

***SERVING VITAL INTERESTS:  
AUSTRALIA'S STRATEGIC PLANNING IN PEACE AND WAR***

***ARMY'S FUTURE PLANS/STRATEGY***  
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**Introduction**

It may seem somewhat incongruous that the last speaker at a military history conference should so clearly be discussing the future. Well, let me say that what I have to describe will be seen as a major turning point in the Army's development and future historians will make much of it.

The Australian Army has undergone considerable change this century, shaped by four major conflicts and numerous smaller engagements, euphemistically referred to as peacekeeping. Our present doctrine and structures are a product of this process. We have seen strategic guidance vary from forward defence to the defence of Australia to a concept today which embodies both strategies. Arguably, the most dramatic change in international affairs in the last 50 years has been the end of the Cold War.

Clearly, such a change in strategic outlook and the resulting guidance requires us to review the role of the Army and how we might meet the challenges of the next century. To do this we embarked on a study called 'Army 21'.

While the review process has been agreed in principle by the Minister, there are areas of detail which have yet to be resolved, and comment on specific outcomes is therefore premature. Nevertheless four broad areas deserve examination:

- a. the changes in the environment which have led us to review Army's structure;
- b. the vision that we have developed for the future Army;
- c. the process which has been employed to achieve that vision; and
- d. some indication of the sort of outcomes you might expect to see emerge in the coming years.

**An Environment for Change**

At the outset, we were confronted not by a strategic environment with identifiable threats, but with the post-Cold War strategic environment which has been described as a volatile era of uncertainty. In the Army, we can no longer plan against the certainty of a specific threat. Indeed, it is many years since we did. But we simply cannot reduce the Army and hope that strategic warning will give us sufficient time to rearm and be ready for the conflict. I think there are two reasons for this:

- a. Firstly, the record of correct strategic assessment is abysmal. I know of no major conflict this century where one side was not fundamentally surprised.
- b. Secondly, an Army cannot be created overnight. And this issue is more relevant today, than at any time in the past.

The reduction of Cold War tensions has resulted in an increasingly uncertain strategic environment. Patterns of relations between states are less defined and more difficult to define. Within our region, for example, some countries have questioned the long-term military

commitment of the United States. Others have seen the United States embarked on a policy of containment. We, of course, wish to see the United States remain regionally engaged. The uncertainty of this process, however, does not make the task of force structuring any easier.

Strategic change apart, we also face a further major challenge. We are in the grip of a surge in technological development. While those of us who are professional soldiers, and who have made it our business to keep abreast of evolving technologies, may disparage such vague terms as the 'Age of Information Warfare' and the 'Revolution in Military Affairs', there is little doubt that technology is changing the shape of the battlefield and has the ability to do so in a way few of us can imagine. The paradox is that we still expect an infantryman to close and kill his adversary. But he must also be capable of doing much more.

The Gulf War brought several new dimensions to warfare. I wonder, of course, what our perceptions of war might have been if the conflict had been fought on the Korean Peninsula. The flat, highly manoeuvrable, open spaces of the Kuwaiti desert certainly presented an opportunity for the concept of the Air-Land Battle to be exercised. But I can assure you that in the few years since DESERT STORM, the developments in command and control, target acquisition, lethality of weapons, and so on have significantly raised the capability of forces. In many ways, DESERT STORM has been used as a giant test bed for further development. And this process will not only continue but increase.

It took 400 years for weapons based on gun-powder to be perfected. It has taken less than 20 years for the micro-processor to change the way we do all forms of business drastically. Commanders now have access to information of an unprecedented magnitude. Indeed, unless commanders take steps to articulate clearly their information requirements, and to control the flow of information, they will be swamped.

For the Army, like the other services, an understanding of the future battlefield is vital. In the past, we frequently took many years to develop a major capability. Nowadays, major capabilities, particularly those which have a significant software component, can change almost overnight. Our doctrine, to say nothing of our acquisition processes, cannot come to terms with this reality. At least, not yet.

Inevitably, therefore, technology will change the shape of the future battlefield. This century we saw the trenches of the First World War created, some would argue, by the machine-gun and artillery. I suspect the inability of commanders to control the battle, lacking as they did the means to communicate and process the large volumes of information they needed, had as much to do with the establishment of the linear battlefield as did firepower.

Therefore, while I personally do not like the term, to say we are in the grip of a revolution may not be to oversell the issue. Clearly, our doctrine and organisation must exploit the new tools, all of which are based on the micro-processor.

What, therefore, does all this mean for the Australian Army? In very crude terms, we need four outcomes from technology:

- a. We need to own the night.
- b. We need to know where we are and where the enemy is.
- c. We need to be able to exchange and process this information rapidly, securely and accurately.
- d. We need to be able to move rapidly and sustain ourselves over large distances.

Let me elaborate briefly on these issues.

We have always operated at night. We have patrolled and ambushed, moved into forming up places, breached minefields and even attacked at night. But we are on the verge of being able to operate at night as if it were day. We will be able to defeat and engage targets at great distances.

We now have the means of accurately identifying our position. Given the lethality and precision of weapons, and the speed with which operations will be mounted, this is of vital importance. Equally, an array of sensors will now detect movement, variations in heat and exploit the electro-magnetic spectrum. Envisage a situation where a surveillance device will detect the movement of an armoured vehicle and relay that information immediately to a gun which fires a precision guided missile and hits the armoured vehicle within seconds. Of course, the gun must immediately move or have such counter-measures so that it, in turn, will not become a target. All this leads to an increasingly lethal battlefield with a rising spiral of complexities as counter-measures are developed and counter-counter-measures and so on. And yet the same technologically capable Army floundered in the stress of downtown Mogadishu.

Managing the information process has become critical. The increasingly dispersed battlefield, the upward change in the tempo of operations and the volume of information available from the increasing array of sensors now means that a commander needs automated information systems, requiring wide band widths. After a very slow start, AUSTACCS—the Australian Army Command Support System—is starting to show considerable promise with the trials of equipment begun recently.

The distances over which we operate are unique. No other army considers tactical manoeuvre over half the continental distance of Europe or an area larger than the mid-west states of the United States. And this is conducted in harsh terrain with a paucity of infrastructure. A range of vehicles and aircraft is under active consideration. Infantry will have to be motorised, mechanised or delivered by air.

What then are the relevant 'conclusions' which we in the Australian Army can draw about the nature of warfare in the early part of the 21st century:

a. Firstly/that threats of armed conflict will remain. Even the most optimistic analyst would acknowledge that while the threat of superpower conflict has receded, many sources of potential instability remain. The early years of the next century will be characterised by greater strategic uncertainty. Therefore, Australia will still require a capable army. Our challenge today is to ensure that the army of tomorrow is equipped, trained and ready to meet and defeat any threats to the security of our nation.

b. Secondly, the Army will have to be more efficient in its use of resources. This trend is already evident, particularly amongst the armies of the major powers, as a result of the demands of reducing budgets coupled with the benefits of new technologies. Capabilities will be more tightly integrated: mobility, precision and the ability to closely operate in a joint environment will become force structure benchmarks. However, the single services are likely still to exist as individual entities. The Australian Defence Force will still need experts in land, maritime and air warfare. Overlaid on all three will be a requirement for expertise in information warfare operations.

c. Thirdly, the future battlefield will be non-linear and deep. The lethality and precision of modern weapon systems demand dispersion, with manoeuvre to concentrate firepower rather than mass. This trend is likely to continue, particularly with the development of space-based weapon systems.

d. Finally, while the future soldier will likely retain the ethos and values of today's Australian soldier, the knowledge and training requirements will be very different. Leaders and soldiers of the future must have the knowledge and training to understand and utilise emerging technologies in chemistry and physics, engineering, electronics, air and space, and

information technology. The future demands a new breed of professional soldier. Our soldiers must be trained in new and intellectually stimulating ways. We must create an Army which encourages them to think, rewards knowledge and utilises their expertise. The Australian Army of the future will have an important place for part-time soldiers. But it will require a professional to continue to master the increasing complexities of war and to translate this mastery into doctrinal and capability outcomes.

### *The Need for Change*

The proposed restructuring of the Army is a response to these factors. The present structure of the Army does not reflect current strategic guidance. It still has many of the features of the core force which saw an Army structured to be massively reinforced through widespread enlistment or conscription. There is a disconnect between the structure and the doctrine we are teaching. Many units are not prepared for combat. The Army does not have sufficient mobility to disperse forces quickly over the vast distances of Australia and the region. Nor does it have the combat power for the quick resolution of conflict on terms favourable to Australia.

While we have two divisions and numerous brigades on paper, we should not derive a false sense of security from our present structure as some units do not provide any true capability. Our administrative overheads are too high. Deficiencies which have developed over many years undermine Army's capacity for defending Australian territory, for cooperating with Allies and friends in the region and for making substantive commitments to meet our alliance obligations.

Although some effort has been made in breaking down the structures of earlier eras, the Australian Army remains top-heavy, hollow and inflexible. Our structure is not capable of absorbing rapid advances in command and control, target acquisition, mobility and nightfighting technologies. It is cumbersome in its demand for logistic support and is not readily adaptable to operate in a joint warfare environment.

### *The Planning Problems*

The need for a review was obvious. However, having determined that we needed a major review, we were immediately confronted with several problems.

First, there is no manual for force structuring. The arithmetic of operations research, though important, should not be allowed to obscure the fact that strategy is an art rather than a science. We were confronted with the task of designing an Army for the next century in the absence of an agreed force structuring methodology and relevant force development experience.

We also have deficiencies in strategic guidance. Any review of the Army should be undertaken within the framework of a fully developed national military strategy; such a strategy does not currently exist. This is a significant deficiency.

Furthermore, while most comparable countries are dealing with similar force structuring problems in the aftermath of the Cold War, nobody has established an unbeatable lead in their approach to force structuring. However, there are lessons to be learnt from the way the US and British Armies have approached the problem and I would like to spend a few moments on the vision of each.

### *Force XXI*

Force XXI is the US Army force structure review which is designed to lead the US Army from a threat-based to a capability-based army, concentrated on power-projection with a global focus to address the proliferation of new threats and the requirement to adapt to new missions and new coalition partners.

The five key objectives of the process coincided with the US Army's force modernisation objectives:

- dominate the manoeuvre battle;
- precision strike;
- protect the force;
- project and sustain the force; and
- win the information war.

Planned operational capabilities, to be enabled by emerging technologies, are:

- operational agility;
- tailorability and modularity;
- full-dimensional operations;
- doctrinal flexibility; and
- joint, multinational and interagency.

The US Army views Force XXI as a natural progression from today's CONUS-based, power-projection army to one capable of a more flexible engagement strategy, using 21st-century technology with improved lethality, survivability, operational tempo and sustainment.

### *BA2000*

Similarly, BA2000 is the British Army's response to the changing world situation and what they assess to be the expeditionary nature of their future operations. The British Army considers that the biggest challenge they face is to strike the right balance between the ability to mobilise a large organisation and holding formations at high readiness.

This balance is to be achieved by utilising versatility and adaptability in equipment and organisations. The intention is to structure an Army capable of operating across the full spectrum of conflict against forces with widely differing capabilities and in a variety of different circumstances. This is to be achieved by maintaining a core capability for a credible warfighting response should their national interests be threatened, coupled with a foundation on which to build should they face again a major external security threat.

In both the US and British response, the emphasis in restructuring has been placed on providing well-equipped land forces, able to exploit emerging technologies and with the flexibility to be utilised in a variety of operations. This is an emphasis which mirrors our vision of a 21st century Army, a vision which requires fundamental change before it can be realised.

### **The Vision**

The key defence aim remains the development of military forces sufficient to defeat any attack against Australia, particularly along our northern approaches. But Australia cannot be defended by simply guarding our territory. We need a force which is more mobile, better trained, better equipped and reshaped to fight on the modern battlefield—wherever that battlefield may be.

The Army of the future must be capable of performing a more diverse range of missions, with the firepower, mobility and instantaneous access to information required on the modern battlefield. The Army must be interoperable with the Navy, the Air Force, and our Allies and be more capable of deploying forces to meet our broader security interests.

The vision for modernisation relies on enhancing the combat power of a relatively small, but highly professional Army. This will be achieved through the redirection of spending to the combat area and the adoption of new military concepts and emerging technologies.

## **What Has Been Done**

The Army has already begun to restructure. The decision to end the Ready Reserve Scheme and to increase General Reserve capabilities are an integral part of these changes. Much of the Government Directed Savings of \$125m per annum over the next three years will be used to enhance capabilities including night vision equipment, radios, satellite navigation equipment, laser rangefinders and simulators.

But reviews within Defence, including a review of Army's structure beyond 2000, suggest that more needs to be done. The Army must become an organisation in which structural and technological adaptation is regarded as normal and desirable. These dynamics for adjustment are being built into an evolutionary development process, the first part of which will test and evaluate new concepts.

The review process has produced an analysis of Army's core tasks from which we have derived a number of concepts and principles for developing the future structure of the Army. That analysis identified, as key issues to be addressed, the Army's low readiness for operations, an inability to train and retain people in the Reserves, insufficient air and ground mobility, weakness in our command and control arrangements, shortages of Special Forces and the need to take advantage of new and evolving technologies.

## **What We Will Do**

Most of the structural changes will occur over the next three to five years. Implementation planning has been designed to ensure that the Army's force structure remains:

- appropriate to strategic circumstances;
- balanced and capable; and
- affordable.

The first step will be to develop provisional doctrine drawing from the operational concepts of the review process. Selected elements will then be consolidated to test and evaluate command and control arrangements and other new concepts.

Confirmation of operational requirements for equipment, doctrine and training will also emerge from these trials. As concepts are validated, the outcomes will be applied.

We foresee wide Defence and industry involvement in confirming Army's needs for procurement of major capital equipment and further modification of the structure. Full modernisation of the Army will occur from about the year 2000, including the introduction of a new range of high technology equipments.

To increase overall readiness, it will be necessary to raise personnel numbers in the combat force. This will be achieved by shifting troops from base support areas into the combat force and by integrating Regular and Reserve units.

We will revitalise the Reserve by increasing the relevance and attractiveness of Reserve service. Reserves will be trained to a higher standard and incentives provided to keep them serving longer.

The Army's mobility will be increased by the acquisition of more armoured fighting vehicles, new armoured infantry vehicles and helicopters for troop lift. The major combat elements of the Army will be motorised or air-mobile.

We will shift from the traditional divisional structure towards more dynamic, responsive and flatter task organised structures. These will be self-contained, capable of a range of independent operations and better able to operate in concert with the Navy and the Air Force.

The Army's command and control arrangements will be modernised. Army commanders will be assisted by automated command support systems, enhanced data management systems and modern electronic warfare capabilities. These improvements will allow operations to be conducted at the tempo demanded by modern combat.

We will establish a Regular commando unit to increase our options for counter terrorism and strategic strike. An existing infantry battalion will be re-equipped and retrained to enable it to perform these Special Forces tasks. These highly skilled soldiers will play a key part in all types of ground operations, both in Australia and offshore.

### **Conclusion**

That then is our vision for a restructured Army of the future. As we stand on the edge of a new century, we face the challenge of providing Australia with an army which is capable of defeating any attack, meeting any threat and with the adaptability and versatility to undertake successfully any mission required.

The Australian Army is to be restructured in a manner which will ensure that it remains appropriate to changes in the strategic environment throughout an evolutionary development period. The changes will be affordable within the portfolio.

The Army will not be reduced, but will be reshaped into a more modern combat ready force. It will be an Army of mobility, firepower and high technology, with an appropriate mix of Regular and Reserve personnel. The Army will be better trained and equipped and able to deploy wherever our national interests are best served. It will be capable of operating more effectively with the Navy and Air Force, as a joint force and as part of an international coalition.

The proposed changes will lead to an Army which is responsive to change and ready to meet the uncertainty of a new strategic era. Preserving the status quo is not an option. To do so would be to condemn the Army to further decline at a time of significant strategic and technological change.