers meeting again after 12 years. You had your differences, you're coming back … but again it comes down to personalities, to leadership, to political interest.*[163]

Reminiscences by Fijian military/political leaders focused on the mainstays of international engagement: training and education in Australia and joint deployments / operational interactions in places such as East Timor, Solomon Islands and various other peacekeeping missions, such as the Sinai.[164]

A few officers, such as Commodore Humphrey Tawake, referred to the long history of cooperation between Australia and Fiji that dated back to World War I. Reflecting on these experiences he asserted that 'we've worked very closely and we understood each other'.[165] Many Fijian officers related the shared doctrine or, more accurately, use of Australian warfighting doctrine, as a key reason to reconnect and also a reason why closer relations with 'new friends' such as China or Indonesia had inbuilt limitations.[166] Australian officers also recognised the binding value of shared doctrine, in particular relating to small-unit operations, dismounted operations and

peacekeeping.[167] In addition, many very senior Fijian Government officials reflected on the warm relationships built with very senior Australian defence and political leaders over a long period, including Governor-General Cosgrove and various CDFs, CAs etc. A key connection was the *esprit de corps* that came from militaries with foundations in the British Empire and similar organisational and doctrinal practices.

Soon after the elections, Fiji was invited to join the PMSP as it was always envisioned that Fiji would participate when it 'returns to democracy'.[168] The PMSP was detailed in the *2016 Defence White Paper* as a collaborative initiative to support PICs in protecting their sovereignty and security. As with the predecessor initiative, the Pacific Patrol Boat project, boats were gifted along with a comprehensive package of through-life support including docking infrastructure, training and ongoing advice. Pacific analysts note that the benefits afforded Australia from the Pacific Patrol Boats are 'difficult to overstate',[169] so the PMSP had a firm foundation. The PMSP also provided up to an additional 1,400 hours of military and civilian aerial surveillance to PICs that they could apply for tasking in priority areas in their EEZs. A key benefit for Fiji was that the PMSP married aircraft with boats to produce a capability that increased the efficacy of surveillance, which Fiji had been denied during the sanctions years. In addition, Australia paid for a wharf upgrade at the Stanley Brown Naval Base in Suva so the new patrol boats could be safely berthed in all conditions.

Fiji had to wait three years for the boats to be constructed, so one of the first projects that the ADF undertook after the elections was a comprehensive audit of Fiji's existing Pacific Patrol Boats. The audit was well overdue as these vessels had not received the benefit of through-life support from Australia between 2006 and 2014. A large backlog of maintenance was discovered, priorities set and resources provided (to the tune of millions of dollars) to ensure that Fiji's Pacific Patrol Boats remained seaworthy in the lead-up to the arrival of the new vessels. This involved embedding an Australian technical advisor with the Republic of Fiji Naval Service (RFNS), which was an early tangible step in restoring diplomatic relations.

Three projects and events symbolise the building of trust and collaboration that characterises relations between Australia and Fiji today. The first is the response to Cyclone Winston, the second is the provision of Bushmaster PMVs to the RFMF, and the third is the agreement to develop and provide through-life support to the Blackrock base. However, these are only symbolic events built on numerous prior activities. Trust grows through a cumulative process of shared learning, and, due to the legacy of the sanctions years, both the senior leadership and the 'lost generation' watched Australia's behaviour closely. Sensitivities meant that any diplomatic slight would be magnified, which placed additional pressure on Australian High Commission staff. Two key precursor events will be reviewed before dealing with more recent examples of both Australia's and Fiji's willingness to commit to a deeper bilateral defence partnership.

Tentative Steps: Visit of HMAS *Leeuwin*, Inaugural Bilateral Defence Talks and Exercise Longreach in 2015

Immediately after the elections in 2014, the Director of Army International Engagement and the Australian High Commission searched for ways to re-engage with Fiji.[170] Defence provided two such opportunities that reached back into tried and tested international engagement practices. The visit by HMAS *Leeuwin* and the running of Operation Longreach were tangible steps toward normalising relations and they fed directly into the success of the Cyclone Winston HADR efforts in 2016.

In mid-2014, HMAS *Leeuwin* became the first RAN vessel to visit Fiji since 2006. As such, it reinstated the longstanding place of port visits in diplomatic relations between the two countries. HMAS *Leeuwin* spent a month in Fijian waters conducting hydrographic surveys while also providing training opportunities to RFNS personnel. HMAS *Leeuwin* conducted a six-day port visit to Suva from July 10–16 and also undertook outreach activities in communities on Rotuma. The underwater surveys fulfilled a significant unmet demand in Fiji because, as one Australian put it, 'you'll never know about the shipwreck that didn't happen'.[171] Of equal importance, however, was the impact of people-to-people links. RFNS personnel were paired with their Australian counterparts and embedded on board the vessel to provide opportunities for training and relationship-building. Social functions were held while in port, including an official event involving the President of the Republic of Fiji, His Excellency Ratu Epeli Nailatikau.

Figure 4. Lieutenant Colonel Jack Moceica; a member of the HMAS *Leeuwin* ship's company; Lieutenant Colonel Kitione Tuinaosara, Director RFMF Legal Services; and Australian Defence Attaché Lieutenant Colonel Lachlan Robertson at a reception on HMAS *Leeuwin*, 13 July 2015. (Source: Australian High Commission Suva)[172]

The captain of HMAS *Leeuwin*, Lieutenant Commander Richard Mortimer, identified the dual purpose of the visit: 'The work we will do together will produce vital nautical charting information, but more importantly, it will create friendships.'[173] Australian DA Robertson noted that this was the single most important event in breaking down the barriers imposed by the 'lost years'.

The *Leeuwin* visit was followed in December 2014 by the visit of Vice Admiral Ray Griggs, the Vice Chief of the Defence Force, who met with the Fijian Minister of Defence and senior RFMF officers and discussed opportunities for increased defence cooperation. He was the first senior ADF officer to visit Fiji since 2006 and his visit had a positive impact amongst the RFMF which signalled that the thaw in relations was well underway.

Momentum was building when the first Fiji-Australia DCP talks since 2006 were held in Canberra in June 2015. During these, Colonel Connolly, Director of International Engagement for the Australian Army, offered Captain (Naval) Viliame Naupoto (representing the Commander of the RFMF) the option of hosting Exercise Longreach. Exercise Longreach is a regional exercise that rotates between interested states such as PNG and Tonga.

Longreach is an established exercise undertaken by the Army's 1st Division with a format that brings together local stakeholders and their Australian counterparts to share information and learning and to workshop practical scenarios that capture the disaster management challenges faced by the local partner. Naupoto embraced the opportunity and invited Connolly and Lieutenant Colonel Andrew Baker, from HQ 1st Division, to undertake a planning visit to Fiji. By the time they arrived in late September, Naupoto had been promoted to Rear Admiral and Commander RFMF, and wholeheartedly supported hosting Longreach as a whole-of-government planning exercise. The small Australian delegation was warmly received at the officers' mess at Queen Victoria Barracks in Suva and informally met key political and military players including PM Bainimarama, former PM Sitiveni Rabuka, and former Commander RFMF Mosese Tikoitoga.

As with ship visits, joint training exercises are a mainstay of international engagement and Fiji had been excluded from these since 2006. Rear Admiral Naupoto enthusiastically embraced the idea and proposed a challenging HADR scenario that necessitated a whole-of-government approach.[174] The nine-day 'table-top' exercise was coordinated by Lieutenant Colonel Baker, held at the Grand Pacific Hotel in Suva and began with an official welcome at the RFMF officers' mess. Participants included members of the ADF, RFMF, Fijian Government, and non-government organisations (such as the Salvation Army).

The ostensible aim of Longreach had a practical focus on Fiji's needs—in this case connecting work done under Fiji's National Disaster Management Framework with the ADF as a potential future partner. However, equally important was the exercise's role in the development of an *esprit de corps* between Fijian and Australian military personnel. The Acting Commander of the RFMF, Captain (Navy) John Fox noted that 'we will use this opportunity as a platform to be able to learn from one another on how we develop as Pacific partners and better equipped to handle natural disasters'. His Australian counterpart, Lieutenant Colonel Baker, highlighted the benefits for Fiji in relation to enhanced mobility and readiness of the RFMF to respond to natural disasters.[175]

Figure 5. Exercise Longreach provided an opportunity to share planning and procedures to respond to natural disasters (Source: Australian High Commission Suva)[176]

It is a testament to Rear Admiral Naupoto and the exercise planners that the scenario that was workshopped over the course of the exercise very closely replicated the actual landfall of Cyclone Winston less than six months later. This coincidence was also fortuitous for the Australian response to Cyclone Winston. Numerous interviewees from Australia and Fiji highlighted the importance of this exercise in coordinating forces in Fiji and connecting Fijian agencies with their Australian counterparts, with the focus being on the first responders in the ADF.[177] With hindsight it was clear to senior Australian personnel that Longreach allowed the ADF to demonstrate that 'Australia not only trains with Fiji, but we're the first responders as well; … train together then fight together if you like'.[178]

Cyclone Winston 2016: Operation Fiji Assist 16

Cyclone Winston was a Category 5 tropical storm that passed into the Fiji Islands group on 20 February 2016, killing 44 people and damaging 31,000 homes and 229 schools and other government buildings.[179] Winston caused millions of dollars in damage to homes and vital infrastructure and lost production. Communications were severed to several areas that were worst hit, such as Koro Island, which were completely cut off. Rural and remote communities devastated by Cyclone Winston were isolated and vulnerable, and local authorities did not have the capacity to assess damage or to reach all areas to provide timely assistance.

Figure 6. An aerial view of damage on Koro Island after Tropical Cyclone Winston (Source: Department of Defence)[180]

Fiji requested Australian support and the Australian Government willingly responded. At the outset it was clear that the Australian Foreign Minister's declaratory statements were carefully crafted to ensure that Fijians were aware that the response was to be directed by them and that Australia would respond to priorities identified by the Fijian Government.[181] Similarly, the Australian Defence Minister repeatedly reinforced the fact that forces were being provided at the request of Fiji and placed on standby in case the Fijian Government identified additional needs; this included one of Australia's amphibious assault ships, HMAS *Canberra*.[182]

Figure 7. Defence Attaché Lieutenant Colonel Lachlan Robertson with RFMF Liaison Officer Sub-Lieutenant Sairusi Colati at Nausori Airport, 2016 (Source: Australian High Commission Suva)[183]

Canberra was 'crash sailed' through heavy cyclonic seas and could never have deployed so quickly if preparations had not already been underway in expectation of a request from Suva. Its preparedness also benefited from its having recently returned from the biennial Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercise off Hawaii. The speed of deployment was so quick that there was the danger that *Canberra* would arrive in Fijian waters without diplomatic clearances. It seems that, in the circumstances, this was not a major concern for Fijian authorities. This situation highlights 'the level of awareness of the need to respect Fiji's sovereignty'.[184] Senior Fijian interviewees welcomed the message that the Australian PM, Foreign Minister, CDF, High Commission and DA (now Lieutenant Colonel) Robertson repeated: 'What do you want?'[185] This sensitivity to sovereignty is central to the ADF's understanding of successful international engagement, noted earlier, and was in marked contrast to the megaphone diplomacy of the sanctions years.

Australia quickly marshalled a whole-of-government response that was spearheaded by the Department of Defence and ADF. The Australian High Commission in Suva, DFAT and other departments had key roles to play, but the ADF's rapid response was vital due to its logistic capacity. The ADF

command structure was integral to the effective response. Many key 'hard power' capabilities could be considered dual use insofar as they can be tasked for warfighting roles and also directed to other tasks. This relates particularly to the logistic 'tail', such as lift, medical and victualling, which supports combat forces. In addition, specific ADF units are maintained at a high level of operational readiness to provide the government options in a range of contingencies and these include HADR. Defence quickly convened a joint task force to coordinate Australian efforts to deliver humanitarian assistance and to provide command-to-command links with the RFMF.

The Fijian response was directed by Cabinet and implemented by the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) through the National Emergency Operations Centre in close cooperation with the RFMF and FMOD.[186] In practice, the day-to-day response was led by Lieutenant Colonel Jack Moceica, Chief of Staff, Land Force Command. Over the year and a half since elections, Australian DA Robertson, had been busily rebuilding broken ties and building new ties with the RFMF and FMOD. These relationships proved invaluable in ensuring that there was a clear flow of information, that Fijian needs were met, and that there was a seamless integration of force elements in subsequent relief efforts.

A timely response was essential to limit suffering and deaths. Fortunately, the operation developed very quickly as the groundwork had been laid through Exercise Longreach in 2015. Many personnel involved in Longreach reconnected with their Fijian counterparts, and new personnel, such as Lieutenant Colonel Scott (Scotty) Hill, were deployed and continued and reinforced the meaningful partnership built by their predecessors. Lieutenant Colonel Hill was Task Force Commander for Operation Fiji Assist 16 and, by all accounts, did an outstanding job.[187]

HMAS *Canberra* deployed to Fiji on 1 March, barely 10 days after Winston made landfall. When it arrived off Suva, it brought three Army and RAN MRH90 Taipan helicopters and over 60 tonnes of vital stores, as well as specialist personnel trained to handle humanitarian crises and provide practical support (e.g. engineers, carpenters, electricians and plumbers). Initial damage assessment had been undertaken beforehand from the air by Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) AP-3C surveillance aircraft. Meanwhile, 340 damage assessments were undertaken on the ground by teams of Army engineers working closely with Fijian personnel. On its arrival

off Suva,[188] *Canberra* was met by additional helicopters and tonnes of critical supplies previously delivered by air by RAAF C17 Globemasters and C130 Hercules transport aircraft to the closest airfield at Nausori. The initial deployment involved over 760 personnel and 44 RAAF sorties. At the peak of the operation, over 1,000 ADF personnel were deployed to Fiji, with more in Australia supporting the operation. Then the work began in earnest:

> *The ADF delivered more than 580 tonnes of humanitarian and disaster relief stores, supplied almost 40,000 tonnes of food and 30,000 litres of drinking water, and delivered almost 10,000 hygiene kits. Australian personnel provided close to 3,000 shelter kits and, together with their Fijian counterparts, our deployed personnel helped repair nine schools, two medical centres and a hospital, as well as several churches and community centres.*[189]

The ADF operated on Fiji's three largest islands (with a major emphasis on Rakiraki and Taveuni and coordination through Suva and nearby Nausori airport) and on the hard-hit Koro Island in the Lomaiviti Group. This geographic spread represented the Fijian Government's priority of focusing on the hardest hit and most isolated areas, and also reflected coordination with other first responders, namely the New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF). The decision was also an acknowledgement of the value of the ADF's lift capacity. It is clear from the Fijian Government's internal situation reports that, from very early on, Australian lift assets were treated as integral to their response and recovery efforts.[190] A good example of the latter advantage was the ability to aeromedically evacuate victims of the cyclone and then treat them on HMAS ***Canberra***, a critical capability the Fijian military (or NZDF for that matter) could not have achieved. This capability made the ADF the 'first responder' in a number of areas. Ultimately, the *Canberra* delivered more than 114 tonnes of aid by landing craft and more than 140 tonnes of aid by helicopter.[191]

Figure 8. An Australian Army soldier and members of the Koro District Department of Infrastructure, work together to assemble a Mobile Storage Unit in the village of Nasau, Koro Island, Fiji as part of Operation Fiji Assist (Source: Department of Defence)[192]

Defence Public Relations gained extensive coverage both in Australia and in the local press. The key messages were that Australia was responding to Fijian requests and priorities, and that Australian and Fijian personnel were working closely together in a spirit of friendship. Numerous images were published of ADF and RFMF personnel working side by side on damage assessment, clearing obstacles and repairing critical infrastructure.

Understandably, the Fijian Government and press were more focused on recovery operations, and reportage of the recovery efforts drew heavily on information provided by the Australian High Commission. It is nevertheless clear that the Fijian Government and people were very grateful for the intervention. PM Bainimarama noted as much in a press conference on HMAS *Canberra*, and the Minister for Defence, National Security and Immigration, Captain (Naval) Timoci Natuva, thanked Australia in parliament.[193]

A general attitude of cooperation was evident from interviews with senior Fijian Government and military officials and their Australian counterparts. For instance, one senior interviewee noted that the deployment of *Canberra*, helicopters and a battalion of troops 'allowed both militaries to work seamlessly' but that capabilities do not guarantee cooperation and this is where the relationships built through military diplomacy paid dividends. When combined with the millions of dollars donated by the Australian Government, the operation highlighted how far the relationship had come in a short time.[194] A good example of the small actions that had a big impact was the ADF's provision of medical support on Koro. The Fijians predicted that there would be numerous trauma cases on Koro. In response, they had allocated one of their few surgical teams to the area, but when the ADF offered their services the Fijian Emergency Operations Centre was able to devote its resources to other areas. This offer also came with aeromedical evacuation assets that were deployed to great effect to bring serious cases back to the Fijian surgical team at the Colonial War Memorial Hospital in Suva.[195]

For his part the CDF asserted that:

> *The Fijian people were deeply moved by the ADF's compassion and extremely grateful for our assistance, and the two months we spent working together with the Fijian military allowed us to impart new skills and strengthen the existing friendship between our two nations.*[196]

Australia's contribution in 2016 stood out from those of other donors. Australia was the key contributor to the response and recovery effort in terms of materiel and the personnel and capabilities required to get it to where it was needed most. In this role as the primary first responder, the ADF built many close relationships with the RFMF and Fijian civilian authorities, and these capture the essence of how military diplomacy comes to the fore in crises.

The Benefits for Defence

The development of ADF's amphibious capability is illustrative of the intrinsic link between international engagement, force generation and operational effect. From inception, the development of strategy, policy and doctrine has been informed and enabled through engagement with international partners. As the Amphibious capability comes on-line, it will provide unprecedented capability for the conduct of regional engagement, capacity building and disaster relief.

Major General Rick Burr, 25 June 2015[197]

Major General Burr's comment was made a year and a half before Cyclone Winston struck. It is worth quoting at length because of how predictive it was of events to come. For his part, the CDF noted that Operation Fiji Assist 'clearly demonstrates our ability to deploy a range of high-end capabilities at short notice while maintaining our ongoing commitments to border protection and operations across the Middle East region'.[198] Therefore, the operation provided a range of training benefits for Defence including testing scenario planning.

Beyond the defence support for Australia's broader diplomatic priorities, it was clear that the response to Cyclone Winston greatly benefited the ADF by providing the opportunity to test critical capabilities and doctrine. For example, HMAS *Canberra* was commissioned in 2014 and its arrival off Suva represented its first operational deployment. It was also the Army's 16th Brigade's first operational deployment of MRH90 helicopters. *Canberra's* deployment involved a 1,700 nm/3,150 km journey which was undertaken with great haste and tested a key priority in strategic guidance. Taken together, the joint task force that deployed as part of Operation Fiji Assist included a range of capabilities that had not been deployed effectively on this scale before. This event thus highlighted the ADF's capacity for integrated operations and the broader evolution of a maritime strategy. The lessons from 1987 had been learned.

Figure 9. Australian Army vehicles on the apron at Nausori Airport, Suva, 2016 (Source: Department of Defence)[199]

In government policy the need for integrated capabilities was evident most recently in the *2016 Defence White Paper*, where all three strategic objectives required the development of maritime capabilities and joint operations. In particular objective two provided that Defence would:

> *Make effective military contributions to support the security of maritime South East Asia and support the governments of Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and of Pacific Island Countries to build and strengthen their security.*[200]

While the White Paper did not explicitly label the strategy a 'maritime strategy', the intent was clear from the capability priorities detailed in Chapter Four. This chapter highlighted the need to exercise sea control and denial in Australia's area of primary strategic concern, in the proximate waters in the northern approaches and South Pacific.[201] Operation Fiji Assist provided a useful test of the ADF's force structure and also showcased the capacity of Defence to contribute to Australia's broader foreign policy goals. The need for this type of maritime capability actually had its roots in the 1987 Defence White Paper, where lower-level contingencies short of war in Australia's area of direct military interest were identified as credible.[202]

Coincidentally, conducting operations in Fiji prompted the development of this force structure and posture because of the weaknesses revealed by the attempt to deploy forces during the 1987 coup in Fiji.[203]

Figure 10. Operation Fiji Assist farewells, Suva, 2016 (Source: Department of Defence)[204]

Operation Fiji Assist provided a very visible example of the benefits of ADF force development and, as senior Fijian interviewees noted, was a military diplomatic 'win-win'. It provided political benefits to the Australian Government domestically in justifying the maritime strategy while simultaneously providing foreign policy benefits when facing Fiji.[205] The goodwill and trust developed through this highly successful operation were quickly leveraged through new projects proposed by Fijian officials at DCP talks.

Soon after Operation Fiji Assist in July 2016 the second Fiji-Australia Defence Talks were held in Nadi. The Australian delegation was led by IPDIV's Commodore Woodall, with support from the Army's Director of International Engagement, Colonel Connolly, and the DA, Lieutenant Colonel Robertson. The RFMF was led by the Land Component Commander, Colonel Sapenafa Motufaga, which allowed close collaboration in efforts

to identify RFMF priorities. The Australian approach continued to be characterised by the question 'What do you want?' These meetings proposed the concept of MTTs, visiting from Australia's 7th Brigade based in Brisbane, to deliver a range of critical training needs, such as force preservation in the face of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Urgent training was organised for RFMF personnel about to deploy on a peacekeeping operation to the Middle East. Meanwhile, five short-term MTTs, three joint training exercises and two instructor positions were nimbly offered and supported in Australia. The collaborative approach and speedy response to Fiji's priorities highlighted Australia's role as a security partner of choice facilitated by effective international engagement personnel.

The Bushmaster Acquisition 2017

The Bushmaster PMV acquisition in 2017 was a key step to cementing closer relations. This project was unprecedented in a number of ways and it can be seen as epitomising the new character of relations. First and foremost, it was driven by the Fijians rather than being offered by Australia. Furthermore, within Fiji the acquisition was driven by the FMOD and RFMF rather than the MOFA, highlighting the military temper of the diplomacy.[206] Second, it was not the replacement of an existing capability or project, as in the case of the Pacific Patrol Boats (delivered from 1987 to 1997) and PMSP (delivered from 2018), but rather a new capability that met an operational demand of the RFMF to provide enhanced force protection for peacekeepers.

The background to this acquisition was the increasing lethality and aggression of combatants in areas where Fiji was involved in peacekeeping. These trends saw peacekeeping forces directly targeted and revealed the deficiencies in Fijian equipment. These trends were brought into sharp relief by the kidnapping of 45 Fijian United Nations Disengagement Observer Force peacekeepers in September 2014. So the Fijian military was searching for enhanced force protection and escalation options. In parallel, the UN member states were increasingly concerned about civilians being directly targeted in conflict zones, leading to the development of the Kigali Principles on the Protection of Civilians. Fiji was involved in these meetings and recognised that its forces were under-equipped, in some cases in

critical areas. The implication of both trends was that Fijian forces needed to upgrade equipment to operate effectively, to protect themselves and to protect civilians under their charge. Before this purchase, Fiji had relied on UN equipment deployed by other states. A key lesson from the kidnapping was that Fiji needed its own force protection and escalation options.[207]

Fiji wanted to take advantage of UN rules in relation to the deployment of contingent-owned equipment (COE) for which the owner was compensated. The Bushmasters are classified by Australia as PMVs, which from a technical standpoint places them above infantry fighting vehicles (IFVs). Combined with the array of enhanced equipment included in the package, these vehicles fitted into a band of combat vehicle that attracted significant UN remittances for running and depreciation costs. This meant that the cost of the Bushmasters was doubly economical: they were refurbished rather than new, so they were delivered at a 30 per cent discount; and their costs were subsidised by the UN, so Fiji would break even within a few years of their 25-year life cycle.[208] The Fijian Minister for Defence noted:

> *Fiji's involvement in UN peacekeeping overseas has been of tremendous advantage to Fiji through substantial financial gains and reimbursement for troop contingent owned equipment will add enormously to this investment. Further, our continued commitment has created thousands of job opportunities over the years, which have contributed directly to improved family livelihoods and also to the economy.*[209]

This was the first COE that Fiji had ever deployed and it came at a critical juncture in relation to the UN's formation of standby arrangements. As such it met a significant political demand in Fiji that went beyond simply providing troops with enhanced personal protection. Defence and the ADF met this demand in record time, and this could only have occurred by leveraging the relationships built by the DA and the Army's Director of International Engagement.

As noted earlier, at the time of the 2006 Coup when defence cooperation was suspended, Fiji was receiving training and equipment under Operation Valiant for its force protection elements working for the UN in Iraq. During the Coup years, Fiji had relied on other states for equipment and training and there had always been doctrinal incompatibilities that revealed the close 'natural' connection between the ADF (particularly Army) and the RFMF. Most equipment gained by Fiji during the Coup years was non-combat equipment, but in 2016 Fiji received a delivery of $14 million in small arms from Russia, ostensibly to support peacekeeping operations in the Middle East. The delivery of the 20 shipping containers containing them and the arrival of 20 advisors to train Fijian forces caused some concern amongst Australian commentators.[210] But it fitted with Fiji's broader 'Look North' approach that, in the defence realm, saw the diversification of sources of equipment during the Coup years. This episode contains lessons for the events of 2022 when Solomon Islands signed a security agreement with China to gain training and equipment, which was unsettling for Australia as it had hitherto been the security partner of choice.

The Bushmaster project involved effective international engagement because Australia was able to support Fiji's peacekeeping strategy, which required the deployment of enhanced force protection equipment under new UN rules. At the 2015 Leaders' Summit on UN Peacekeeping in New York, Fiji had committed to providing forces to the UN Stand-by Arrangement System. However, this required independent enhanced mobility and force protection assets to support its troops. If Fiji was to maintain its forces in the Golan Heights the UN deadline for deploying the equipment was extremely tight, and if the vehicles had not been procured Fiji's capacity to deploy forces would have been compromised. At the time, Fiji's Defence Minister, Ratu Inoke Kubuabola acknowledged that the swift provision of Bushmasters had 'provided tremendous leverage' for Fiji in meeting the UN.[211] Fiji connects its long history of peacekeeping with nation building and its responsibility to the international community,[212] so it was a national priority to ensure that it could continue this role.

The Bushmasters were viewed by Fiji as the best in the world and as such they were an attractive option when compared with offers from competitors vying to provide vehicles to Fiji. Reportedly competing offers included Russian, South Korean and potentially Chinese vehicles. Providing the Bushmaster capability fed into Australia's larger geopolitical ambitions in the region insofar as potentially hostile states were denied the influence associated with such a project. For Fiji the Bushmasters were the first COE that the RFMF had deployed.

Discussions between Deputy Secretary of Defence Moceica and Australian DA Robertson laid the groundwork for the initial positive response from Canberra to requests from Suva. Australia made an official offer in November 2016 and a delegation of senior Fijian officials, including Deputy Secretary Moceica and the RFMF Director of Peacekeeping, Commander Humphrey Tawake, visited Australia in December 2016 to inspect the vehicles. This had been preceded by a visit by Deputy Secretary Moceica and Robin Nair, Permanent Secretary of MOFA, in September 2016 where discussions began in earnest with Commodore Woodall, Assistant Secretary for Pacific and Timor-Leste in IPDIV, who oversaw many key engagement projects including the PMSP.

In January 2017 a new DA, Commander Andrew Nelson, took over from Robertson. An orderly transfer ensured both that the project schedule could be met and also that Nelson was able to immediately build rapport with key Fijian officials. It is clear that the relationship handover between DAs was essential for the successful completion of this project and all other details could be worked out on the job.[213]

In early 2017, Fiji purchased 10 Bushmaster PMVs, seven of which were deployed to the Middle East to support operations in the Golan Heights and Syria and the other three to Fiji to facilitate training. Australia provided the vehicles along with specialised driver and maintenance training and a logistic support package. Significantly, Australia also offered to train the initial troops immediately and to deliver the seven Bushmasters to the area of operations in the Middle East by March 2017 utilising a C17 Globemaster. In fact, the tempo of the project was such that training began before the Fijian Minister for Defence had even had the opportunity to inform parliament of the program.

From announcement to deployment was a matter of months and the tempo was challenging for both partners, but it highlighted Fiji's urgent operational requirement for enhanced protection and the willingness of Canberra to deliver on requests by the Fijians as they were still rebuilding relations. Interviews with senior Fijian officials made the connection to the historic first deployment of troops to Lebanon, which took three months for Commander RFMF Colonel Paul Manueli[214] to organise in 1978. The parallels were important because this deployment was similarly enabled by the ADF providing logistic support through the provision of essential equipment. This first deployment is a source of pride verging on legend in the RFMF and it was symbolic for the ADF to be connected to it.[215] In 1978 the Australian DA was integral to the swift transfer of equipment, and interviewees highlighted the significant role of the DA again in 2016. In both cases personal relationships were identified as an important enabling factor.[216]

By reversing a key aspect of the drift in defence cooperation from the Coup years, Australia's international engagement achieved broader strategic objectives that moved beyond simply practising strategic denial to cementing the position as a security partner of choice for PICs. While the focus may appear to be on the provision of equipment, senior officers involved in the project emphasised the multitude of day-to-day interactions that come with the provision of equipment, and that the equipment simply provides the basis for building much closer relations.[217]

A Maturing Relationship Focused on Shared Interests: Blackrock

The Blackrock Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief Camp in Nadi is a longstanding RFMF base. The purpose of the base is twofold. Originally it was developed to provide training for Fijian forces undertaking peacekeeping operations, who have been routinely and regularly deployed to various peacekeeping operations in the Middle East (UN in Iraq, Lebanon, Golan and the US-led operation in Sinai). As the role of the Fijian military in HADR operations grew—at home during the cyclone season and through deployment overseas to respond to Cyclone Pam in Vanuatu in 2015 and most recently to fight the fires in Australia in 2019—so did demand for dedicated training facilities and equipment.

Blackrock required significant upgrades in order to meet the needs of the Fijian military, and the RFMF began identifying these needs in staff talks in 2016. By 2019, Fiji was reportedly negotiating with a number of states, most notably China, to redevelop the base. Australia was one of several countries that could have provided assistance, but ultimately it was the comprehensive funding package 'fully committing' to the redevelopment that led to the partnership.[218] At the time there was speculation that Australia's support was to counter China, as part of an ongoing role of international engagement to secure Australia's broader foreign policy objectives in the South Pacific. For Australia's part, the Assistant Secretary for Indo-Pacific, Sue Bodell, noted that 'Australia was grateful to be involved in the project'.[219] This gratitude relates to cementing Australia's position as a partner of choice for Fiji.

A measure of the priority attached to supporting Blackrock is that the speed of the decision did not fit routine budget cycles. Funds were reallocated within Defence's Integrated Investment Program 'to respond to changing priorities such as the Pacific step up' and other projects and timelines were adjusted accordingly.[220] As with the Bushmaster acquisition, this tempo reflected flexible and adaptive decision-making that was in contrast to the long-term planning involved in projects such as the PMSP.

Blackrock represented many aspects of the maturing international engagement relationship between Australia and Fiji. From the perspective of the focus on military diplomacy it involved HADR, and delivered national benefits to Australia and Fiji. Its focus was on capacity building (training) and supporting Fiji to participate in peacekeeping, which was noted earlier as being a central national interest. Blackrock also provided regional benefits that connected to the emphasis in the PIF's Boe Declaration on regional responses to instability and environmental disasters.[221] This included by extending Australia's commitment to regional infrastructure. From the standpoint of Australia's approach to military diplomacy, it involved leveraging strong relationships with all levels of government in Fiji, including the RFMF, and represented an Australian whole-of-government approach.[222]

Figure 11. Australian and Fijian dignitaries at the opening of Blackrock, 2022 (Source: Department of Defence)[223]

The Australian PM and Foreign Minister visited the base development in October 2019, highlighting its importance in supporting Australia's larger foreign policy objectives. The Blackrock project cemented the already strong relationship and symbolised the maturing of relations well beyond pre-2006 arrangements. The Australian-Fijian redevelopment of Blackrock is evidence of nimble international engagement in Canberra facilitated by the post-re-engagement partnership approach developed by key ADF staff in Suva and Australia. Leadership is essential, and the swift and targeted responses to both emergency situations, such as Cyclone Winston, and more measured specialised projects, such as Blackrock, highlight the important influence of successive CDFs and CAs in creating an enabling environment to support Australia's defence international engagement personnel in the field. In current guidance this is known as 'persistent presence', but its lineage can be traced back through the post-2014 re-engagement with Fiji to Afghanistan and earlier operations.

The Renewal of the International Engagement between Australia and Fiji

Australia's international engagement policies are presently focused on maritime security, HADR, and peacekeeping. These align closely to Fiji's needs. The DCP involves a mixture of large capital projects, such as the PMSP and Blackrock, as well as shared operations (e.g. maritime surveillance) and a multitude of training and exchange arrangements. The volume of interactions through these projects and training is very large, and was unimaginable during the sanctions years. A senior Australian military officer interviewed in 2020 captured the state of affairs well: 'it started as a bit of a trickle and that's become a flood'.[224] Recent initiatives and events that highlight the strength of the relationship include specialist training and exchanges, the provision of theatre lift for Fijian peacekeepers, the delivery of the first Guardian Class patrol boat and, in a reversal of support, the participation of RFMF personnel in fighting the fires in Australia.

The Australian Army has a program partnering its brigades with foreign militaries in the 'near region'. Early in the re-engagement process, in 2015, the Director of International Engagement for Army brokered partnering the RFMF with the 7th Brigade based in Brisbane. Brigade partnering is a key way of deepening relationships, building shared understanding and preparing for joint operations. As noted earlier, in 2017 the 8th/9th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment had swiftly provided training to RFMF personnel to allow the deployment of Bushmasters to Syria, with the fourth round of training conducted in 2019. In September 2019 the RFMF participated alongside the militaries of eight other states in Exercise Hydra Brisbane. This exercise was hosted by the 7th Brigade with the aim to 'reinforce the strong military relationships between Australia and its regional partners'.[225]

In January 2020 the so-called Bula Force of 85 RFMF engineers worked alongside the 7th Brigade's 8th/9th Battalion in Joint Task Force 646 as part of Operation Bushfire Assist. In February 2020, Exercise Coral Warrior was conducted by members of the 7th Brigade with RFMF personnel in Fiji to build interoperability with the hope that partnership will also lead to joint peacekeeping deployments in the future.[226] The tempo of cooperation as part of this partnership is noteworthy insofar as each interaction builds an authentic *esprit de corps*.

Despite the change in personnel, the focus on international engagement continued to gain momentum. For example, the DA who replaced Lieutenant Colonel Robertson, Commander Nelson, oversaw a vastly different program, both in qualitative and in numerical terms, than the DCP activities that occurred before 2006. There were three ADF personnel embedded in the RFMF in Suva: one in the Officer Training School and two at the Stanley Brown Naval Base. There was one Fijian instructor in Australia at the Peace Operations Training Centre in Canberra. Over 250 RFMF personnel trained in Australia each year, on courses that lasted up to 18 months, and approximately six to eight ADF MTTs visited Fiji each year to provide intensive specialised training to small groups of up to 30 RFMF personnel. This equated to approximately 180 to 240 Fijian personnel being trained locally each year.

Another significant initiative was the provision of theatre lift for the RFMF on peacekeeping missions. The first rotation of Fijian personnel, and all of their equipment, were transported to the Sinai by the RAAF in March 2019. The operational impact of this initiative cannot be underestimated as previously Fiji had to rely on a mixture of commercial aircraft and UN-sponsored flights to deploy forces. Capacity restraints meant that the units were often moved piecemeal in small groups and without all of their necessary equipment. Historically there were also delays caused by the vagaries of international travel. Under this new arrangement, the RAAF now routinely conducts large body lifts of RFMF units, which allows an effective handover to occur in theatre. A senior Australian officer who brokered the arrangement noted that it is 'good for morale, it gives them certainty about the duration of their posting, gets them back to their families quickly, and essentially gives the mission commander a much better output … short, sharp, clean'.[227] It also supports Australia's broader foreign policy objectives by cementing the position of partner of choice.

Fiji received the first of two Guardian Class patrol boats, RFNS *Savenaca*, in March 2020 as part of the PMSP. This was almost exactly three years after the post-sanctions maintenance was undertaken on Fiji's patrol boats to extend their lifetime. This allowed RFNS *Kula*, one of Australia's original Pacific Patrol Boats, which was donated in the mid-1990s, to be decommissioned after 25 years of service.

Figure 12. Fijian sailors at the handover of RFNS *Savenaca*, Henderson, Western Australia (Source: Department of Defence)[228]

In his speech accepting RFNS *Savenaca*, Fijian PM Bainimarama reflected on the impact that the vessel would have on defending Fiji's EEZ against transnational criminals and illegal fishers and gave thanks for 'our vuvale, the Australian people, for their support of a strong Pacific'.[229] For her part, the Australian Defence Minister, Linda Reynolds, also identified the importance of the vessel as 'a symbol of our commitment to sovereignty, to freedom and also our shared values as nations'. She focused on the role of the vessel in defending Fiji's sovereignty and highlighted the benefits for the bilateral relationship:

> *It will further strengthen ties that will build even greater trust and respect between our two nations, between our Navies and also between our Defence organisations.*[230]

In the context of increasing Chinese influence in the South-West Pacific, positioning Australia as Fiji's partner of choice for capabilities such as patrol boats (or Bushmasters) clearly supported strategic objectives.

A prime example of the strength of the relationship is the deployment of RFMF personnel to assist in the 2019–20 Australian bushfires. The RFMF deployed 85 engineers, who worked alongside members of their partner 7th Brigade in Operation Bushfire Assist on a range of clearance tasks around Orbost in Victoria. The engineers spent five weeks in Australia, which was framed by Fiji as returning a favour as 'Australia has helped us in our time of need' during Cyclone Winston.[231]

Figure 13. Brigadier Matt Burr and Rear Admiral Viliame Naupoto with Fijian and Australian soldiers in Orbost, Victoria, during Operation Bushfire Assist 2020 (Source: Department of Defence)[232]

The Australian Defence Minister effusively thanked the Fijian Prime Minister 'for that hand of friendship and compassion that your people showed ours in our time of our most darkest need … This is truly the embodiment of our Vuvale partnership'.[233] This close relationship could not be further from the situation in which the incoming DA found himself when he arrived in Suva in 2014. Indeed, this type of cooperation would have been inconceivable

before 2006 and unimaginable from 2006 to 2014. Now it seems like a natural reciprocal exchange. This is a testament to the present health of relations between Australia and Fiji.

The exponential growth in Australia–Fiji relations that occurred through Cyclone Winston and the Bushmaster acquisition has plateaued somewhat, but this was inevitable given the rapid growth and resource constraints on the Fijian side. Fiji has a small military and a finite need for defence cooperation. Fiji also continues to receive support from the multiple defence cooperation partners that it developed as part of the 'Look North' policy during the sanctions era. Canberra, Defence and the ADF have shown great flexibility in meeting Fiji's needs and requests for specialist training etc., such as in relation to IEDs, and Fiji has been more discerning in identifying its needs[234] so as to not overwhelm its capacity to participate in international engagement. Therefore, plateauing has no reflection on the health of the relationship because it has been elevated so high. Furthermore, a key element of the claimed dynamic of international engagement, building trust through a military *esprit de corps*, is strongly evident in broader relations with Fiji. It is evident in the close relationships built by defence officials, especially DAs, and by political leaders, in particular ministers such as Foreign Minister Julie Bishop.

It is noteworthy that the creation of Vuvale and PM Morrison's attention to Fiji, including the unprecedented two visits in a year in 2019, was perceived as having a positive impact on the day-to-day relationship.[235] This was enhanced by the election of Anthony Albanese's Labor Government in 2022, which immediately compromised on climate change and pivoted even closer to the Pacific through the deft diplomacy led by Foreign Minister Penny Wong. Within Foreign Affairs, Defence and the services, there are numerous examples of close collaboration building trusted relationships. These were obviously on display during Cyclone Winston and were evident in the behind-the-scenes work on the Bushmaster acquisition and redevelopment of Blackrock.

Conclusion

This paper identifies international engagement as a key factor enabling Australia's re-engagement with Fiji from 2014. Debate in policy guidance and the academic literature over the appropriate role for defence forces in diplomacy is ambiguous at best, but in this case there is voluminous evidence of the impact of careful international engagement from ADF personnel that supported broader foreign policy goals.

Equally, the willing engagement from key RFMF and FMOD and MOFA officials facilitated the development of relations that are closer and more sustainable than prior to the coup and sanctions of 2006. This military diplomacy was backed by a willingness to develop partnerships at the highest levels of both governments, which has its most apt expression in the Vuvale Partnership signed between the PMs of both states. Furthermore, a number of challenges and opportunities presented themselves and were taken advantage of in a manner best described (independently) by senior military officers on both sides of the Pacific as 'a step up before the step up'.

There is no doubt that the enabling environment encouraged by successive CAs, General Angus Campbell and Lieutenant General Rick Burr, had a direct impact on the approach taken toward Fiji during the tentative and formative years of re-engagement covered by this study. The impact of leadership in relation to testing approaches to military diplomacy as force multipliers cannot be underestimated. Identifying concrete evidence of explicit links between operational lessons from Afghanistan and elsewhere is beyond the remit of this paper, but they are apparent, whether in doctrinal approaches or even in having key personnel in pivotal positions during the liminal moments described in this paper. International engagement has

been an enabling factor and force multiplier in re-engaging with Fiji, and this reflects positively on the leadership of the Army and ADF and also on Australia's 'way of war' during peacetime.

Some of the conditions that presented themselves in this case have similarities with other diplomatic relations, such as the military dictatorship in Indonesia up to 1998 or the response to the Boxing Day tsunami in 2004, but these examples miss key aspects of the relationship with Fiji that may make it unique. The significant role of the military in civilian government, the long history of warm relations, the shared doctrinal outlooks, and previous operational experience all present the Fiji example as unique compared to relationships with other militaries.

A question for further study is whether the lessons from successful international engagement with Fiji can be generalised. There are clear commonalities in the approach taken to international engagement amongst Australian and Fijian officers and these provide strong foundations for the future. The fractured relations are a thing of the past, but could occur again. However, this is less likely as the lessons from the legacy of Australia's past responses to Fijian coups appear to be internalised in the respect for sovereignty and trust through authentic relationships built on affinity and mutual interest. Clearly the pivotal role of senior RFMF officers, such as Rear Admiral Naupoto, Commander Tawake and Deputy Secretary of Defence Moceica, should not be underestimated, especially when they form part of a Fijian domestic polity that may at times be divided in its approach to Australian diplomatic entreaties.

Policy guidance and the academic literature are divided on the question of whether international engagement is an effective approach, but this paper provides a case study that finds unequivocally that international engagement was central to the rapprochement. It may be that several conditions in this case study were unique, and that a cyclone provided an opportunity that was seized upon. However, Australian defence practitioners were sensitive and careful diplomats; they possessed a range of personal qualities and professional experience that allowed them to build authentic relationships of trust with their Fijian counterparts.

The DSR has elevated the place of Defence international engagement in whole-of-government approaches to achieving Australia's strategic objectives. This aligns closely with the US focus on 'Joint Force military diplomacy' in the 2023 Joint Chiefs of Staff *Joint Concept for Competing*. However, this paper clearly identifies that Australia's approach is not derivative. Rather it reflects the evolution of decades of diligent and sensitive international engagement by the Army and broader Defence establishment. The lineage of international engagement can be seen clearly in Australian operations in Afghanistan, and it was honed in the re-engagement with Fiji. International engagement was pivotal to the 'Step Up,' which is central to achieving Australia's strategic objectives in the region. Much of this defence diplomacy relied on visionary leadership within Army and skilled operators in the field. The DSR provides the promise of institutionalising this approach to become a force multiplier for Australia, and this report provides some modest lessons about how to make this so.

A Note on Confidentiality

This project received unconditional ethics approval from the Department of Defence Low Risk Ethics Panel (DPR-LREP-038-19).

Due to the sensitive nature of the experiences of many interviewees they were provided the highest level of confidentiality and ethical protection. Many talked both on and off the record and did so with the understanding that the material discussed would only be attributed to them in a publicly available report if they expressly agreed. Interviewees agreed 'to participating on the condition that my name and any other identifying information cannot be included in a publicly available report, publications, or presented at conferences without my express permission'. Therefore, the only direct quotations in this paper appear on the public record or were explicitly approved by interviewees.

About the Author

Dr Michael O'Keefe is Director of the Master of International Relations at La Trobe University. Michael's research interests focus on Australian foreign policy, and Pacific foreign policies (especially Fiji). His current projects focus on Australia's 'Step Up' in the Pacific, Fiji's peacekeeping strategy and military diplomacy. He undertakes a wide range of consultancies in the Pacific and has taught in Fiji and Japan. Michael features regularly in media such as the ABC's 7.30 *Report* and *Insiders*, ABC 774, CNN, Radio National, 3CR, ABC.net and New Matilda. Michael's commentary has also appeared in outlets such as *The Age, The Australian, The Sydney Morning Herald, Islands Business, Fiji Sun and The Fiji Times*. His latest book is *Australian Foreign Policy: Relationships, Issues and Strategic Culture*, Bloomsbury, London, 2023 (https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/australian-foreign-policy-9781350369368/).

Endnotes

1. Commonwealth of Australia, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, Canberra, 2023.
2. Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2016, pp. 20, 22, 36, 104, 106, 117–119, 140, 148, 153. The policy context is detailed below.
3. Parliament of Australia, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Response to the Indian Ocean Tsunami*, Canberra, 2006, accessed 16 May 2023, at: https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Joint/Completed_Inquiries/jfadt/tsunamiresponse/chapter2
4. Goran Swistek, 'The Nexus between Public Diplomacy and Military Diplomacy in Foreign Affairs and Defence Policy', *Connections: The Quarterly Journal,* vol. 11, no. 2, 2012, pp. 79–86.
5. Timothy Shea, 'Transforming Military Diplomacy', *Joint Force Quarterly*, vol. 38, 2005, p. 50.
6. Alfred Vagts, *The Military Attaché*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1967.
7. William Mott, *Military Assistance: An Operational Perspective*, Greenwood Publishing, Westport, 1999.
8. Swistek, 2012, pp. 83–84.
9. Joseph Nye, 'Soft Power', *Foreign Policy*, no. 80, 1990, pp. 153–171; Joseph Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, Public Affairs Store, NY, 2004, p. 5.
10. Guy Wilson (Air Commodore), *Defence Diplomacy: The Right Ballast for Australia's Fragile Relations with Indonesia*, Indo-Pacific Papers, Centre for Defence and Strategic Studies, Australian Defence College, Canberra, 2017, p. 2.
11. Colin Gray, *Hard Power and Soft Power: The Utility of Military Force as an Instrument of Policy in the 21st Century*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, 2011, p. 1.
12. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, Dutton and Co., NY, 1940 [1832], Chapter 1.
13. For background see Rupert Smith, *The Utility of Force: The Art of War in the Modern World*, Allen Lane, London, 2005.
14. On the way of war see for instance Albert Palazzo, *Planning Not to Lose: The Australian Army's New Philosophy of War*, Australian Army Occasional Paper No. 3, Australian Army Research Centre, Canberra, 2021.
15. Personal correspondence with a retired senior Australian officer, June 2023.
16. David Capie, 'The United States and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) in East Asia: Connecting Coercive and Non-Coercive Uses of Military Power', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 309–333.

17. Jack McCaffrie, 'Train, Advise and Assist in the South Pacific', in Tom Frame (ed.), *The Long Road: Australia's Train, Advise and Assist Missions*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2017, pp. 192–205; Reuben Bowd, 'Islander Perspectives: Bougainville and the Solomon Islands', in Tom Frame and Albert Palazzo (eds), *On Ops: Lessons and Challenges for the Australian Army Since East Timor*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2016, pp. 85–103.
18. See for instance Bilveer Singh, *Defense Relations Between Australia and Indonesia in the Post-Cold War World*, Greenwood Press, Westport, 2002.
19. Representative examples include Anton Du Plessis, 'Defence Diplomacy: Conceptual and Practical Dimensions with Specific Reference to South Africa', *Strategic Review for Southern Africa*, vol. 30, no. 2, 2008, pp. 87–119; KA Muthanna, 'Military Diplomacy', *Journal of Defence Studies*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2011, pp. 1–15.
20. For example, see Ministry of Defence, *Defence Diplomacy*, Policy Paper No. 1, United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, London, 2000.
21. Theo Farrell, 'Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, vol. 33, no. 4, 2010, pp. 567–594.
22. Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, *UK's International Defence Engagement Strategy*, London, 2017.
23. Facsimile from Ministry of Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 2017, p. 11.
24. US Government, *Joint Guide for Interagency Doctrine*, Washington DC, 4 November 2019.
25. Department of Defense, Department of State and USAID, *3D Planning Guide: Diplomacy, Development, and Defense*, Washington DC, 2012, p. 8, accessed 16 May 2023, at: https://2012-2017.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1866/3D%20Planning%20Guide_Update_FINAL%20%2831%20Jul%2012%29.pdf
26. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Interorganizational Cooperation*, Joint Publication 3-08, Washington DC,12 October 2016, validated 18 October 2017, pp. IV-29–IV-30.
27. US Government, *Joint Guide for Interagency Doctrine*, 2019, p. V-6.
28. US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Concept for Competing*, Washington DC, 10 February 2023, p. 43.
29. Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, Canberra, July 2020, pp. 25–30.
30. Greg Bilton (Major General, Deputy Chief Joint Operations), 'Generating Land Power through Partnerships', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 3, 2018, pp. 93–94.
31. See for instance ABCA, *Coalition Operations Handbook*, ABCA Publication 332, Edition 4, 14 April 2008.
32. See Seng Tan, 'Digging in Its Backyard: Why Australia Should Deepen Engagement with Southeast Asia', in Brendan Taylor, John Blaxland, Hugh White, Nick Bisley, Peter Leahy and See Seng Tan, *Defence Diplomacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?* Centre of Gravity Series No. 17, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2014, p. 19.
33. Michael Evans, *The Tyranny of Dissonance: Australia's Strategic Culture and Way of War 1901–2004*, Study Paper No. 306, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, 2004.
34. Michael O'Keefe, 'Teaching Australian Foreign Policy through the Lens of Strategic Culture', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 73, no. 6, 2019, 532–538.
35. Interview with a senior Australian military officer.
36. The 'rules-based order' is the latest manifestation of an interest in protecting the liberal internationalist world order developed by the US and like-minded states after World War II. See for instance White House, *National Security Strategy 2022*, Washington DC, 2022, pp. 8–10.

37. Jennifer DP Moroney, Celeste Ward Gventer, Stephanie Pezard and Laurence Smallman, *Lessons from U.S. Allies in Security Cooperation with Third Countries: The Cases of Australia, France and the United Kingdom*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica, 2011, p. 28.
38. Swistek, 2012, pp. 79–86.
39. Andrew Cottey and Anthony Forster, *Reshaping Defence Diplomacy: New Roles for Military Co-operation and Assistance*, Adelphi Paper No. 365, Oxford University Press for the International Institute of Strategic Studies, Oxford, 2004, p. 6.
40. Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, p. 118.
41. Commonwealth of Australia, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, pp. 46–47.
42. Bilton, 2018, p. 94.
43. For example, feedback by a Fijian liaison officer with 7th Brigade.
44. Interview with senior Fijian MOD official (Lieutenant Colonel (retd)) Ilai (Jack) Moceica.
45. Ibid.
46. For example, see Department of Defence, *Defending Australia in the Asia Pacific Century: Force 2030*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2009, pp. 93–101; Department of Defence, *Defence White Paper 2013*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2013, p. 56, para 3.13; and Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, pp. 20, 22, 36,104, 106, 117–119, 140, 148, 153.
47. Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, pp. 20–21.
48. Ibid., p. 20.
49. Ibid., p. 118.
50. Ibid., p. 74.
51. Richard Sadlier (First Assistant Secretary, International Security Division, DFAT), 'Soldiers and Diplomats Working Together', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 3, 2018, p. 115. For an early example of institutional cooperation see Department of Defence and AusAID Global Programs Division, *Strategic Partnership Agreement between Defence and the Australian Agency for International Development*, Canberra, 2009.
52. Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, p. 22; Bilton, 2018, pp. 93–98; Sadlier, 2018, pp. 109–118.
53. Scott Morrison (Prime Minister), Address: Launch of the 2020 Strategic Update, Canberra, 1 July 2020, transcript accessed 16 May 2023, at: https://www.defence.gov.au/research-innovation/research-publications/australian-journal-defence-and-strategic-studies-volume-2-number-2
54. Department of Defence, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, p. 26.
55. Ibid., pp. 25–30.
56. Michael O'Keefe, 'Countering Unwelcome Strategic Competitors in the South Pacific', *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, vol. 5, no. 7, 2022, pp. 15–31.
57. Michael O'Keefe, 'The Militarisation of China in the Pacific: Stepping Up to a New Cold War', *Security Challenges*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2020, pp. 94–112.
58. Commonwealth of Australia, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, pp. 46–47.
59. For instance, see Royal Australian Airforce, *Air Force Strategy 2017–2027*, Canberra, 2017, pp. 35–39.
60. Joyo Sanyal, 'Building Strategic Security: Defence Diplomacy and the Role of Army', *The Strategist,* 19 July 2018, accessed 16 May 2023, at: https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/building-strategic-security-defence-diplomacy-and-the-role-of-army

61. Ibid.
62. Department of Defence, *Army in Motion: Strategic Guidance 2019*, Canberra, 2019.
63. Ibid., p. 19.
64. Simon Stuart, Address by Chief of Army at Land Forces 2022, Brisbane, 4 October 2022, accessed 19 May 2023, at: https://www.army.gov.au/our-news/speeches-and-transcripts/address-chief-army-land-forces-2022-brisbane-4-october-2022
65. Department of Defence, *Army in Motion*, 2019, p. 4.
66. Rick Burr (Major General), Deputy Chief of Army Address to ASPI Conference, Canberra, 25 June 2015, accessed 26 November 2023, at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8uZKll3EA-Q&list=PL0-bcfeS6XTesN90OsaSBoPUtRXHrqQUL&index=4
67. Nicholas Floyd, *Dropping the Autopilot: Improving Australia's Defence Diplomacy*, Lowy Institute, Sydney, 2010.
68. Peter Leahy, 'Military Diplomacy', in Brendan Taylor, John Blaxland, Hugh White, Nick Bisley, Peter Leahy and See Seng Tan, *Defence Diplomacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?* Centre of Gravity Series No. 17, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2014, p. 16.
69. Burr, 2015.
70. Nicholas Floyd, *Dropping the Autopilot: Improving Australia's Defence Diplomacy*, Lowy Institute, Sydney, 2010.
71. Daniel Baldino and Andrew Carr, 'Defence diplomacy and the Australian defence force: Smokescreen or strategy?', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 70, no. 2, 2016, pp. 139-58.
72. John Blaxland, 'In Defence of Military Diplomacy,' in Brendan Taylor, John Blaxland, Hugh White, Nick Bisley, Peter Leahy and See Seng Tan, *Defence Diplomacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?* Centre of Gravity Series No. 17, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2014, p. 8.
73. Floyd, 2010.
74. Brendan Taylor, John Blaxland, Hugh White, Nick Bisley, Peter Leahy and See Seng Tan, *Defence Diplomacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?* Centre of Gravity Series No. 17, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2014.
75. Floyd, 2010, p. 3.
76. Alan Gyngell, 'The Indo-Pacific Doesn't Exist', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 3, 2018, p. 206.
77. See for example Garth Pratten, 'Access but How Much Influence', in Craig Stockings and Peter Dennis (eds), *Army of Influence: Eighty Years of Regional Engagement*, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 186–219.
78. João Resende-Santos, 'Anarchy and the Emulation of Military Systems: Military Organisation and Technology in South America, 1870–1930', *Security Studies*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1996, pp. 193–260.
79. Evan Laksmana, 'What Is Military to Military Engagement Good For?', *The Strategist*, 18 October 2018.
80. Blaxland, 2014, p. 8.
81. Gilbert Toropo (Brigadier), 'Trust and Respect in Regional Relationships', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. XIV, no. 3, 2018, p. 101.
82. 'Manus Base Deal to Boost Key Port, Stymie Beijing', *The Australian*, 18 November 2018.

83. Hugh White, 'Grand Expectations, Little Promise', in Brendan Taylor, John Blaxland, Hugh White, Nick Bisley, Peter Leahy and See Seng Tan, *Defence Diplomacy: Is the Game Worth the Candle?* Centre of Gravity Series No. 17, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 2014, p. 11.
84. Good overviews of this history are provided by Bob Hall, 'Vietnam: Insights Gained, Lessons Lost', in Tom Frame (ed.), *The Long Road: Australia's Train, Advise and Assist Missions*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2017, pp. 24–38; Tom Richardson, 'Helping the Americans Help the Vietnamese', in Craig Stockings and Peter Dennis (eds), *Army of Influence: Eighty Years of Regional Engagement*, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 115–139; and Patrick Cullinan, 'The Commonwealth Military Training Team Uganda', in Tom Frame (ed.), *The Long Road: Australia's Train, Advise and Assist Missions*, UNSW Press, Sydney, 2017, pp. 39–57.
85. Cottey and Forster, 2004, p. 10.
86. Michael O'Keefe, 'Australia and Indonesia: The Persistence of Distance between Proximate Neighbours', in Bridget Brooklyn, Benjamin T Jones and Rebecca Strating (eds), *Australia on the World Stage: History, Politics, and International Relations*, Routledge, London, 2022, pp. 156–170.
87. Wilson, 2017, p. 3.
88. Singh, 2002, p. 70.
89. Alan Dupont, 'Indonesian Ties Much Tighter', *The Australian*, 8 April 2013.
90. Don Greenlees, 'Khaki Diplomacy under Post-Timor Constraints', *The Australian*, 10 March 2000, at: www.etan.org/et2000a/march/5-11/10khaki.htm
91. Liam Cochrane, 'Australia to Continue Military Training in Myanmar Despite Ethnic Cleansing Allegations', *ABC News*, 29 September 2017, accessed 19 May 2020, at: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-29/australia-to-continue-myanmar-military-training-despite-concerns/9002198; Stewart Firth, 'Australia's Policy towards Coup-Prone and Military Regimes in the Asia-Pacific: Thailand, Fiji and Burma', *Australian Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 67, no. 3, 2013.
92. Jim Molan (General, Army Attaché to Jakarta 1994–1995, Defence Attaché 1998–1999) quoted in Floyd, 2010, p. 7.
93. Ken Brownrigg, 'Defence Attaché in Indonesia' and Craig Stockings, 'East Timor and the Crisis of 1999', in Craig Stockings and Peter Dennis (eds), *Army of Influence: Eighty Years of Regional Engagement*, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 52–70, 140–155.
94. Blaxland, 2014, p. 7.
95. Leahy, 2014, p. 15.
96. Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era*, Polity, Cambridge, 1999.
97. Cottey and Forster, 2004, p. 71.
98. Peter Connolly (Colonel), *Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009*, Study Paper No. 321, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, 2011.
99. 'Vale', *Australian Army*, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://www.defence.gov.au/vale
100. Connolly, *Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009*, 2011, pp. 12–13.
101. Anthony Rawlins, 'Conventional Stability Operations at the Battle Group Level in Iraq', in John Blaxland, Marcus Fielding and Thea Gellerfy (eds), *Niche Wars: Australia in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2001–2014*, ANU Press, Canberra, 2020, Chapter 6.
102. Connolly, *Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009*, 2011, pp. 12–13.

103. Ibid., p. 1.
104. Ibid., p. 10.
105. Peter Connolly (Colonel), 'Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2011, pp. 9–34.
106. Department of Defence, *Defence Imagery*, accessed 21 May 2020, at: https://images.defence.gov.au/assets/20101202adf8114832_233.JPG
107. Connolly, *Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009*, 2011, p. 13.
108. Charles Krulak (General, US Marine Corps), 'The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War', *Marines Magazine*, January 1999; Lynda Liddy (Major), 'The Strategic Corporal: Some Requirements in Training and Education', *Australian Army Journal*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2005, pp. 139–148.
109. Connolly, *Counterinsurgency in Uruzgan 2009*, 2011, pp. 50–51.
110. Ibid., p. 13.
111. Ibid.
112. Tristan Moss, 'Talking Itself Out of a Political Future': Education and Australian Army Engagement with Papua New Guinean Independence, 1966–72', *Journal of Pacific History*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2019, pp. 149–165.
113. Toropo, 2018, p. 103.
114. 'Army Team Takes Drone Literacy Overseas', *Australian Defence Magazine*, 7 March 2019, accessed 16 May 2023, at: https://www.australiandefence.com.au/defence/unmanned/army-team-takes-drone-literacy-overseas
115. Interview with a senior Australian Army officer.
116. Daniel McCulloch, 'Six Australian Ministers Head to PNG Forum', *The Canberra Times*, 26 August 2019, accessed 11 March 2020, at: https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6347627/six-australian-ministers-head-to-png-forum/?cs=14231
117. Interview with a senior Australian Army officer.
118. Interview with an Australian Army officer.
119. Brendan Nicholson, 'Skilled Diplomacy Is Vital to Australia's Defence, Says ADF Chief', *The Strategist,* 5 July 2023.
120. Commonwealth of Australia, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p. 32.
121. Burr, 2015. Note: all ranks listed are as they were at the time of interview/publication.
122. A good overview can be found in Sam Batemen, Anthony Bergin and Hayley Channer, *Terms of Engagement: Australia's Regional Defence Diplomacy*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI), Canberra, 2014.
123. Lowy Institute, *Asia Power Index 2023*, Sydney, 2023, accessed 16 May 2023, at: https://power.lowyinstitute.org/
124. Hugh Jeffrey (First Assistant Secretary International Policy, Department of Defence), Question on Notice No. 54, 2019–20 Budget Estimates, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Senate, Canberra, 2019.
125. Commonwealth of Australia, *National Defence: Defence Strategic Review*, 2023, p. 47.
126. HR Howlett (Lieutenant), *The History of the Fiji Military Forces, 1939–1945*, Crown Agents for the Colonies for the Government of Fiji, Suva, 1948.
127. Interview with a senior Fijian military officer, Commodore Humphrey Tawake, and numerous informal and confidential discussions.
128. Robert Hawke, *The Hawke Memoirs*, William Heinemann, Melbourne 1994, pp. 329–330.

129. Adrian D'Hage (Colonel), 'Operation Morrisdance: An Outline History of the Involvement of the Australian Defence Force in the Fiji Crisis of May 1987', *Defence Force Journal*, no. 80, 1990.
130. Alan Fewster, 'Hawke Rules Out Rambo-Like Military Action', *The Australian,* 19 May 1987, p. 8.
131. Bob Breen, *Struggling for Self-Reliance: Four Case Studies of Australian Regional Force Projection in the Late 1980s and the 1990s*, ANU E Press, Canberra, 2008, pp. 32, 35.
132. Quoted in David Horner, *Duty First: A History of the Royal Australian Regiment*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 2008, p. 306.
133. Bob Breen, *The Good Neighbour: Australian Peace Support Operations in the Pacific 1980 to 2006*, Vol. 5, The Official History of Peacekeeping, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2016, p. 41.
134. D'Hage, 1990, pp. 7–8.
135. Matthew Gubb, *The Australian Military Response to the Fijian Coup: An Assessment*, Working Paper No. 171, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, November 1988; John Blaxland, *The Australian Army from Whitlam to Howard*, Cambridge University Press, Port Melbourne, 2014; 'Success Passes Her First Test', *Navy News*, 24 July 1987, p. 4.
136. Breen, 2016, p. 38.
137. Ibid., pp. 430–432.
138. Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2006–07*, Canberra, 2007, p. 5.
139. Breen, 2016, p. 436.
140. Frank Bainimarama quoted in U.S. House of Representatives Subcommittee on Asia, the Pacific, and the Global Environment, Committee on Foreign Affairs, *U.S. Policy toward South Pacific Island Nations, Including Australia and New Zealand*, Washington DC, 15 March 2007, accessed 17 May 2003, at: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/CHRG-110hhrg34041/pdf/CHRG-110hhrg34041.pdf
141. Shaista Shameem, *The Assumption of Executive Authority on December 5th 2006 by Commodore J.V. Bainimarama, Commander of the Republic of Fiji Military Forces: Legal, Constitutional and Human Rights Issues*, Fiji Human Rights Commission, Suva, 4 January 2007.
142. 'Australia Accused of Helping Spark Fiji Coup', *ABC News*, 2 April 2008, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2008-04-02/australia-accused-of-helping-spark-fiji-coup/2391086
143. Interview with a senior Fijian MOD official.
144. *Defence Annual Report 2006–07*, p. 57.
145. Department of Defence annual reports 2006–07, p. 57; 2007–08, p. 85; 2008–09, p. 164; 2010–11, p. 249.
146. *Defence Annual Report 2006–07*, p. 57.
147. O'Keefe, 'The Militarisation of China in the Pacific', 2020, pp. 94–112.
148. Interviews with a senior Australian military officer and an Australian Army officer, and confidential discussions.
149. Interviews with a senior Fijian MOD official and a senior Fijian military officer, and numerous informal and confidential discussions.
150. Republic of Fiji and Commonwealth of Australia, *Fiji-Australia Vuvale Partnership*, Canberra, September 16, 2019.
151. Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2014–15,* Canberra, 2015, p. 30.

152. Hugh Jeffrey (First Assistant Secretary International Policy, Department of Defence), *Question on Notice No. 54*, 2019-20 Budget Estimates, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Senate, Canberra, 2019.
153. Major Lachlan Robertson who was later promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and became the first post-Coup Defence Attaché (DA).
154. Interview with an Australian Army officer; interviews with Fijian personnel.
155. Interview with a senior Fijian military officer.
156. Interviews with a senior MOFA official, a senior Fijian MOD official and a senior Fijian military officer.
157. See for instance, James Watson, *A Model Pacific Solution? A Study of the Deployment of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands*, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Working Paper No. 126, Canberra, October 2005.
158. Interviews with a senior MOFA official, a senior Fijian MOD official and senior Fijian military officers, including Commodore Humphrey Tawake.
159. Interview with a senior MOFA official.
160. Interview with a senior MOFA official.
161. Interviews with a senior Fijian MOD official and senior Fijian military officers, and numerous informal and confidential discussions.
162. Interview with a senior Australian military officer.
163. Interview with a senior Fijian military officer and numerous informal and confidential discussions.
164. Interviews with a senior Fijian MOD official and a senior Fijian military officer, and numerous informal and confidential discussions.
165. Interviews with senior Fijian military officers, including Commodore Humphrey Tawake, and numerous informal and confidential discussions.
166. For example, interview with a senior Fijian MOD official.
167. Interview with a senior Australian military officer.
168. Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2012–13: Supplement*, Canberra, 2013, p. 6.
169. McCaffrie, 2017, p. 205.
170. Interviews with an Australian Army officer and a senior Australian Army officer.
171. Interview with an Australian Army officer.
172. Australian High Commission, Suva, Facebook post, 13 July 2015, at: https://www.facebook.com/profile/100064451151915/search/?q=leeuwin
173. 'Royal Australian Navy Returns to Fiji', *Navy Daily*, [DATE] 2015, accessed 12 March 2020, at: https://news.navy.gov.au/en/Jul2015/Fleet/2180/Royal-Australian-Navy-returns-to-Fiji.htm#.XmrMcVBS9Bw
174. Interview with a senior Australian Army officer.
175. Australian High Commission, 'Australia Helps in Disaster Preparedness', *Fiji Sun*, 31 October 2015, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://fijisun.com.fj/2015/10/31/australia-helps-in-disaster-preparedness
176. Australian High Commission, Suva, Facebook post, 17 November 2015, at: https://www.facebook.com/australiainfiji/photos/a.1442300072654526/1670215156529682
177. For instance, interview with a senior NDMO official.
178. Interviews with a senior Australian military officer and an Australian Army officer.

179. Hon. Lt Col. IB Seruiratu, Minister for Agriculture, Rural and Maritime Development and Disaster Management, *Fiji Hansard*, 28 April 2016, p. 1548. See also Government of Fiji, *Fiji: Post Disaster Needs Assessment, Tropical Cyclone Winston, February 20, 2016*, Suva, May 2016.
180. 'Operation Fiji Assist', 25 February 2016, *Defence Imagery*, at: https://images.defence.gov.au/assets/Home/Search?Query=20160226adf8526162_103.jpg&Type=Filename
181. Julie Bishop (Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade), 'Response to Tropical Cyclone Winston', press release, 15 June 2016, accessed 17 May 2023, at: 15 Jun 2016 - foreignminister.gov.au/releases/Pages/2016/jb_mr_160222.aspx - Trove (nla.gov.au)
182. Marise Payne (Minister for Defence), Parliamentary Debates, Senate Official Hansard, No. 2, 2016, 22 February 2016, Canberra, pp. 625–626.
183. Australian High Commission, Suva, Facebook post, 22 December 2016, at: https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1698563087028222&set=pcb.1698563847028146
184. Interview with an Australian Army officer and a senior Fijian MOD official.
185. Interview with a senior NDMO official.
186. NDMO sitreps provide a clear picture of how the response evolved. NDMO, 'Sitreps', Suva, 2016, accessed 16 July 2019, at: http://www.ndmo.gov.fj
187. Interviews with a senior Australian Army officer, a senior Fijian MOD official and a senior Fijian military officer.
188. The Port of Suva was not suitable to berth ***Canberra***, which made the helicopter lift capabilities all the more valuable.
189. Department of Defence, *Defence Annual Report 2015–16*, Canberra, 2016, 'CDF Review' (Air Chief Marshal Mark Binskin AC, Chief of the Defence Force), p. 4; and 'Ongoing conduct of a wide range of operations in support of the Government's national strategic objectives', p. 30.
190. Interview with a senior Fijian military officer.
191. Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper,* pp. 66–67.
192. Untitled, 4 March 2016, *Defence Imagery*, at: https://images.defence.gov.au/assets/Home/Search?Query=20160307ran8109938_075.jpg&Type=Filename)
193. *Fiji Hansard*, 27 April 2016, p. 1418.
194. Interview with a senior Fijian MOD official.
195. Interview with a senior NDMO official.
196. *Defence Annual Report 2015–16*, pp. 4, 30.
197. Burr, 2015, p. 5.
198. *Defence Annual Report 2015–16*, p. 4.
199. Untitled, 17 April 2016, *Defence Imagery*, at: https://images.defence.gov.au/assets/Home/Search?Query=20160417ADF8494074_159.jpg&Type=Filename
200. Department of Defence, *2016 Defence White Paper*, Canberra, 2016, pp. 72–78.
201. Ibid., Chapter 4.
202. Department of Defence, *The Defence of Australia*, Canberra, 1987, pp. vii–x.
203. Breen, 2008, p. 40.
204. Untitled, 15 April 2016, *Defence Imagery*, at: https://images.defence.gov.au/assets/Home/Search?Query=20160415adf8494074_069.jpg&Type=Filename
205. Interview with a senior Fijian military officer.
206. Interview with a senior MOFA official.

207. Interviews; Hon. Ratu I Kubuabola, Minister for Defence and National Security, *Fiji Hansard*, 7 February 2017, p. 574.
208. Interviews; Hon. Ratu I Kubuabola, Minister for Defence and National Security, *Fiji Hansard*, 7 February 2017, p. 576.
209. Interviews; Hon. Ratu I Kubuabola, Minister for Defence and National Security, *Fiji Hansard*, 7 February 2017, p. 576.
210. Paul Buchanan, 'Fiji Gets Closer to Its New Friends: Russian Arms Received by Increasingly Authoritarian Regime', *Lowy Informer*, 2 February 2016, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/fiji-gets-closer-its-new-friends-russian-arms-received-increasingly-authoritarian
211. 'Bushmasters for Our Troops', *Fiji Sun*, accessed 3 November 2017, at: https://fijisun.com.fj/2017/02/10/bushmasters-for-our-troops
212. Interviews; Hon. Ratu I Kubuabola, Minister for Defence and National Security, *Fiji Hansard*, 7 February 2017, p. 574.
213. Interview with a senior Australian Army officer.
214. The first Fijian Commander of the RFMF (1974–79) and later Cabinet Minister in the Rabuka Government (Home Affairs, Finance and then Justice). Known affectionately as the Colonel of the Regiment.
215. Conversations with Paul Manueli and RFMF officers; interview with a senior Fijian MOD official.
216. Interviews with a senior Fijian MOD official and a senior Fijian military officer, and numerous informal and confidential discussions.
217. Interview with a senior Australian military officer.
218. 'Fiji, Australia Seal Blackrock Project', ***Fiji Sun***, 17 April 2019, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://fijisun.com.fj/2019/04/17/fiji-australia-seal-blackrock-project
219. Ibid.
220. Linda Reynolds (Minister for Defence), Question on Notice No. 462, 2019–20 Supplementary Budget Estimates, Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, Senate, Canberra, 2020.
221. The cited author mentions Biketawa+, which became the Boe Declaration. Sadlier, 2018, p. 115.
222. Sadlier, 2018, p. 115.
223. 'Blackrock Camp Opening Ceremony', 14 March 2022, *Defence Imagery*, at: http://images.defence.gov.au/20220314adf8609651_0573.jpg
224. Interview with a senior Australian military officer.
225. Linda Reynolds (Minister for Defence), 'Military Skills Reinforce Regional Partnerships during Exercise Hydra', media release, 12 September 2019, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/media-releases/2019-09-12/military-skills-reinforce-regional-partnerships-during-exercise-hydra
226. Mereleki Nai, 'Fiji and Australian Armies Strengthen Vuvale Partnership with Coral Warrior Programme', *Fiji Sun*, 28 February 2020, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://fijisun.com.fj/2020/02/26/fiji-and-australian-armies-strengthen-vuvale-partnership-with-coral-warrior-programme
227. Interview with a senior Australian military officer.
228. 'Fiji Receives New Guardian-Class Patrol Boat', 6 March 2020, *Defence Imagery*, at: http://images.defence.gov.au/20200306ran8112562_422.jpg

229. Office of the Prime Minister, 'Hon. PM's Speech at the Handing-over Ceremony for the New Fijian Guardian-Class Patrol Boat (RFNS Savenaca)', 6 March 2020, accessed 26 May 2020, at: http://www.pmoffice.gov.fj/hon-pms-speech-at-the-handing-over-ceremony-for-the-new-fijian-guardian-class-patrol-boat-rfns-savenaca-06-03-2020

230. Linda Reynolds (Minister for Defence), 'Guardian-Class Patrol Boat Handover Ceremony—RFNS Savenaca', speech, 6 March 2020, accessed 17 May 2023, at: https://www.minister.defence.gov.au/minister/lreynolds/speeches/guardian-class-patrol-boat-handover-ceremony-rfns-savenaca

231. Sikeli Naqoli (Lieutenant, Second in Command of the RFMF contingent), quoted in Max Logan (Lieutenant), 'Fond Farewell for Newfound Fijian Friends', *Department of Defence*, 24 February 2020, accessed 27 May 2020, at: https://news.defence.gov.au/service/fond-farewell-newfound-fijian-friends

232. 'Operation Bushfire Assist 19–20', 8 February 2020, *Defence Imagery*, at: https://images.defence.gov.au/assets/Home/Search?Query=20200208army8270357_010.jpg&Type=Filename

233. Linda Reynolds (Minister for Defence), 'Guardian-Class Patrol Boat Handover Ceremony—RFNS Savenaca', speech, 6 March 2020.

234. Interview with a senior Australian Army officer.

235. Interview with a senior Australian military officer.

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ABC	Australian Broadcasting Corporation
ADA	Assistant Defence Attaché
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand and the United States Security Treaty
Army	Australian Army
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CDF	Chief of the Defence Force (Australia)
CA	Chief of the Army (Australia)
COE	contingent-owned equipment
COIN	counterinsurgency
DA	Defence Attaché
DCP	Defence Cooperation Program
Defence	the defence establishment (in Australia this includes the Department of Defence, outward-looking intelligence agencies and the ADF)
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

DIEP	Defence International Engagement Plan
DSR	Defence Strategic Review
EEZ	exclusive economic zone
FMOD	Fijian Ministry of Defence and National Security
HADR	humanitarian assistance and disaster response
HMAS	Her Majesty's Australian Ship
IED	improvised explosive device
IFV	infantry fighting vehicle (original classification of Bushmasters)
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
IPDIV	Australian Department of Defence's International Policy Division
MOFA	(Fijian) Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation
MRTF	Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force
MTT	mobile training team
NDMO	(Fijian) National Disaster Management Office
NEO	non-combatant evacuation operations
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
PICs	Pacific island countries
PIF	Pacific Islands Forum
PNG	Papua New Guinea
PNGDF	Papua New Guinea Defence Force
PM	Prime Minister
PMSP	Pacific Maritime Security Program

PMV	protected mobility vehicle (classification of Bushmasters)
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands
RFMF	Republic of Fiji Military Forces
RFNS	Republic of Fiji Naval Service
SAS	Special Air Service
TNI	Tentara Nasional Indonesia (Indonesian military)
UKMOD	UK Ministry of Defence
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

researchcentre.army.gov.au