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**Australian Army Cooperation with the
Land Forces of the United States
Problems of the Junior Partner**

by

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABCA	American–British–Canadian–Australian Armies
ADF	Australian Defence Force
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
MOLE	Military Operations in a Littoral Environment
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
UN	United Nations
UNITAF	Unified Task Force
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
US	United States
USFI	US Forces INTERFET
USMC	US Marine Corps

ABSTRACT

Australia's commitment to the War on Terrorism exposes a conundrum that lies at the heart of Australian defence preparedness. In a world dominated by the United States as the global superpower, how can Australia use its defence forces to pursue national interests while gaining the strategic benefits that accrue from being a close partner of the United States? Events since 11 September 2001 have demonstrated that it is no longer possible to restrict Australia's strategic horizon to its immediate region. Indeed, during the past century, conflicts of global magnitude always included Australia. The United States is at war. Initially, it was thought that this fact need not pose an immediate threat to Australia. However, Australian citizens have been the target of terrorist violence, not only because they were Australians, but because they were perceived as American allies. The fundamentalist terrorists' failure to discriminate means that the vital interests of any pluralist secular state are potential targets.

Without seeking a war, the Australian people have had a war declared on them. The Australian Defence Force (ADF) must maintain readiness to combat the threat. As a small, though high-quality, military force with limited resources, the ADF can only make the most of its capabilities by establishing complementary synergies with other armed forces. In this strategic environment, no military relationship is more important than Australia's relationship with the world's first 'Hyperpower'. It is inevitable that the ADF will continue to play a part in coalition operations against terrorist organisations and the states that shelter them. Given the fluid and unpredictable nature of this conflict, the Army in particular will be stretched to provide the range of capabilities required, and to sustain the ongoing cycle of deployments.

As the Australian Government's support of the US position on the Ba'ath regime in Iraq has demonstrated, contributing land forces to contemporary international coalitions presents the Army with a range of political, operational and tactical problems. For Australia to make the most of its contribution, its political leadership, foreign affairs officials and force planners need to work closely in order to match capabilities to outcomes. Experience has shown that, when cooperating with a superpower in a military context, the junior partner

must work hardest if it is to exercise any influence over coalition strategy and objectives.

This working paper outlines some of the historical lessons that the Australian Army has derived from its role as a junior partner in its military relationship with the United States. It concludes that effective army-to-army cooperation is essential to achieving adequate conditions of peace and stability in the new global-security environment. This environment is 'protean', in that conflict rapidly assumes new forms and characteristics. In the future, Australia's Army will have to think beyond merely establishing tactical interoperability with its major partners. It will have to position itself to take advantage of the combat multiplier effect of multinational forces in an ever-expanding range of contingencies.

Australian Army Cooperation with the Land Forces of the United States: Problems of the Junior Partner

The ultimate lesson is that there are many ways for a supporting nation to influence the leadership of a coalition force. However, this influence requires an investment of time, resources and patience.

US Forces International Force East Timor
Post-operational report, March 2000¹

Introduction

Australia's most important military relationship is with the armed forces of the United States of America. This relationship is not simply due to ties of culture, language and democratic ethos, nor is it due to the fact that as the world's only superpower the United States is currently enjoying a 'unipolar moment'. It is not even the result of the fact that the United States has become Australia's biggest trade partner, based on the two-way trade in merchandise and services. Australia's national security is inextricably linked with the fortunes of the United States and with other liberal-democratic countries around the world. As the Foreign Minister, Alexander Downer, pointed out in 2002, the web of United States (US) security alliances in the region is 'the linchpin for regional security and prosperity'.² Consequently, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) can expect to serve alongside US forces in meeting the security challenges facing the rapidly changing global system. This

¹ US Forces INTERFET, *Operation Stabilise, East Timor*, After-action report, PACOM, Honolulu, March 2000, p. 16.

² The Hon. Alexander Downer, MP, 'Advancing the National Interest: Australia's Foreign Policy Challenge', Speech at the National Press Club, Canberra, 7 May 2002, http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/2002/020507_fa_whi_tepaper.html (Downloaded 30 July 2002).

reality means that Australia's political, policy and military leadership needs to devote serious consideration to the strategic and operational implications of being a close, but relatively small, alliance partner of the United States. What is more, the practical implications of our relationship with the United States in the era of globalisation need to be communicated to a broad national constituency.

In the debate leading up to the deployment of Australian forces to the Middle East in early 2003, many critics of the operation justified their opposition by reference to outmoded and irrelevant Cold War strategic paradigms. Such analysis is unhelpful and potentially destructive. Future cooperation needs to be driven by contemporary strategic imperatives, not ideologically informed misrepresentations of our past relationship with the United States. Finally, in those circumstances where Australian troops are sent in harm's way, Australia's leadership has a positive responsibility to use their troops' efforts wisely, to protect their interests and to serve both the national interest and the greater international good. Military cooperation with a superpower is fraught with dangers for smaller powers; we therefore need to consider the problems facing the junior partner.

At the time of writing, in early 2003, a significant public debate is taking place on the appropriate contributions that Australia can make to the War on Terrorism and to the international effort to disarm Saddam Hussein's regime. One important aspect of this debate is that there is considerable uncertainty about the sort of capabilities that a small country can provide to an American-led coalition. To make a meaningful contribution, Australia would need to do more than put just another 'flag on the ground'. There are few capabilities that Australia possesses that the United States does not have in abundance. Accordingly, should the

Australian Government wish to participate in a multinational operation as a partner of the United States, considerable effort needs to go into designing a force contribution that will take ADF strengths into account and that will consequently be valued. This requirement has not always received adequate consideration in the past. This paper sets out the key issues that face Australia's operational relationships with the US military and discusses the means by which we can improve our combined land-force capabilities.

Australia's historical experience of involvement in armed conflict and peace operations has been characterised by involvement in multinational operations, until recently always as the junior partner. As members of the British Empire and later the Commonwealth, Australians have served in contingents sent to the Sudan (1885), the Boer War, the Boxer Rebellion, the two World Wars, the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation with Indonesia. Australians have served on a wide variety of peace operations, including the Commonwealth Monitoring Force in Rhodesia–Zimbabwe (1979–80), the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai (1993–), Cambodia (1992–93) and in Rwanda (1994–95). Since 1942, Australian forces have served as the junior partner in US-led operations in the South-West Pacific during World War II, in Korea, in Vietnam, in the Gulf, in Somalia and in Afghanistan.

The experience that Australian forces gained on these operations has been sustained and complemented by frequent combined exercises with US forces; by force-to-force collaborative relationships such as the American–British–Canadian–Australian Armies (ABCA) Program; and by regular officer exchanges and attendance at each other's military educational institutions. Consequently, the ADF is comfortable working in coalition with US forces.

The main problem that Australia faces in operating in coalition with US forces is that there is a significant mismatch in the level of capabilities that Australia can contribute to any coalition. The high degree of cultural and organisational compatibility that their respective forces share means that Australia is a useful coalition partner for the United States, particularly for operations in Australia's immediate region. The relationship also has significant political benefits for both countries. Nonetheless, when the United States looks at coalition operations involving Australia, it only sees an operational problem. For Australia, inclusion in an American-led multinational military operation is a national–strategic issue.

Recent events in the War on Terrorism have demonstrated that alliance cooperation can polarise the Australian polity. As Australian governments and the armed forces have found in the past, placing their troops under US operational control raises issues of sovereignty. Providing troops under US command brings into question the degree to which Australia can establish and pursue its own national objectives. Australia has a long record of contributing forces to American-led coalitions. The United States recently provided Australia with significant support for the mission that the latter led in East Timor. However, the task of making a valuable contribution to an operation without sacrificing the obligation of care that the government owes to its soldiers and the broader community is increasingly problematic.

Australia's history of military cooperation with the United States brings with it a great deal of baggage. Consequently, any government considering the commitment of combat forces to an operation involving the likelihood of casualties needs to take into account a number of factors. These factors include the extent of the national interests engaged; the

mission objective; the exit strategy; and the domestic implications of involvement.

Australian service personnel have served around the world as participants in great global struggles. On one occasion, in close alliance with the United States, Australian forces fought in the direct defence of Australian territory. Traditionally, Australian security has been actively served by the ADF and its predecessors, not as part of a chauvinist and parochial scheme of territorial defence but as contributors to alliances of liberal–democratic Western states. Historically, Australian troops have served as members of relatively autonomous expeditionary forces such as the First and Second Australian Imperial Forces in the World Wars. They have also provided niche capabilities to great alliances, as did Australian airmen who served in Europe during World War II.

The recent demands of commitments to peace operations and to the War on Terrorism have demonstrated that the ADF needs to preserve a balance of forces. This force structure should enable the ADF to mount reasonably self-reliant operations in its immediate region and to contribute world-class capabilities to coalitions serving international peace and security. The Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill, spelt out the reality of Australia's current strategic situation in a speech at the Australian Defence College in June 2002. In that speech, he concluded that the:

defence of Australia and its interests does not stop at the edge of the air–sea gap. It probably never made sense to conceptualise our security interests as a series of diminishing concentric circles around our coastline, but it certainly does not do so now. We are seeing a fundamental change to the notion that our security

responsibilities are confined largely to our own region. The ADF is both more likely to be deployed and increasingly likely to be deployed well beyond Australia.³

Senator Hill's comments must be understood in the light of the Australian Government's invocation of the ANZUS Treaty in the aftermath of the 11 September attacks. In justification of the activation of the treaty Prime Minister Howard held that:

The sheer scale of the carnage inflicted has taken terrorism to a new level unprecedented in the history of mankind. The world, including Australia, must respond. Even a cursory reflection on history must lead you to the irrefutable conclusion that passive indifference in the face of evil achieves nothing. The threat will remain, growing more ambitious and more powerful and feeding on the unwillingness of decent nations to decisively confront and defeat it. There is a saying that for evil to triumph, it requires only good men to do nothing. The lesson of history tells us that it is equally true for nations. We would be foolish indeed, in the very first years of the twenty-first century, to forget the most hard learned lesson of the twentieth century-that evil cannot be appeased.⁴

Although Australian territory and its immediate interests were not threatened, Australia took its place with other liberal-democratic states in opposing the terrorist threat. In

³ Senator the Hon. Robert Hill, Minister for Defence, 'Beyond the White Paper: Strategic Directions for Defence', Address to the Defence and Strategic Studies Course, Australian Defence College, Canberra, 18 June, 2002, www.minister.defence.gov.au/HillSpeehtml.cfm?CurrentId=1605 (Downloaded 25 June 2002).

⁴ The Hon. John Howard, Prime Minister of Australia, Address to the Australian Defence Association, Melbourne, 25 October 2001, http://www.dfat.gov.au/icat/pm_251001_speech.html (Downloaded 5 July 2002).

October 2001, Australian troops (predominantly a Special Forces capability) were made available to the United States for deployment to the failed state of Afghanistan, which had been harbouring the al-Qa'ida organisation. It is ironic that the first time the fifty-year-old ANZUS Treaty was invoked was not in a conflict between states, but against the more protean threat of a rabidly fundamentalist non-state actor. Nonetheless, Australia's response underlined the fact that its security is intrinsically linked not only to that of its liberal-democratic partners, but also to that of its regional neighbours. Consequently, Australia's willingness to contribute to international coalitions and its ability to make potent force contributions that outstrip those of many similarly sized countries makes multinational cooperation the cornerstone of Australia's security preparations. Prime Minister Howard said as much when he concluded that:

In the fight against terrorism, the United States welcomed Australian military participation for two reasons. First, they know-as we know-that an important message is sent to our enemies by the concentration of an international force against them. A coalition of national forces acting towards a single military aim is a tangible and utterly compelling demonstration of the solidarity of world opinion and world resolve. The threat of international terrorism hangs over each of our countries-it is only right that the risk and the cost for its eradication should be shared.⁵

In recent years Australia has experienced a paradigm shift that has seen its strategic emphasis move from a policy of defence self-reliance focusing on the territorial defence of Australia to a new reality in which multinational cooperation and collective security measures provide the best guarantee of its long-term security. The requirement to raise and sustain

⁵ *Ibid.*

a multinational peace operation in East Timor between September 1999 and February 2000 was a major wake-up call for the ADF. The International Force East Timor (INTERFET) consisted of twenty-two contingents drawn from a diverse range of regional and extra-regional states. Since the handover of command to the United Nations (UN), Australia has continued to play a significant role in the peacekeeping force component of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), providing the largest contingent and the deputy commander. Significantly, prior to operations in East Timor, the task of commanding a coalition was not one of the military response options required of the ADF by the Australian Government. Soon after the operation in East Timor commenced, the then Chief of the ADF, Admiral Chris Barrie, stated:

I think there's a gap in our doctrinal thinking because on [the] one hand our doctrine looked at defence of Australia requirements, on the other hand it looked at interoperability and participation in US-led coalitions and other things. And I think the gap that we need to address quite quickly is: 'What does it mean to be the leader of a small coalition operation such as we have in East Timor? What sort of responsibilities does that give us if that is to become an endorsed role for the ADF?'.⁶

Since 1999 a great deal of effort has gone into considering the implications of the new role represented by the leadership of Operation *Stabilise* in East Timor. Where before, the ADF only possessed doctrine relating to interoperability arrangements with the established ABCA partners, the Directorate of Policy and Doctrine in Australian Defence Headquarters has now prepared draft joint doctrine for

⁶ Admiral Chris Barrie, Chief of the Defence Force, Interview, AM Program, ABC Radio National, 8 a.m., 14 December 1999, <http://www.abc.net.au/am/s73107.htm>.

coalition operations. The decision to develop this publication supplanted previous plans for service-specific, operational-level Army doctrine. The draft doctrine confines itself to the strategic-level issues involved in building and managing a military coalition. It does not address the issues faced by commanders and staffs in planning and managing coalitions at the operational level. To a certain extent, the need for operational-level coalition doctrine is filled by the ABCA *Coalition Operations Handbook*, which is widely consulted in relevant ADF operational-level headquarters.⁷

After three years of involvement in multinational operations in East Timor, the ADF has amassed a great deal of expertise in working in a heterogeneous coalition environment. Although the nature of Australia's immediate strategic environment virtually guarantees that Australia will continue to construct coalitions with a culturally diverse range of partners, recent experiences have confirmed the value of continuing to build higher levels of functional interoperability with traditional partners such as the United States. Even more important than technical compatibility-which will continue to be a problem as the United States forges ahead of its partners in military transformation-is the need to build operational synergies. While such synergies are relatively easy to establish between platform-based air and naval forces, land force cooperation is inherently more complex. Constant effort is needed to deal with changing organisational structures, new doctrine and the all-important human element. Maintaining the ability to conduct complex land operations requires international officer exchange programs, combined training and attendance at each other's military educational institutions.

⁷ American-British-Canadian-Australian Armies Program, *Coalition Operations Handbook*, Primary Standardization Office, Arlington, VA, 1999.

Although this working paper is written from the perspective of army-to-army cooperation, it is also applicable to the other US services that might operate in Australia's strategic environment. As a state occupying a continent in the South-West Pacific, Australia's immediate area of operational concern is characterised by its being a littoral environment. Consequently the ADF has adopted a joint approach to operations, and this approach extends to its alliance and coalition partners.

For Australia, the advantages of cooperation with the US military are obvious. Australia is a small country with a population of not yet 20 million and a Defence Force of some 50 000 service personnel. If, as in East Timor, Australia has the main carriage of an operation, US involvement provides both a potent promise of support and access to a unique range of capabilities. Even without a significant presence of US troops, such capabilities are a key force multiplier and enable Australia to take the responsibility for a range of missions where our common interests are involved.

As far as the United States is concerned, Australian involvement in a coalition operation should go far beyond the presence of yet another 'flag on the ground' to bolster the legitimacy of military action. Australia does not, as one journalist suggested, seek to be 'deputy sheriff' to the United States in its region. There are, nonetheless, certain circumstances where it is appropriate for one country to adopt the role of lead nation or even to act on behalf of other states.⁸ Such circumstances might arise where regional sensitivities preclude the involvement of a particular state. Thus the interests of all parties can be served by one country acting as a proxy for partners in representing their interests. In the

⁸ Fred Brenchley, 'The Howard Doctrine', *Bulletin*, 28 September 1999, pp. 22–4.

South-West Pacific the ADF has acquired a great deal of local operational experience and possesses both a warfighting philosophy and robust peacemaking capabilities that complement the US military presence in the region. Australian and American interests and values generally coincide when it comes to military cooperation; it benefits them both to optimise synergies for combined operations.

The Australian Army and multinational operations

The most recent government Defence White Paper (published in December 2000) made a significant adjustment in the capability expectations of the Australian Army. The government decided that the priority was no longer to use the force-in-being as the expansion base for an army capable of prosecuting major continental-scale operations:

Rather, we place emphasis on providing a professional, well-trained, well-equipped force that is available for operations at short notice, and one that can be sustained over extended periods. This type of force will have the flexibility to deal with operations other than conventional war, and contribute to coalitions.⁹

The strategic guidance provided to the ADF suggests that, should they have to fight, Australian forces are most likely to be employed on low-level to medium-intensity operations. The White Paper expressly states that the government has ‘decided against the development of heavy armoured forces suited for contributions to coalition forces for high-intensity conflicts’.¹⁰ The government requires the Army to be capable of sustaining a brigade deployed on operations for extended periods and at the same time maintain at least a battalion group available for deployment elsewhere. With only 17 000

⁹ Department of Defence, *Defence 2000, Our Future Defence Force*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra, 2000, p. 79.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

troops employed in Land Command units, this requirement presents the Army with a significant problem in sustaining and rotating its land combat forces.

Historically, the Australian Army has been noted for its ability to contribute high-quality, well-trained and generally well-equipped contingents to multinational operations. For the most part these contingents have largely consisted of light infantry. Given the current policy guidance from government, it appears unlikely that this characteristic will change.

In recent operations in the Gulf and in Afghanistan, Australia has provided special forces units drawn from the Army's Special Air Services Regiment. In Afghanistan, in particular, these troops have been engaged in light-infantry combat operations—a role that is not their primary or even secondary task, though their training suits them for it superbly. Given the current high operational tempo, it can be expected that, should Australia be called upon to contribute combat troops to a future coalition, some contribution other than special forces might be made. Special forces have the advantage of being a niche capability that can be quickly assimilated into a multinational force. However, a readily deployable and self-sustaining contingent with a substantial light-infantry component might be equally useful. Some consideration of past US–Australian army-to-army cooperation demonstrates this point.

Recent historical experience of Australian–US cooperation

In the past, the key challenge encountered by Australian forces was the need to establish effective levels of interoperability with the forces to which the Australian contingent had been attached. This problem became particularly critical for the battalion sent to Vietnam in June 1965. This battalion was based with the US 173rd Airborne

Brigade (Separate) in Bien Hoa and operated through the III Corps area. Not only was Australian equipment found to be of a poorer quality than that used by the US Army forces with whom the Australians worked, but there was ongoing disagreement over doctrine and tactics. As a result, the Australian Government dispatched a largely self-sufficient, brigade-sized task force, which conducted independent operations in its own area of operations in Phuoc Tuy province from 1966 to 1971.

The fact that the task force had its own logistics link through the coastal town of Vung Tau enabled it to exercise a greater degree of self-reliance. Although Australian forces came under the operational control of a US headquarters, II Field Force Vietnam, the Australians were largely responsible for fighting the war in their own way.¹¹ Reflecting the different scale of the Australian forces involved and the more limited resources available to them, Australian Army tactics for tropical counterinsurgency warfare remained quite distinct from those employed by US forces. Building on their previous experience in Malaya and during Confrontation with Indonesia, the Army units employed patrolling and cordon-and-search operations to maintain constant pressure on the Viet Cong infrastructure. While a few major battles occurred, for the most part Australian operations were characterised by a ‘softly softly’ approach. Small unit operations lay at the heart of Australian operational doctrine. Unlike their American counterparts, Australian forces did not place an emphasis on inflicting massive battlefield casualties. One commentator has noted:

¹¹ Jeffrey Grey, *The Australian Army, The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, vol. 1, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p. 220.

Australia's army was essentially a light infantry force and this was reflected in the troops' aptitude for patrolling, fieldcraft and night operations. America's big mechanised army was more able to devastate opposing forces. The small Australian force was more thoroughly trained and able to include a greater proportion of experienced soldiers and leaders than the US.¹²

The tactical situation in the Australian area of operations assisted this approach, since the operations that the Australians conducted were relatively small-scale in comparison with some of the fighting experienced by the Americans.

Although over the period of the Australian involvement in Vietnam the Australian Army maintained its own 'national way of warfighting', the US influence did reshape the Australian Army. The Army acquired—or copied—many items of US equipment, including field radios, load-carrying gear and weapons. More significant was the exposure to the enormous resources of the US military, since the Australian Army had long experience of making do with limited support. As Michael Evans of the Australian Army's Land Warfare Studies Centre concluded:

The most important doctrinal impact of Vietnam was the influence of combined arms warfare through the use of helicopters, close air support, artillery fire and armour. The Australian Army emerged from Vietnam in 1972 as a highly professional force. It was expert in Asian counter-revolutionary warfare and accustomed to fighting in tropical warfare conditions against a definite enemy and within the framework of an allied force. However, it was also a tactical-level Army,

¹² Russell Miles, 'Vietnam Re-examined', *Defender*, vol. XII, no. 2, Winter 1995, p. 26.

derivative of its allies in much of its operational thinking and with little experience of developing doctrine for independent operations.¹³

Quite apart from the operational experience of involvement in the war, both the Army and Australian society as a whole were strongly affected by the dilemmas arising from the limited commitment that Australia offered as a junior ally of the United States. Australia suffered some 500 deaths over a ten-year involvement in the war. While in proportion to US casualties these figures were small, they had a significant impact in Australia, particularly as 202 of the dead were conscripts.¹⁴ For the first few years of the war, the Australian commitment enjoyed bipartisan political support within Parliament. The Army's initial deployment to Vietnam of a regular army training team went almost unnoticed; counterinsurgency operations in South-East Asia were hardly new and, besides, these troops were professionals. With the commitment of infantry battalions, the interests of the general community became more directly engaged.

By the late 1960s opposition to the war mounted, mirroring the anti-war movement in America. The Australian involvement had an extra dimension in that, while the war continued and casualties climbed, Australia's vital interests were not engaged and it had no obvious exit strategy. Although the Army had a clear vision of its role in Phuoc Tuy province, it had only a minor influence on the course of the war. With no end in sight and no decisive outcome likely, it is not surprising that public opinion forced the government

¹³ Michael Evans, *Forward from the Past: The Development of Australian Army Doctrine 1972–Present*, Land Warfare Studies Centre Study Paper No. 301, Duntroon, ACT, August 1999, p. 7.

¹⁴ Peter Dennis *et al.*, *The Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1995, p. 620.

to bring the task force home in 1971. The training team followed a year later.¹⁵

The Vietnam experience demonstrated the strategic implications of Australia's position as a lesser partner. While many Americans remain unaware of the Australian involvement, Australian society was split by bitter disputes over its role in the war. The outgoing Liberal Government introduced a policy of defence self-reliance before leaving office and the incoming Labor Government announced that Australian troops would never again serve on operations in South-East Asia.¹⁶ For the following thirty years, successive governments from both sides of politics have accepted a national-security policy whose priority is continental defence. Australia's war in Vietnam demonstrated that it could not make an open-ended commitment to a US-led coalition-particularly for land operations, where the possibility of suffering casualties was high. The political dimension of combined operations involves not only the government and the military, but ultimately the electorate.

¹⁵ See Frank Frost, *Australia's War in Vietnam*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1987, pp. 178–82; D. M. Horner, *Australian Higher Command in the Vietnam War*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence no. 40, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1986; T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War*, 2nd edn, Australian National University Press, 1991, pp. 174–6, 180, 222–5, 334.

¹⁶ Department of Defence, *Australian Defence Review*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, March 1972, p. 27; E. G. Whitlam and L. H. Barnard, Defence Policy: Statement issued at a press conference held in Brisbane, 18 October 1971; L. H. Barnard, MP, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Speech to the Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 29 March 1972; Statement by L. H. Barnard, MP, Minister of Defence, *Australian Defence: Major Decisions Since December 1972*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975.

The next major operation that an Australian Army unit conducted within a US-led coalition involved participation by an infantry battalion group in the multinational Unified Task Force (UNITAF) in Somalia between January and May 1993. Australia had provided naval vessels to the Multi-National Naval Force in the Gulf War of 1990–91; however, in keeping with the post-Vietnam policy of emphasising the territorial defence of Australia, no ground forces were deployed to the conflict—a conflict that was not perceived as posing a direct threat to Australia.

Although brief, the Australian involvement in UNITAF proved significant for the Australian Army. It was the first time that a combat unit had been employed on a US-led peace operation since the end of the Cold War. Not only did the operation take place well outside what was then termed Australia's area of direct military interest, but it was felt that this would be a 'one-off' operation. The conduct of security operations for a humanitarian relief mission was not, at the time, considered to be an ADF function. The need to deploy substantial combat capabilities to East Timor—as well as Australian Army involvement in peace and humanitarian relief operations in Rwanda, Papua New Guinea and the Solomons—has since proven the need for the Army to be prepared to mount significant operations offshore.

Operations in Somalia demonstrated the benefits of combined training and officer exchanges. Many of the officers deployed on the operation had personal acquaintances in the US forces and this familiarity, as much as anything, contributed to force cohesion. Although there were some differences in jargon, both operational and logistic staff systems were fundamentally compatible. Successful airmobile search-and-clear operations were conducted by Australian troops with the US 10th Aviation

Brigade. These missions showed that it was possible to achieve a high level of tactical interoperability. Throughout the operation Australian troops had their own area of operations in the Baidoa Humanitarian Relief Sector. Initially, the Australian Battalion Group was deployed under the operational control of the US 10th Mountain Division, but for the second half of the mission, operational control passed to the Australian national headquarters element that had deployed to command the force. Reflecting the high level of cultural synergies achieved, command and control was not an issue on this operation.

There were some problems establishing equipment compatibility with US forces, though with few exceptions such problems did not affect operations. It was noted, however, that the degree of digitisation achieved by the US Army was far more advanced than anything that the Australians had yet encountered. The Australian force commander concluded that secure and compatible telephone, facsimile and data transfer equipment was required. Additionally, although clearances to access the US intelligence system had been processed prior to the deployment and forwarded to the United States, they were not passed to UNITAF since the deployment was occurring over the Christmas holiday period.¹⁷

Some distinction has been drawn between the contrasting styles of peace enforcement employed by Australian and US forces in Somalia. This variation in operational styles is a consequence of the very different historical influences that have shaped the development of the two countries' armies. The disparity in resources available to the two armies is

¹⁷ Bob Breen, *A little bit of hope: Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp. 337, 342–3.

another reason for the variation. As Dr Robert Patman of the University of Otago in New Zealand has observed:

The US approach was short-term, reactive high-tech, compartmentalised and maximum force oriented. At the other end of the spectrum, Australia exhibited a community-based style of peace-enforcement that might be more appropriately described as peace enhancement. This was long-term, assertive, relatively low-tech, integrated and minimum force oriented. Overall, it was a ‘tough but tender’ approach to humanitarian intervention.¹⁸

This is not to say that the Australian approach lacked teeth. Australian troops exercised considerable fire discipline and sought to shape the security environment in their area of operations by asserting a constant presence through active patrolling and community reconstruction tasks. When fired upon, however, they replied with high volumes of accurate fire.¹⁹ This robust approach to peace enforcement reflected the fact that Australia’s Army is based on a light-infantry force with a strong tactical focus. Given their experience in South-East Asia and in training for low-level operations in defence of the Australian mainland, the Australian Army is comfortable in applying counterinsurgency techniques to enforce peace in failed states. Charged with delivering security in a complex and unfamiliar area of operations, the force chose to employ both ‘hard’- and ‘soft’-power techniques to achieve their objectives. Of all the regions in Somalia, Baidoa remained secure until 1994, when with the UN mandate at an end, the province suffered the fate of the rest of that benighted country.

¹⁸ Robert G. Patman, ‘Beyond “the Mogadishu Line”’: Some Australian Lessons for Managing Intra-State Conflicts’, *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, vol. 12, no. 1, Spring 2001, p. 71.

¹⁹ Bob Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, p. 339.

Most recently, US forces and the ADF cooperated in East Timor on Operation *Stabilise*, the Australian-led peace enforcement operation authorised by UN Security Council Resolution 1264. This operation, which took place between September 1999 and February 2000, provided an innovative model for future coalition operations involving Australian and US forces. The United States had no significant interests engaged in East Timor and in any case was already heavily engaged elsewhere, most notably in Kosovo. While in a major warfighting coalition involving the United States and Australia (and no doubt other countries), the United States would inevitably take the lead, this was not the case here. As the US Forces INTERFET (USFI) post-operational report found:

USFI represents an experiment in limiting the role and size of US participation while continuing to demonstrate our commitments to allies and our support to the growing numbers of peace operations underway [sic] in the world.²⁰

The US contingent provided a unique contribution to the multinational force-in the form of a range of capabilities that Australia as lead nation did not possess. Such capabilities included:

- the Deployable Joint Task Force Augmentation Cell sent by Admiral Blair, Commander-in-Chief US Pacific Command to assist the Australian planning effort;
- logistical support (including strategic-lift, heavy-lift helicopters);
- intelligence (including Trojan Spirit II secure-communications package, electronic surveillance, counterintelligence and analysts);

²⁰ US Forces INTERFET, *Operation Stabilise, East Timor, After-action report*, PACOM, Honolulu, March 2000, p. 1.

- communications (including tactical satellite terminals, long-haul satellite communications, data networks and voice switching); and
- civil affairs (Civil Military Operations Center training and support).²¹

The US contingent was designated a ‘Joint Force’, though not a ‘Joint Task Force’, and therefore represented something of a hybrid organisation in US doctrine. As far as the Australians were concerned, however, the American contribution was exactly what was required. Initially, the Australian media reported some ill-informed criticism that the United States had not made a heavy commitment of ground troops.²² Despite this misrepresentation, as the operation progressed, it became clear that the provision of complementary (but unique) capabilities was a significant force multiplier. The US contribution did more than merely supplement the troop numbers in theatre—it enabled the operation to proceed. Additionally, the public–political pressure brought to bear on the Indonesian Government to accept the international force²³ was a key factor in removing support for the militia groups in East Timor.²⁴

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² See Robert Garran and Christopher Dore, ‘Call for US troops tests alliance’, *Australian*, 8 September 1999, p. 4; Michelle Grattan, Gay Alcorn and Peter Cole-Adams, ‘Howard pushes for US “boots on the ground”’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 September 1999, p. 1; Paul Kelly, ‘Shattered myths’, *Weekend Australian*, 11–12 September 1999, p. 25.

²³ Such pressure was brought to bear by President Clinton and Admiral Blair of US Pacific Command.

²⁴ Robert Garran and Stephen Romei, ‘Severe dressing down for Jakarta’, *Australian*, 28 September 1999, pp. 1–2.

The visit by US Ambassador to the UN, Richard Holbrooke, resulted in a meeting between General Cosgrove, Indonesian military leaders and Taur Matan Ruak (Commander of the East Timorese resistance force FALANTIL)²⁵ at the border town of Motaain on 22 November. The result of that meeting was the joint acceptance of a Memorandum of Technical Understanding on the control of the Inter-Timor border. Each party agreed to respect the East–West Timorese boundary and to discourage retaliatory militia violence. Although the US presence was not obvious in terms of troops on the ground, it was critical to the success of the mission.

The Australian- and UN-led operations in East Timor are widely accepted as a considerable success. This knowledge, combined with the fact that the militia groups put up little resistance, has led to a certain degree of amnesia concerning the conditions of the initial deployment. At the time that Australian, New Zealand and British troops were deployed into Dili, it was expected that the force could suffer significant casualties. US support was multidimensional and reflected the ability of the superpower to provide a combat power multiplier effect without committing combat troops to ongoing operations. Most important, perhaps, was the political leverage that US involvement provided, and this commitment was reinforced by the substantial logistical, communications and intelligence support that is unique to the US military. In a practical sense, the presence of the USS *Belleau Wood*, with its contingent of Marines from the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit, provided a visible token of US involvement.

The fact that the United States was content to deploy its forces in a junior role in the Australian-led coalition

²⁵ *Forças Armadas da Libertação Nacional de Timor Leste*, Armed Forces for the National Liberation of East Timor.

demonstrated the high level of trust that already existed between both the Australian and the US governments at the strategic level and their forces at the operational level. The task of establishing combined-force synergies that will enable the ADF to undertake future, more complex missions requires the ADF—and the Army in particular—to expand those links.

Key operational challenges in multinational contingencies

The first operational challenge that immediately leaps to mind in multinational operations is that of achieving functional interoperability between forces. As already discussed, the widening technological gap between the United States and its traditional alliance partners makes it difficult for less well resourced forces to keep up. For the ADF this problem is compounded by the fact that, in the broad-based coalitions in which it is likely to participate, it experiences a similar disjunction with forces from developing countries. Even when cooperating with forces from extremely compatible countries such as New Zealand, the resource gap makes it difficult to assume that any given partner will be capable of undertaking certain missions.

The New Zealand analogy is a particularly useful one. Putting aside the political baggage that accompanied New Zealand's withdrawal from the ANZUS pact, the proportional commitment that the New Zealanders can make to an operation is on a similar scale as the Australians' ability to assist the United States. Realistically, with a population well under four million, New Zealand is severely constrained in the level of military capability that it can deploy. Nonetheless, for three years now, an effective multinational Australian–New Zealand Brigade, with a combined headquarters, has been operating on the intra-Timorese border, providing security in what is called Sector West.

Latter rotations of the New Zealand battalion in Sector West have seen it become a composite international battalion, containing Fijian, Irish and Nepalese sub-units. The main lesson of this operation has been that all forces, regardless of their resources, need to train and think to operate both one level of capability up and one level down from their actual potential. Forces that understand one another can work around issues of technical incompatibility, but all the seamless technological wizardry in the world will not overcome a mutual lack of understanding.

Accordingly, no matter how similar their national cultures are, it makes sense to think of integrating partners into coalitions, rather than assimilating them. Army units are human-based organisations. While they may be organised along similar lines, no unit is the same. Within a single army, for instance, no two infantry battalions provide an identical capability. To make the most of multinational coalitions, the lead nation should seek to maximise the benefits of the complementary capabilities and skill sets that each contingent brings. The American scholar Patrick Walsh has made the point that:

Generally, the most effective coalitions are those that integrate resources and capabilities rather than solely focus on the assimilation of personnel. Military leadership of the coalition strives to create norms, values, and a sense of loyalty to the collective that is larger and extends beyond that of individual sovereign units.²⁶

Walsh and an increasing number of other coalition pundits argue that we need to think more of 'synchronisation' than

²⁶ Patrick Michael Walsh, 'Military Coalition Building: A Structural and Normative Assessment of Coalition Architecture', Doctoral Thesis, Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University, Spring 1999, p. 217.

we do of interoperability. All too often when we think of interoperability, we fall into the trap of thinking about standardisation. Rather than pursue the mythical Holy Grail of achieving seamless synergies within disparate coalitions, campaign planners need to be turning their attention to ‘the arrangement of military actions in time, space and purpose to produce maximum relative combat power at a decisive place and time’.²⁷

The demands of the international War on Terrorism have demonstrated that any contemporary multinational operation is likely to involve a wide variety of partners. The spectacle of US Special Forces troops galloping into battle alongside Afghan warriors illustrated the fact that future commanders will need to make allowances for, and to accommodate, a wide variety of capabilities. The armed forces of countries such as Australia, experienced in their own regions and with established regional defence relationships, can do a great deal to cement disparate and ad hoc coalitions together.

Significant problems remain, and these have been exposed by recent operations. Without US strategic lift, it would have been impossible to build up INTERFET as quickly as occurred. Such a delay might have caused a very different outcome for the operation. The problems faced by some contingents committed to the War in Afghanistan in reaching the theatre of operations reinforced the fact that, without US assistance, many countries find it difficult to move their land forces safely beyond their shores. Of course the United States cannot be expected to shoulder this burden alone, but it should seek to encourage its friends and allies to develop the supplementary strategic-lift capacity required to enhance response times.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 19; see also General Robert W. Riscassi, ‘Principles for Coalition Warfare’, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Summer 1993, p. 65.

Similarly, the issue of operational intelligence sharing continues to be an obstacle to effective combined operations. This is not so much a problem among the ABCA forces as it is when coalitions contain other partners. There are no easy solutions to this problem. The War on Terrorism has highlighted the need for effective sharing of intelligence between agencies and countries. We can hope that the exigencies of the situation will drive countries to establish more interactive intelligence networks, and to develop doctrines and understandings that will facilitate information exchange.

Enhancing army-to-army cooperation

Traditionally, the Australian Army has looked not to the US Army, but to the US Marine Corps (USMC) as the force with which it can best establish combined synergies. In part this relationship might be traced to the role played by the USMC in the South-West Pacific Theatre during World War II. For the most part, it is a function of the relative scale of Australian and US forces, combined with the philosophy of littoral manoeuvre adopted by the Australian Army. The Australian Army is, however, keenly following the process of experimentation and force transformation that is currently taking place in the US Army. It might not be entirely clear how services as different as the US and Australian Armies will cooperate in the future, but it is clear that they will have to learn to do so.

One issue that will prove important is the level at which units and formations can integrate to build operational synergies. Writing about peace support operations, Colonel Stephen Bowman of the US Army Military History Institute has pointed out that interoperability and technological issues are best addressed at the brigade and higher level since:

Lower level integration exacerbates differences in capabilities, communications and culture. Focus can be placed on critical areas to improve interoperability: communications, intelligence, computers, munitions and fuels. Developing protocols and common procedures will help resolve differences among the various national forces . . . ²⁸

He concludes that combat units need to be integrated at a progressively higher level as the operational tempo becomes more intense. The reality, however, is that Australia possesses only six regular battalions. While a battalion or brigade group is not the only capability that Australia could contribute to a US-led peace support or warfighting operation, it is perhaps the most likely option. Australia is extremely loath to send its troops 'in harm's way' unless they can-as a minimum expectation-provide for their own self-protection.

In its highly professional, all-volunteer force Australia simply does not have large numbers of troops to send on operations. Consequently, if Australia wishes to make a contribution to a multinational operation, the ADF must prepare for the role of a self-reliant but relatively small partner in a US force. While the United States is unlikely to place combat units under Australian operational control, US Pacific Command needs to consider how it might augment an Australian-led operation should that circumstance arise.

One option for achieving higher levels of strategic cooperation has been proposed by Major Jonathan Gackle, a

²⁸ Colonel Stephen Bowman, 'Historical and cultural influences on coalition operations', chap. 1 in Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip Kaiser and Jon Kessmeire (eds), *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, PA, 1997, p. 18.

Marine Corps officer who recently served on exchange with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF). Major Gackle argues that Australia and the United States should introduce ‘deployment integration’.²⁹ He builds his argument using the model of forward-deployed Air Force squadrons. He suggests that the Australian units operating the same aircraft and equipment as the United States forces can achieve a strategic level of interoperability.

Gackle also argues that, in a three-phase process, an Australian Air Force squadron could fully integrate into a forward-deployed USMC formation. This argument depends on similar forces sharing platform-based capabilities. He concludes, however, that initiating this level of cooperation would not only enhance the long-term prospect for deployment integration of the USMC and the RAAF, but it would increase the opportunity for future ADF interoperability with Marine amphibious task forces. He goes on to argue that an Australian combined-arms force—equipped with a Joint Strike Fighter tactical air component—could achieve the synergies necessary to wage seamless coalition warfare. In doing so, the ADF could potentially provide a complementary component—about the same size as that of the Marine Expeditionary Unit—able to function within the Marine Corps’ operational concept of Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare.

There are clearly significant obstacles to attaining this level of interoperability—not least being the issue of Australia’s implied advance consent to participation in US operations. Australia’s security interests in the region are likely to mirror those of the United States, but no state can ever be prepared

²⁹ Jonathan O. Gackle, ‘US–Australian Defense Cooperation: A Model for Twenty-First Century Security Arrangements’, *Defense & Security Analysis*, vol. 18, no. 1, 2002, pp. 39–49.

to venture its force structure on the expectation that it will always be committed to a conflict dominated by another power. There is, nonetheless, some merit in developing specific capabilities that are relevant to regional operations and complement our major ally's strengths. Gackle suggests that the Australian Army's concept of Military Operations in a Littoral Environment (MOLE) will inevitably lead to the adoption of a force structure compatible with that of the Marines. The promotion of technical and tactical synergies suggests ways in which the Australian Army and US forces will achieve higher levels of operational burden-sharing in the future.

Of all America's services, the USMC is most likely to achieve functional levels of cooperation with the ADF. This relationship should be seen as a key foundation for the construction of capabilities that will enhance the value of Australia's contribution to coalitions. However, while combined capabilities are important, interstate cooperation is founded on common political goals and shared interests. It is important to bear in mind the lessons of past military relationships between Australia and the United States.

The political dimension of Australian–US military cooperation

During World War II, Australia learnt the bitter lessons of being the junior partner. Although much has changed, the issue of Australia's relative insignificance in global affairs remains. Some consideration of the political relationships that developed during that period of crisis demonstrates the problems that Australia might face should its security situation deteriorate once again. Throughout the 1940s Australia's relationship with the country that emerged as its major partner was not improved by the failure of successive governments to establish a 'whole-of-government' approach

to the complex task of alliance management. Consequently, the Curtin Labor Government was noted for its lack of influence over the conduct of the War in the South-West Pacific.³⁰ At Australia's time of greatest national peril, the government's lack of experience in managing an alliance relationship was manifest. Internecine conflict within the government and within the senior ranks of the Army diminished the already limited Australian influence over the strategic direction of the war.³¹ This failing continued throughout the war and into the critical period of postwar reconstruction, when the Allies were concentrating their efforts on the task of rebuilding the international system. Preoccupied with the problems of national survival in a major world conflict, the Australians lost sight of the fact that their own future was contingent on the continuing existence of Western liberal democracy. Planners at all levels need to be aware of Australia's status as a junior partner and must maintain a sense of proportion about the significance of Australia's potential contribution to the global effort. This sense of proportion did not exist during World War II.

³⁰ T. B. Millar, *Australia in Peace and War: External Relations since 1788*, 2nd edn, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1991, pp. 121–2; David Day, 'Pearl Harbour to Nagasaki', chap. 3 in *Munich to Vietnam: Australia's Relations with Britain and the United States since the 1930s*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, Vic., 1991, pp. 52–69; Alan Watt, *The Evolution of Australian Foreign Policy 1931–1965*, Cambridge University Press, 1968, pp. 61–8.

³¹ See David Horner, *Crisis of Command: Australian Generalship and the Japanese Threat 1941–1943*, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1978; David Horner, 'Curtin and Macarthur at war: How Australia lost control of the war effort to an American general', *Wartime: Official Magazine of the Australian War Memorial*, no. 2, April 1998, pp. 34–40; David Horner, *Inside the War Cabinet: Directing Australia's War Effort, 1939–1945*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1996.

After resigning as a member of the Department of External Affairs, Paul Hasluck³² remarked:

Australian foreign policy in the past three or four years has suffered from a passion for doing something on every occasion without enough thoughtful concern over what is best and doing it at the right time . . . we have sometimes butted unnecessarily into other people's arguments without waiting to consider whether the argument was getting on all right without us. We are not as considerate of other people's honour as we are of our own and are rather careless of other people's corns.³³

It is easy to forget that participation in a multinational force involves an ongoing relationship with the other partner nations. The formation of the force and its deployment to the theatre of operations is only a precondition for operational success. Multinational forces, particularly those with a large and inherently complex land-based component, require constant nurturing. We can learn much from the alliance relationship that developed in the 1940s. For one thing, the relationship with the United States was novel and the concerns that bedevil a global conflict were writ large at that time.

The somewhat parochial concerns of the Australian Government ultimately detracted from Australia's credibility as an alliance partner. Membership of an international coalition is not an end in itself; it is entered into in order to achieve common international objectives. A sensible policy seeks to influence combined strategy in a positive way, not just secure limited national objectives. In his authoritative work on the problems of higher command during World War II, David Horner concluded that the most valuable

³² He was later Minister in the Menzies Government.

³³ Paul Hasluck, *Workshop of Security*, Cheshire, Melbourne, 1948, p. 178.

lesson that Australia learnt from its wartime relationship with the United States was that:

if a small nation is to have any influence over allied strategy, then it has to have a coherent and clearly defined policy which takes account of both national and allied objectives. This policy must be pursued by both political and military leaders in close co-operation and with mutual confidence. The luxury of several competing national policies, promoted by different organs of the one government, can be enjoyed only by a great power.³⁴

The same rules apply today and have been intensified by the circumstances of the War on Terrorism. In responding to the threat of asymmetric attack, military action is only one of the tools of an effective national-security strategy. Increasingly, civil and military leaders need to understand each other, develop mechanisms for immediate and coherent crisis response, and adopt a consistent policy line when dealing with the senior alliance partner. These objectives are difficult to achieve when the guidance contained in the defence and foreign policy white papers is arrived at independently and at different times. Achieving consistency and a degree of predictability as an alliance partner is also problematic when the crisis management machinery within government is developed on an ad hoc basis.³⁵ Given that the current strategic situation involves a range of non-military security issues requiring particular expertise and close negotiation with major allies, it is worth revisiting the concept of a national security council on the American model.

³⁴ David Horner, *High Command: Australia's struggle for an independent war strategy 1939–45*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1982, p. 442.

³⁵ See Alan Ryan, 'Primary Responsibilities and Primary Risks': *Australian Defence Force Participation in the International Force East Timor*, Study Paper no. 304, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, ACT, November 2000, pp. 38–9.

Conclusion

The task of preparing for multinational operations cannot be left to the last moment, particularly if the lead nation expects to make foreign force contributions an asset rather than an encumbrance. In the past, Australia and the United States have worked well together on military operations, and that is a record to be commended. They are both English-speaking, Western countries with a substantially shared culture. Consequently, it is easy for their armed forces to take up the same technologies and to work together on a personal basis.

To enhance this record of successful collaboration in the future, it is important that we do not take these similarities for granted. Maintaining multinational force cohesion and employing combined military force effectively and efficiently continues to be as much the product of ‘soft’ human factors as it is of providing technical interoperability. The Australian Army and its counterparts in the United States—both the US Army and the USMC—must continue to conduct combined training; develop consistent and integrated doctrine; understand each other’s force development processes; and inculcate coalition principles in their personnel. What is more, both Australian and US planners and soldiers alike need to appreciate that future coalitions will not merely consist of a cosy Western club, but will contain a wide variety of partners. In preparing for future coalition operations we need to think multilaterally as well as bilaterally.

The success of the broad-based coalition in East Timor demonstrated that total technical interoperability is not required to guarantee the success of a multinational force. Nonetheless, as the operational tempo increases, greater technical interoperability significantly enhances the ability of forces to work together. The ADF can expect close interoperability with its alliance partners—particularly the

United States—though it is worth noting that within INTERFET not even the ABCA partners had common equipment and software. It is unlikely, however, that more disparate partners will be able to ‘plug in’ to the sort of system utilised by Western forces. Within Australia’s immediate region, this technical disjunction can be partly overcome by a higher number of combined training and education programs, but in many cases we are simply going to have to accept that cooperation will have to suffice.

For Australia and the United States the significant issue that is likely to remain is: at what level is it reasonable to integrate their forces, given the level of threat they face and the likely range of operations they will have to conduct? Ultimately, our planning staffs will have to move from the one-dimensional concept of achieving interoperability to thinking about how best to synchronise processes and effects in the joint multinational environment.

There are limits to the capabilities that the Australian Army and the ADF can bring to any coalition commanded by the United States. On the other hand, without a large deployment of its own forces and with relatively little expense, the United States can facilitate the success of an Australian-led operation. The differences in their military cultures and strategic circumstances do suggest that they have the ability to assist each other on different types of operations. When called upon to operate together, what really counts are the unique capabilities that the supporting partner produces. While the Australian Army needs to retain a certain degree of self-reliance to provide for its own security, operational success in 21st-century operations will be the product of orchestrating the combat multiplier effect inherent in multinational forces. To achieve these effects is undoubtedly the acme of military skill.

Australian force contributions to operations since 11 September have served to emphasise the fact that as the junior partner on most operations, our operational deployments have a national–strategic effect. The willingness to deploy ground forces on the complex contemporary battlefield is the ultimate demonstration of national resolve. It is valuable currency in our global relationships, and it must be spent wisely and well. On the other hand, if Australia wishes to continue to exert a positive influence on international affairs that is disproportionate to its size, it must be prepared to lend its assistance to its most prominent ally whenever it is feasible, and appropriate, to do so. Australia’s support for US action against Saddam Hussein’s totalitarian terrorist regime has demonstrated that not resiling from a military commitment can win significant international credit and credibility.

Finally, to the operational dimension of cooperation must be added the political dimension of coalition cohesion at both the domestic and the international level. National objectives may be achieved by the use of military force, but to secure them requires an ongoing commitment from all the parties involved. In the era of globalisation this requirement will involve not only military forces, but domestic constituencies, humanitarian relief organisations and a range of non-state actors. As the United States has found in the War on Terrorism, the unilateral exercise of military power might well win the war, but it can never assure the peace.

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