

Land Warfare Studies Centre

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**FORWARD FROM THE PAST: THE DEVELOPMENT OF
AUSTRALIAN ARMY DOCTRINE, 1972–PRESENT**

by

Michael Evans

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Comment on this Study Paper is welcome and should be forwarded in writing to:

The Director
Land Warfare Studies Centre
Ian Campbell Road
DUNTROON ACT 2600
Australia

Telephone: (02) 6265 9548
Facsimile: (02) 6265 9888
Email: dir.lwsc@army.defence.gov.au

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About the Author

Dr Michael Evans is a Senior Research Fellow in the Australian Army's Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon. He has served on the staff of Land Headquarters, Sydney, and in the Directorate of Army Research and Analysis. Dr Evans is a graduate in history and war studies of the universities of Rhodesia, London and Western Australia. He has been a Sir Alfred Beit Fellow in the Department of War Studies at King's College, University of London, and a Visiting Fellow at the University of York in England.

He did national service in the Rhodesian Army as an infantryman and was later a regular officer in the Zimbabwe Army where, with the rank of Major, he headed that army's war studies program and assisted the British Army in the development of a Staff College. He has published a wide range of journal articles and papers in Australia, Britain, South Africa and the United States. His most recent publications include *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy* (LWSC Working Paper No. 101, 1998), *Conventional Deterrence in the Australian Strategic Context* (LWSC Working Paper No. 103, 1999); and as editor, *Changing the Army: The Roles of Doctrine, Development and Training* (1999).

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

A21	Army in the 21st century
AAN	Army-After-Next
ABCA	American, British, Canadian, Australian Standardisation Agreement
ADC	Army Development Committee
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ADFP	Australian Defence Force Publication
AHQ	Army Headquarters
AIB	Army-in-Being
AJWE	Australian Joint Warfare Establishment
ANZAC	Australian and New Zealand Army Corps
ASLAV	Australian Light Armoured Vehicle
ASP97	Australia's Strategic Policy 1997 (White Paper)
ATD	Army Trials Doctrine
ATT	Army Tactical Tasks
AUSTACCS	Australian Army Automated Command and Control System
BOS	Battlespace Operating Systems
CA	Chief of Army
CAL	Centre for Army Lessons
CATDC	Combined Arms Training and Development Centre
CGS	Chief of the General Staff
CGSAC	Chief of the General Staff's Advisory Committee
CMF	Citizen Military Forces
COMAST	Commander Australian Theatre
COSC	Chiefs of Staff Committee
CSS	Combat Service Support
DAA	Defeating Attacks Against Australia
DGFD(L)	Director General Force Development (Land)
DIB	Division in Battle
DJFHQ	Deployable Joint Force Headquarters
DMT	Directorate of Military Training
DRI	Defending Regional Interests
DSG	Doctrine Steering Group
ECF	Enhanced Combat Force
FDG	Force Development Group (CATDC)
GOC	General Officer Commanding
HQAST	Headquarters Australian Theatre
HQNORCOM	Headquarters Northern Command
HQSO	Headquarters Special Operations

IO	Information Operations
JFAO	Joint-force Area of Operations
JODG	Joint Operations Doctrine Group
JSP	Joint Service Publication
LWD	Land Warfare Doctrine
LWP-G	Land Warfare Procedures-General
LWP-S	Land Warfare Procedures-Special
LWSC	Land Warfare Studies Centre
MAP	Military Appreciation Process
MLW	Manual of Land Warfare
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NCW	Network-centric Warfare
ODF/RDF	Operational Deployment Force/Ready Deployment Force
POSTED	People, Organisation, Support and facilities, Training, Equipment and Doctrine (Components of Capability)
RDF	Ready Deployment Force
RFSU	Regional Force Surveillance Unit
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
RSI	Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Intelligence
RTA	Restructuring the Army
SAMS	School of Advanced Military Studies (US Army)
SASR	Special Air Service Regiment
SGI	Supporting Global Interests
TAOR	Tactical Area of Responsibility
TCDC	Training Command Doctrinal Committee
TIB	Training Information Bulletin
TRF	Theatre Response Force
US	United States

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the development of Australian Army doctrine from the end of the Vietnam War in 1972 to the publication of Land Warfare Doctrine 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare* in March 1999. It analyses the rise of Army doctrine for continental defence operations in the 1970s and dissects the trend towards low-level conflict in the 1980s. The paper looks closely at the logic behind the Army in the 21st Century (A21) Review and the Restructuring of the Army (RTA) initiative in the 1990s. The impact on the Army of *Australia's Strategic Policy 1997* and the important transition in the late 1990s from a continental to a maritime doctrinal focus are assessed. The paper contends that Army doctrine became increasingly rigid, insular and divorced from contemporary strategic trends during the first half of the 1990s and it investigates the reasons for these developments.

The paper then attempts to assess how successful the Australian Army has been in formulating doctrine over the past twenty-seven years. To this end, problems of strategic guidance, difficulties of central direction, the impact of the Army's powerful tactical tradition and the officer corps' intellectual approach to doctrine are analysed. The paper argues that the success of doctrine development must be measured against its ability to promote the interrelated elements of *learning*, *anticipation* and *adaptability* in a military organisation. It is suggested that the Army performed well in the first category in the 1970s and 1980s, but largely failed to anticipate new trends and to adapt to the ramifications of dramatic political and strategic change during the first half of the 1990s. The paper assesses the content of the new *Fundamentals of Land Warfare 1999* and argues that the Army must view doctrine as a journey rather than as a destination. Finally, it is suggested that the Army must take the opportunity to use the new Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) series to devise an innovative and dynamic approach to land warfare in the 21st century.

FORWARD FROM THE PAST: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AUSTRALIAN ARMY DOCTRINE, 1972–PRESENT

In the quarter of a century between its formation in 1947 and its withdrawal from Vietnam in 1972, the Australian Regular Army was shaped as a Cold War force. The Army was structured to fight overseas, in tropical warfare in Asia, using largely borrowed Anglo-American doctrine. For twenty-five years after the end of the Vietnam War, strategic policy moved the Australian Defence Force (ADF) towards fighting to protect the Australian landmass and its maritime approaches. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Army grappled with the daunting task of developing an indigenous military doctrine for the land defence of continental Australia. By the mid-1990s, the Army had succeeded in developing coherent doctrine that would guide a scheme for restructuring the land force to fight across northern Australia.

Yet, at almost the same time, international events in the post–Cold War era and a new strategic environment forced the Army to move away from its continental focus towards adopting new doctrine to support a maritime concept of strategy. On the cusp of the 21st century, the Australian Army finds itself, as it did in 1972, at a major turning point. The Army must redefine itself at a time of strategic uncertainty, when familiar concepts of warfighting are being challenged and, in some respects, transformed by new political and technological developments.

The purpose of this paper is to trace the main features of Australian Army doctrine from the creation of a defence of Australia strategy beginning in the mid-1970s to the adoption of a maritime strategy at the end of the 1990s. Six themes are developed. First, the generic nature of doctrine is examined briefly, together with its importance in the pantheon of modern military skills. Second, the main characteristics of the Australian Regular Army's approach to doctrine between 1947 and 1972 are briefly sketched in order

to provide an intellectual context for understanding the strategic change from forward defence to defence of Australia. Third, the foundations of early Army doctrinal thinking for continental defence between 1972 and 1977 are analysed. Fourth, the close interrelationship between Army reorganisation and doctrine development in the years 1977–89 is examined. Fifth, the course of doctrine development in the 1990s is assessed, when restructuring the land force for optimising continental operations was transformed into doctrine for a broader spectrum of maritime and offshore operations. Sixth, some of the main intellectual and institutional problems that have beset the process of formulating Army doctrine over the last quarter of a century are analysed.

The Nature of Military Doctrine

In 1950, the United States (US) Army defined doctrine as a compilation of ideas that represented the best available thought on a subject. ‘Essentially’, noted a US Army Special Regulation, ‘doctrine is that which is taught . . . a truth, a fact, or a theory that can be defined by reason . . . which should be taught or accepted as basic truths.’¹ Nearly half a century later, in most English-speaking Western armies, doctrine is regarded as the foundation of military professional knowledge. Doctrine is to soldiers what blueprints are to architects or briefs to lawyers. The British Army’s 1996 definition of military doctrine is instructive:

Military doctrine is a formal expression of military knowledge and thought, that the Army accepts as being relevant at a given time, which covers the nature of current and future conflicts, the preparation of the Army for such conflicts and the methods of engaging in them to achieve success.²

¹ United States Army, Special Regulation 320 5-1, *Dictionary of United States Army Terms*, Department of the Army, Washington D.C., August 1950, p. 78.

² British Army, *Design for Military Operations: The British Military Doctrine*, Army Code 71451, D/CGS/50/8, 1996, p. 1-1.

The function of military doctrine is ‘to establish the framework of understanding of the approach to warfare in order to provide the foundation for its practical application’.³

A former US Army Chief of Staff, General Gordon R. Sullivan, has compared the importance of doctrine in an army to the concept of harmony in an orchestra. Just as a particular music score blends together the different parts of an orchestra, so too should military doctrine synchronise the disparate elements of a military organisation into a united and effective whole.⁴ Like a musical conductor controlling his orchestral instruments, a military commander applies doctrine to bring his military resources into play in a manner that maximises operational effectiveness and strategic success.⁵ Doctrine is a bridge between thought and action; it interprets the higher conceptualisation of war—embodied in strategic and operational ideas—into working guidelines for military action.⁶

Effective and modern military doctrine usually reflects the interaction of three components: the enduring, the practical and the predictive. The enduring tenets are based on the time-honoured principles of war; the practical component interprets the nature of modern warfare; and the predictive component looks into the future to identify how military force development might be integrated with emerging technology.⁷ Modern military doctrine is thus formed out of a triangular dialogue between past experience, operational

³ *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

⁴ General Gordon R. Sullivan, ‘Doctrine: A Guide to the Future’, *Military Review*, February 1992, LXXII, ii, p. 4.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ John Gooch, ‘Military Doctrine and Military History’, in *The Origins of Contemporary Doctrine*, ed. John Gooch, The Occasional No. 30, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Camberley, September 1995, p. 5.

⁷ See Colonel Charles Grant, ‘The Use of History in the Development of Contemporary Doctrine’, *ibid.*, pp. 8–9.

requirement and technological feasibility. In their study of why military organisations fail in war, Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch have pointed to the interaction of three core factors: failure to learn, failure to anticipate and failure to adapt.⁸ This taxonomy of misfortune can be minimised by effective doctrine or made worse by flawed doctrine. Doctrine is therefore of critical importance in a modern army; it helps provide a philosophical impetus for thinking about the needs of learning, anticipation and adaptation by attempting to identify the constants and the variables in war.

However, it is important to note that military thought and military doctrine are not synonymous. Military thought can often be individual and can take place outside military establishments. Military doctrine, on the other hand, is usually institutional in focus and internal in nature. While a military thinker might inspire a cohort of admirers to implement his ideas, this informal approach can never be a substitute for institutional acceptance.⁹ As the French soldier Marshal Ferdinand Foch once put it, in a modern military culture there must be a common way of objectively approaching military problems by organised examination and analysis.¹⁰ A modern army defines itself by its doctrine, which should encapsulate institutional theories about warfighting, equipment and training. Unlike individual military thought, modern doctrinal formulation is not an abstract process. It is influenced by the interaction of personalities, hierarchies, ideas and internal compromises and by the institutional realities of intra-service politics. Effective doctrine requires acceptance across an army; it must be internalised by all echelons in

⁸ Eliot A. Cohen and John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War*, The Free Press, New York, 1990, pp. 26–8; 233–43.

⁹ Brian Holden Reid, *A Doctrinal Perspective 1988–98*, The Occasional No. 33, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Camberley, May 1998, p. 13.

¹⁰ Ferdinand Foch, *The Principles of War*, Chapman and Hall, London, 1918, p. 18. See also Major General I. B. Holley, ‘The Doctrinal Process: Some Suggested Steps’, *Military Review*, April 1979, LIX, iv, pp. 2–13.

order to establish a framework of understanding that can inform the decision-making process. Only then can doctrine become what the British military thinker, Major General J. F. C. Fuller, called ‘the central idea of an army’.¹¹

Characteristics of Australian Army Doctrine, 1947–72

In order to understand the context of doctrinal thinking after the Vietnam War, it is useful to summarise scholarly research into the development of Australian Regular Army doctrine between the late 1940s and the beginning of the 1970s. The most systematic research has been carried out by a trio of young soldiers, M. C. J. Welburn, J. C. Blaxland and R. N. Bushby.¹² From their work it seems clear that, in this period, Australian Army doctrine development was haphazard and lacked central direction. Despite a continuum of Asian operations in the 1950s and 1960s—in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam—the Army did not develop an indigenous or systematic approach to doctrine. Instead, doctrine was largely borrowed from the British with a leavening of American ideas.

Welburn’s study of doctrine development between 1945 and 1964 demonstrates how the Australian Army adopted a policy of doctrinal standardisation with its British counterpart. Doctrine development

¹¹ Major General J. F. C. Fuller, *The Foundations of the Science of War*, Hutchinson, London, 1926, p. 254.

¹² M. C. J. Welburn, *The Development of Australian Army Doctrine, 1945–1964*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 108, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1994; J. C. Blaxland, *Organising an Army: The Australian Experience, 1957–1965*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, No. 50, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1989; R. N. Bushby, ‘*Educating An Army*’: *Australian Army Doctrinal Development and the Operational Experience in South Vietnam, 1965–72*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 126, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1998.

became the responsibility of corps directors rather than Army Headquarters, and British-modelled doctrine was disseminated throughout the Australian Army by the Directorate of Military Training (DMT), the Staff College and the corps schools.¹³ Australian Army doctrine reflected British ideas and organisation for both positional warfare in Korea and for counterinsurgency in Malaya.¹⁴

Blaxland's work on Australian Army organisation shows how, in the early 1960s, American Pentomic battle group doctrine was briefly important in influencing the adoption of the ill-fated Australian Pentropic division.¹⁵ Tropical Warfare divisions and brigades were restructured into battle groups in a tactical and doctrinal experiment that did not suit Australian conditions.¹⁶ By 1964 the Army had reverted to a traditional British-style Tropical Warfare divisional organisation.

Bushby's study of Australian Army doctrine during the Vietnam War era from 1965 to 1972 demonstrates how operations, first in Borneo and then in Vietnam, led to a focus on counter-revolutionary warfare. Three Army pamphlets, *The Enemy, Ambush and Counter-Ambush* and *Patrolling and Tracking*, provided a framework for understanding the nature of revolutionary warfare.¹⁷ In 1965 a new doctrinal series, the Division in Battle (DIB), including the important pamphlet *Counter-Revolutionary Warfare*, emerged on the eve of the Army's long deployment in Vietnam.¹⁸

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 15–16.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20–9.

¹⁵ Blaxland, *op. cit.*, pp. 56–63.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 102–16.

¹⁷ Australian Army, *The Enemy*, Army Headquarters, Canberra, 1964; Australian Army, *Ambush and Counter Ambush* 1965, Army Headquarters, Canberra, February 1966; *Patrolling and Tracking* 1965, Army Headquarters, Canberra, March 1966.

¹⁸ Australian Army, Division in Battle, *Counter Revolutionary Warfare* 1965, Pamphlet No. 11, Army Headquarters, Canberra, February 1966.

The DIB series was to remain in force for over a decade, but during the course of the Vietnam War there was little doctrinal development by the Army. Only in 1969 was a Battle Analysis Team formed to investigate the tactical lessons of operations by the 1st Australian Task Force in Vietnam. Although the Directorate of Infantry prepared a pamphlet on infantry battalion lessons and gave it limited circulation in 1972, it was not until 1988 that this material was formally compiled as a Training Information Bulletin (TIB).¹⁹

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.²⁰ 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.²¹ However, it was also a tactical-level Army, derivative of its allies in much of its operational thinking and with little experience of developing doctrine for independent operations.

The Defence of Continental Australia: Army Doctrine Development, 1972–77

After withdrawal from Vietnam, the Army was confronted with the rigorous challenge of elaborating a land force doctrine for continental defence—something that had not been considered since

¹⁹ Australian Army, *Infantry Battalion Lessons from Vietnam*, Training Information Bulletin Number 69, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, June 1988. In the preface, it is explained that plans to issue the paper in the 1970s were affected by ‘reasons of economy and because of disagreement over “doctrine versus tactical techniques”’.

²⁰ Bushby, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

²¹ Author’s interview with Lieutenant General John Coates (Retd), 23 September 1998.

the inter-war period.²² From the outset, Army doctrine development was hampered by the wider difficulty of marrying defence policy with appropriate strategic concepts and a realistic force structure—all of which were in the process of emerging during the 1970s.²³

The Impact of the 1976 White Paper and Organisational Change on Army Doctrine

The difficulties involved in the transition from forward defence to the defence of Australia were exemplified by the November 1976 White Paper, *Australian Defence*.²⁴ This document spelt out a new policy of self-reliance in an alliance framework. In defining self-reliance, the White Paper stated that, while overseas operations could not be ruled out, ‘we believe that operations are much more likely to be in our own neighbourhood than in some distant or forward theatre and that our Armed Services would be conducting joint operations as the Australian Defence Force’.²⁵ It went on to state that a self-reliant posture required a substantial force-in-being, which needed to be capable of military expansion to deal with unfavourable developments.²⁶

²² The term ‘continental defence’ was used to describe defence policy in 1975. For a discussion of continental defence in the inter-war years, see David Horner, ‘Australian Army Strategic Planning Between the Wars’, in *Serving Vital Interests: Australia’s Strategic Planning in Peace and War*, eds Peter Dennis and Jeffrey Grey, University of New South Wales, Canberra, 1996, pp. 75–101 and Brett Lodge, *Lavarack: Rival General*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998, chaps 4–6.

²³ For the evolution of continental defence thinking, see Department of Defence, *Defence Report 1974*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1974 and *Defence Report 1975*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1975.

²⁴ Commonwealth of Australia, *Australian Defence*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1976.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10, para. 6.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12, para. 21.

While *Australian Defence* sketched the outlines of future defence policy, it failed to provide a blueprint to guide Army doctrine and force development. There was little attempt in the 1976 White Paper to define the relationship between strategic concepts and force structure. Although the Government understood the need for ‘doctrine associated specifically with the defence of Australia’, it also noted that the process was likely to be lengthy, progressive and complex.²⁷ As the Army contemplated the task of transforming itself from a tropical warfare expeditionary organisation into a land force designed largely for continental defence operations, it was, to a considerable extent, forced to rely on its own interpretation of policy intentions.²⁸

The problem of interpreting strategic guidance was highlighted in early 1974 by the Commander of the 1st Division, Major General R. J. Hughes, who pointed out that for thirty years the Army had been able to focus its training to meet a recognised threat.²⁹ Now the challenge of defending Australia had become extraordinarily difficult because the Army had ‘no nominated potential enemy, . . . no real prediction of when a war [would] happen, [and] no positive guidance as to the type of war [it would] be called upon to fight’.³⁰

Major General Hughes warned that ‘the philosophy of continental defence as it is understood by the Joint Service planners in

²⁷ *Defence Report 1975*, pp. 5–6.

²⁸ For a good discussion of the Army’s position in the 1970s, see Stewart Woodman and David Horner, ‘Land Forces in the Defence of Australia’, in *Reshaping the Australian Army: Challenges for the 1990s*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence No. 77, ed. David Horner, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, pp. 38–51.

²⁹ Australian Army, 1 Division Commander’s Training Letter No. 01/74, 25 March 1974, p. 1, para. 3. Document in author’s possession.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 2, para. 5.

Canberra' embraced terrorism, raids, limited war and invasion.³¹ He thought that the range of capabilities required for such operations were so diverse that 'the exact requirement of Continental Defence can not be determined [by the Army]'.³² To overcome its lack of guidance, Major General Hughes felt the Army had to train for operations on Australian soil using the principles of war as a method of preparation.³³

Apart from a lack of detailed strategic guidance, the environment for Army doctrinal revision was further complicated by the pace of organisational change in the first half of the 1970s. Organisational reform included the 1970–71 Farrands–Hassett Review of the Army's structure, the 1974 Millar Report on the Citizen Military Forces (CMF) and the 1973 Tange defence reorganisation. The Farrands–Hassett Review recommended that Army functional commands replace the system of geographical commands that could be traced back to Federation. The Millar Report recommended the reorganisation of the CMF and its redesignation as the Army Reserve. The Tange reforms abolished the single-service boards and inaugurated a new centralised defence organisation. However, the new Chief of Defence Force Staff initially had insufficient staff to develop joint doctrine in a concerted way.³⁴

³¹ Australian Army, 1 Division Commander's Training Letter No. 04/74, 'Continental Defence', 17 April 1974, p. 1, para. 1; pp. 2–4, paras 5–12.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 4, para. 15.

³³ 1 Division Commander's Training Letter No. 01/74, 25 March 1974, p. 2, paras 5–8.

³⁴ Australian Army, *Report of the Australian Army Organisation and Manpower Committee*, Part 1, 30 March 1973, CP-53386 (the Farrands–Hassett Review); Commonwealth of Australia, *Report of the Committee into the Citizen Military Force*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1974 (The Millar Report). For a useful summary, see Australian Army, 'Army Reorganisation', *Army Journal*, March 1972, No. 274, pp. 3–33. For the Tange reforms, see Robert O'Neill, 'Defence Policy' and F. A. Mediansky, 'Defence

In the wake of its withdrawal from Vietnam and in the face of major organisational reform of defence, the Army was reduced from a mixed force of nine battalions of volunteers and national servicemen to become an all-volunteer force of six battalions.³⁵ Despite this reduction, the Army did succeed in retaining the framework of a divisional structure in peacetime as an essential basis for training and expansion.³⁶ In the mid-1970s, when the Army emerged from the reorganisation process to confront the problem of doctrine for operations in defence of Australia, it possessed a new functional command system. This system comprised Field Force Command, Logistics Command and Training Command as well as the framework of a divisional structure based on three task forces each of two battalions.³⁷

The 1975 Chief of the General Staff Training Directive and the Army Doctrine Conference

One of the first important statements on post-Vietnam Army doctrine came in early 1975 from the Chief of the General Staff (CGS), Lieutenant General F. G. Hassett. In his 1975 CGS Training

Reorganisation 1957–75’ in *Australia in World Affairs, 1971–75*, ed. W. J. Hudson, George Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1980, pp. 11–36; 37–64.

³⁵ The Army’s strength fell from 41 500 in 1972 to 29 000 in 1975 following the end of national service. See Peter Pedersen, ‘The Defence of Australia: Australia 1973–1979’, in *Duty First: The Royal Australian Regiment in War and Peace*, ed. David Horner, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990, pp. 281–5.

³⁶ Major General S. C. Graham, ‘The Requirement for a Divisional Structure’, 9 August 1972, C Ops Minute No. 320/72 and Major General S. C. Graham, ‘Infantry Battalions in the ARA’, 12 May 1972, C Ops Minute No. 209/72. Documents in author’s possession.

³⁷ Woodman and Horner, ‘Land Forces in the Defence of Australia’, pp. 38–9; Peter Pedersen, ‘The Defence of Australia: Australia 1973–1979’, pp. 283–5.

Directive, Lieutenant General Hassett stated that the requirement to study and prepare for the defence of the continent of Australia was a change of emphasis that was bound to reveal organisational and equipment deficiencies and would call for a 'rethinking of tactical doctrine and method'.³⁸ Like Hughes, Hassett believed that the development of new doctrine was a major challenge in the face of evolving strategic guidance. He felt that the Army could not await the refinement of guidance from the Department of Defence but had to seize the initiative by using its own organisation to 'examine factors which might influence tactical and logistical doctrine'.³⁹ Lieutenant General Hassett went on to state:

The starting point for the development of tactical doctrine is more likely to be that doctrine which existed at the conclusion of World War II, resulting from operations in the European and Middle East theatres, than the Australian experience in South-East Asia. We need to re-learn much which has been irrelevant in the Army's more recent operations. In the broader field of armoured warfare, armoured tactics as opposed to armoured-infantry tactics, is a field in which we must catch up with modern armoured warfare doctrine. I feel we are behind in this field.⁴⁰

Along with armoured tactics, Lieutenant General Hassett identified joint warfare and operations in support of United Nations peacekeeping as areas that required doctrinal study.⁴¹

In July 1975, in response to the CGS Training Directive, the recently formed Training Command in Sydney held an Army-wide

³⁸ Excerpts from Chief of the General Staff, 'Training Directive', 1975. Cited by Major General W. G. Henderson, GOC Training Command, in an opening address in a Training Command Doctrinal Conference, 16 July 1975, pp. i–ii. Document in author's possession.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. i.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. i.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. ii.

doctrinal conference.⁴² The conference was held against a background of considerable effort to reform the Army's divisional structure in order to reflect the shift from forward defence to defence of Australia.⁴³ The aims of the conference were to try to standardise the development and promulgation of doctrine in the new functional command system; to provide provisional doctrine; to highlight areas requiring doctrinal study; and to advise Army Headquarters, Logistics Command and Field Force Command of Training Command's approach to doctrine.⁴⁴ The conference was chaired by the head of doctrine, Colonel C. E. Newton, and drew together twenty-seven officers, mainly at the rank of lieutenant colonel or colonel from Army Headquarters, Training Command, the Australian Staff College, the Land Warfare Centre, the Infantry Centre and Field Force Command.

The conference attempted to centralise doctrine development by emphasising the role of a new Training Command Doctrinal Committee (TCDC), made up of representatives from Army Headquarters and the three functional commands.⁴⁵ Doctrinal submissions were to be made from Army formations and the corps schools to Training Command where they would be examined by doctrine staff and subsequently by the functional commands, before being referred to the TCDC. The TCDC's proposals and recommendations were to be approved by the Army Development Committee (ADC) in Army Office and then promulgated. The aim was to create an effective doctrine system, capable of meeting the Army's needs for operations in defence of continental Australia,

⁴² Australian Army, 'Report on Doctrinal Conference, 16–17 July 1975', Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, 4 August 1975.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 10–11, paras 17–21.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9, paras 4–5.

⁴⁵ The TCDC included representatives from Training Command, the Staff College, the Land Warfare Centre, and the Infantry Centre.

including improved divisional mobility, air defence and surveillance capabilities.⁴⁶

From the outset it was clear that a formal system of timely and relevant doctrine development based on central direction would be difficult to implement. Corps school representatives argued that the absence of a threat and the lack of a concept of operations were serious obstacles to the development of doctrine in defence of Australia.⁴⁷ Training Command doctrine staff pointed to the moribund nature of the DIB series and the daunting task of rewriting some 740 doctrinal pamphlets, many of which were ‘ultra-descriptive’.⁴⁸

Reflecting these concerns, the conference chairman, Colonel Newton, noted that successful doctrinal production required clear terms of reference, the allocation of adequate manpower and effective decision-making from Army Office. Newton pointed out that there was no branch or directorate in Army Office that could coordinate these requirements.⁴⁹ He warned that the Army’s long-term interests ‘lay in the early approval of a system for the development and formulation of doctrine. Until a system was approved by Army Office little could be achieved’.⁵⁰ As will be seen in this paper, the concerns expressed at the 1975 doctrine conference about the problems that the Army faced in creating an effective Army-wide doctrine development system were never satisfactorily resolved. Organisational weaknesses, personnel shortages and lack of resources were to become almost permanent problems facing Training Command over the next twenty years.

⁴⁶ ‘Report on Doctrinal Conference’, p. 8, paras 4–5 and Annex A, ‘Flow Chart for the Formulation and Promulgation of Doctrine’.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10, para. 14.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9, para. 7.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 8, para. 6.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10, para. 15. It should be noted that the term Army Office referred to Army Headquarters.

The TIB 28 Division and the Introduction of the Manual of Land Warfare, 1976–77

Despite the institutional problems highlighted by Army doctrine developers at the July 1975 doctrinal conference, sufficient momentum was generated by Training Command to begin the task of producing new doctrine throughout 1976 and 1977. In January 1976 interim doctrine in the form of Training and Information Bulletin Number 28 (TIB 28), *The Infantry Division (Provisional) 1975*, was issued.⁵¹

TIB 28 was the Australian Army's first major doctrinal publication following withdrawal from Vietnam. It was also significant in that it marked a movement away from the borrowed doctrine that had tended to predominate in Regular Army doctrinal publications between 1947 and 1972. The TIB 28 division was described as an organisation 'for which the Army would develop doctrine and which would be used as a vehicle for the testing and teaching of tactics'.⁵² In developing the new organisation, the Army placed emphasis on the ability to commit light, highly mobile forces, quickly followed by heavier formations for operations in open terrain with a temperate climate.⁵³

At nearly 18 000 personnel, the TIB 28 division was a heavier fighting organisation than the Tropical Warfare division it replaced. The new division's operational concept was designed for fighting limited war on the Australian continent with a capacity to operate in lower levels of conflict. The new organisation was designed to try to maximise three capabilities. First, the division required the capability of deploying a formation up to task force strength in

⁵¹ Australian Army, *The Infantry Division (Provisional) 1975*, Training Information Bulletin No. 28, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, January 1976.

⁵² *Ibid.*, para. 104.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, paras 106–7.

independent operations for limited periods. Second, the division needed to be able to function independently for limited periods, with task forces operating over a wide frontage. Third, the division had to be able to concentrate its capabilities by constituting itself as part of an Australian corps of two divisions.⁵⁴

In order to adjust the TIB 28 division to the new Australian environment, the Army adopted two modes of operations: normal mode and dispersed mode.⁵⁵ In normal mode, the division was expected to fight large enemy conventional forces in a defined area of operations. In dispersed mode, the demand was for task forces capable of operating over an extended front with limited logistics and accepting limitations of mutual support between major formations.⁵⁶ TIB 28 introduced the concepts of dispersal, independent operations and limited logistics into Australian Army operational thinking—concepts that were to become important features in doctrinal development over the next twenty years.

In May 1977, TIB 28 was supplanted by provisional versions of a new doctrinal series, the Australian Manual of Land Warfare (MLW), designed by the head of doctrine, Colonel Peter Gration, and authorised by the Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant General Donald Dunstan. The new manual formally replaced the Vietnam-era Division in Battle series and consisted of three parts. Part One, The Conduct of Operations, was applicable to all corps and contained the principles, tactics and techniques of land warfare including operational fundamentals, command and control, formation tactics, fire support and the arms and services. Part Two, Corps Doctrine, was concerned with pamphlets for each corps.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 108.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, paras 111–13.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

Part Three, Training, covered aspects of training for war and supported Parts One and Two.⁵⁷

Part One, Volume 1, Pamphlet No. 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations* of the Manual of Land Warfare (MLW One 1.1) published in 1977, 1985 and finally in 1992 became effectively the Army's 'keystone pamphlet' for the next twenty-two years.⁵⁸ Pamphlet No. 1 represented, as *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations 1985* put it, 'the Army's fundamental doctrine for fulfilling the function of conducting operations on land for the defence of Australia and her interests. It therefore forms the foundation for all other pamphlets of the Manual of Land Warfare (MLW), and hence for the training of the Army.'⁵⁹

The first edition of *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations (Provisional) 1977* recognised the unique challenge facing Army doctrine. 'It is apparent', stated the pamphlet, 'that future operations will be different from anything the Australian Army has previously faced, and will provide a much greater training challenge. While past experience should not be disregarded, it does not altogether provide an adequate precedent for training for future conflict'.⁶⁰

Although the 1977 edition of MLW One 1.1 was influenced by the lethality of the 1973 Yom Kippur War and by the 1976 version of the US Army's doctrine manual, FM 100-5, *Operations*, which

⁵⁷ Australian Army, 'The Structure of the "Australian Manual of Land Warfare"', 1 May 1977, p. v. Document in author's possession.

⁵⁸ The 1992 edition was published as the *Fundamentals of Land Warfare*.

⁵⁹ Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part One, The Conduct of Operations, Volume 1, The Fundamentals, Pamphlet No.1, *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations 1985*, Army Office, Canberra, January 1985, para. 1.

⁶⁰ Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part One, The Conduct of Operations, Volume 1, The Fundamentals, Pamphlet No. 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations (Provisional) 1977*, Army Office, Canberra, May 1977, chap. 5, para. 501.

emphasised fighting with numerically inferior forces, it sought to define the conventional battlefield in Australian terms.⁶¹ Given the Army's low-force-to-space ratios, the 1977 pamphlet advanced the proposition that the development of an indirect strategy—derived from the writings of Basil Liddell Hart and André Beaufre—was particularly suited to the Australian situation.⁶²

The most interesting and original aspect of the 1977 *Fundamentals* was, however, the chapter entitled 'Characteristics of Australian Strategic and Tactical Doctrine'.⁶³ This chapter emphasised Australia's unique strategic situation as 'an island continent of vast size, largely dry, empty, and undeveloped'.⁶⁴ For the first time in a Regular Army publication, there was a primary focus on developing doctrine for land force operations to meet Australia's unique physical environment. The enduring problems of geographical size, of a limited population located mainly in the south-eastern and south-western coastal fringes, and of an underdeveloped infrastructure in the north and north-west were described as causing Australian strategic and tactical doctrine to have five 'special characteristics'.⁶⁵

These five special characteristics were identified as *self-reliance*, *mobility*, *logistic support*, *austerity* and *resilience*.⁶⁶ Under the characteristic of self-reliance, a premium was placed on structuring Australian land forces for a primarily independent role rather than an allied capability. The Army had to be prepared to operate successfully on Australian soil against superior forces by avoiding

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, paras 108–10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, chap. 2, paras 206–8 and 213–16. Although Liddell Hart and Beaufre are not mentioned, the language employed is clearly influenced by their writings.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, chap. 4.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 402.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 404.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, paras 405–16.

attrition strategy and tactics that relied for effect on the ‘direct application of massive forces’.⁶⁷

In terms of the second characteristic of mobility, the Army faced a wide theatre of operations over thousands of kilometres. Vast distances required ‘an effective Australian surveillance system and a high level of strategic mobility to confer on the Army the ability to deploy and redeploy over vast distances’.⁶⁸ Tactical mobility was also needed to fight a fluid battle of manoeuvre over extensive areas. Strategic and tactical mobility required not only appropriate vehicles and aircraft, but a realistic assessment of the capabilities of the national infrastructure of ports, roads and railways.⁶⁹

The third characteristic of logistic support was recognised as a key element in mounting successful operations. The 1977 *Fundamentals* noted that ‘the availability of logistic support may well be the principal limiting factor on the nature and size of force committed to operations, and on the scale, intensity and duration of operations in which force can be sustained’.⁷⁰ Under the fourth characteristic of austerity, the Army had to be structured and employed carefully at the end of a long and vulnerable line of communication. Forward-deployed forces would have to operate by conserving limited resources and by realising that they had the backing of a support area with limited industrial capacity.⁷¹

The 1977 *Fundamentals* stated: ‘austerity implies also that the Army must look to commanders and staff officers at all levels to handle the forces available with the skills to compensate, at least in part, for lack of numbers. Military strategic doctrine will place emphasis on the indirect approach, and tactical doctrine on

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, paras 405–7.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 408.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, paras 408–9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 411.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, paras 412–13.

extracting the maximum combat power from austere physical resources'.⁷² The final doctrinal characteristic of resilience placed an emphasis on the need to survive initial reverses by regrouping to regenerate combat power. Such an approach required using dispersed forces and defensive operations in depth by trading space for time.⁷³

Collectively the 1977 *Fundamentals of Land Force Operations* laid down the foundations for a land force doctrine stressing a new indirect strategy. The main elements of this emerging doctrine were the importance of surveillance over vast distances and the need for nonlinear defensive operations based on numerically inferior forces using dispersion, surprise and deception. Between 1977 and 1979, the *Fundamentals of Land Force Operations* was followed by additional pamphlets laying down provisional doctrine for formation tactics, command and control, and combat surveillance.⁷⁴

Army Reorganisation and Doctrine Development 1977–89: The Impact of Specialisation and Total Force Concepts

Although the doctrine promulgated in 1977 was provisional, it remained in force for eight years in the case of the *Fundamentals of Land Force Operations*, for six years in the case of doctrine for command and control, and for a decade in the case of doctrine for formation tactics. One of the major reasons for the slow emergence of the various pamphlets in the MLW was the rapid pace of organisational change within the Army. Doctrine had difficulty in keeping up with the force structure and capability developments that

⁷² *Ibid.*, para. 414.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, paras 415–16.

⁷⁴ Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part One, Volume 1, Pamphlet No. 4, *Formation Tactics (Provisional) 1977*, Army Office, Canberra, June 1977; Pamphlet No. 2, *Command and Control (Provisional), 1977*, Army Office, Canberra, June 1977; Training Information Bulletin No. 31, *Combat Surveillance 1979*, Army Office, Canberra, April 1979.

drove change in the Army in the late 1970s and first half of the 1980s. A brief review of the Army's organisational changes between 1977 and 1982 is necessary in order to understand the context in which doctrine was developed.

Towards the Army of the 1980s: The Dunstan Organisational Reforms 1977–82

Towards the end of the 1970s it became clear that operations on Australian soil could not be met easily by the 1976 TIB 28 infantry divisional organisation. The TIB 28 division lacked sufficient versatility, mobility and logistical flexibility to engage fully in operations in defence of Australia.⁷⁵ Because the land force had to be able to operate over a wide variety of terrain, Army planners realised that no single formation could be proficient across the whole range of possible operational circumstances. Land forces required a capacity for expansion in high-level operations and an ability to undertake a range of short-term, low-level contingencies.⁷⁶

To operate effectively on Australian soil, the Army identified its key needs as being better surveillance and improved strategic and tactical battlefield mobility over long distances.⁷⁷ A land-based surveillance and reconnaissance element, a readily deployable reaction force and a heavier follow-on force, good communications, long-range firepower and a night-fighting capability were required for a ground defence of Australia.⁷⁸ All presented formidable

⁷⁵ Australian Army, 'Combat Power in the Australian Environment', undated paper but circa 1979; 'Forecast of Capabilities and Operational Status of the Army at the end of the 1980s', undated paper but circa 1980.

⁷⁶ 'Forecast of Capabilities and Operational Status of the Army at the end of the 1980s', para. 1. 'Combat Power in the Australian Environment', para. 5.

⁷⁷ 'Combat Power in the Australian Environment', paras 18–21.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 29.

logistics problems for a nation with a limited defence industrial capacity.⁷⁹

Under Lieutenant General Dunstan, Chief of the General Staff from April 1977 until February 1982, the basic organisational design of the Army of the 1980s was laid down. Dunstan's objective was to create an Army that, by the end of the 1980s, would be capable of versatile operations and would make efficient use of both regular and reserve elements.⁸⁰ To this end, in February 1980, the TIB 28 division was reduced from over 18 000 to less than 14 000 personnel. The aim was to develop a more flexible organisation for testing new operational concepts that would reflect the impact of distance on the conduct of the tactical battle and on logistical support in the field.⁸¹ Although the standard infantry division was to remain the major type of formation in the Australian Army, increased attention was to be placed by the Army on operations based on using forces capable of a high degree of dispersion, mobility and endurance.⁸²

In broad terms, the Australian Army moved towards a 'core force' structure. To maximise limited resources for land operations in defence of Australia, the Army needed a core of essential skills and capabilities on which expansion could be based in times of need.⁸³ Implicit in the core force concept was an assumption that warning time of future conflict would be adequate to allow for expansion.⁸⁴ A core force also required a dual capability: heavy formations with high combat power were required for expansion to higher-level conflict, while light mobile formations with limited combat power

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, paras 30–7; para. 52.

⁸⁰ 'Forecast of Capabilities and Operational Status of the Army at the end of the 1980s', para. 57.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, para. 6.

⁸² 'Forecast of Capabilities and Operational Status of the Army at the end of the 1980s', para. 5.

⁸³ 'Combat Power in the Australian Environment', paras 7 and 55.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 8.

were needed for shorter-term contingencies. An Army paper on combat power outlined the problem:

We thus have two conflicting force structure requirements. We require heavy formations with high combat power (that is firepower and tactical mobility) but such formations tend to have limited strategic mobility. On the other hand, light formations are more easily deployed but are generally lower on combat power. This may lead us to having to adopt two organisations—a light ready deployable reaction force with a heavier follow up force.⁸⁵

The Army thus faced a paradox, particularly in equipment needs. Light airborne equipment needed for strategic mobility was the antithesis of heavy equipment (such as tanks, artillery and armoured personnel carriers), which represented the raw material of land combat power.⁸⁶

Most of the organisational changes that occurred in the Army between late 1977 and early 1982 were summarised in an important pamphlet entitled *The Army in the 1980s*, issued by Dunstan's successor, Lieutenant General P. H. Bennett in August 1982.⁸⁷ *The Army in the 1980s* reflected the evolution of two new concepts for ground operations in Australia: specialisation and the development of the Total Force. Both concepts were designed to resolve the dilemma between the need for both light and heavy forces to meet the balance between mobility and combat power.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ 'Combat Power in the Australian Environment', para. 22.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 60.

⁸⁷ Australian Army, *The Army in the 1980s*, Army Headquarters, Canberra, August 1982. The first draft was written by Major David Horner and the final draft by Brigadier John Coates.

⁸⁸ David Horner, 'Ready Reaction and Specialisation: Australia, 1980–1990', in *Duty First: The Royal Australian Regiment in War and Peace*, ed. David Horner, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1990, chap. 13.

The Army developed specialisation to facilitate better flexibility and rapid reaction forces at short notice. Under specialisation, light, standard and heavy formations were to be developed in the 1st Division in the course of the 1980s. The term 'brigade' replaced the term 'task force', which had been introduced in 1965. The 3rd Brigade in Townsville, in conjunction with a Logistic Support Group (LSG), became the nucleus of the Operational (later Ready) Deployment Force (ODF/RDF) designed to be at high readiness with an organisation 'which is light, air portable, tactically air mobile and air supportable'.⁸⁹

The 6th Brigade in Brisbane became a standard infantry formation specialising mainly in conventional warfare in open country but also with a capability for parachute and amphibious operations. The 1st Brigade in Holsworthy developed into a heavy armoured/mechanised formation for all-arms mobile ground operations in Australia. If necessary, in times of expansion each of these specialist formations could become building blocks for an Australian corps comprising infantry, airborne and mechanised divisions.⁹⁰

The second concept of the Total Force involved developing the Army as a unified organisation of regulars and reservists. According to the 1982 pamphlet, 'the priority task for the early 1980s and beyond [was] to achieve a sound balance between the Regular and Reserve elements'.⁹¹ The Field Force was to consist of a regular 1st Division and the reserve 2nd Division as a follow-on force. Accordingly, the reserve 7th Brigade located in South Queensland became part of the 1st Division. A two-division Field Force meant that a corps headquarters, while not being raised, remained 'an essential part of the Army's doctrine' to be studied and

⁸⁹ *The Army in the 1980s*, p. 8.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–10; Woodman and Horner, 'Land Forces in the Defence of Australia', pp. 31–51.

⁹¹ *The Army in the 1980s*, p. 6.

developed in training.⁹² To meet the requirements of surveillance and reconnaissance, territorial reservists trained by the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) were formed into three Regional Force Surveillance Units (RFSU) in the Northern Territory, northern Queensland and Western Australia. Their task was to mount a comprehensive surveillance screen across northern and north-western Australia.⁹³

Specialisation and the Total Force concept reflected the belief in the Chief of the General Staff's Advisory Committee (CGSAC) that the Army's most probable initial operational commitment would be against a form of low-level conventional conflict. This form of conflict demanded a 'balanced, versatile [Army] capable of sustained operations', combined with the deployment of 'lean, hard-hitting and highly mobile forces'.⁹⁴

To meet the needs of command and control in dispersed operations, 1st Division Headquarters was to be converted into a deployable divisional headquarters (later a nucleus of the Deployable Joint Force Headquarters) and the Australian Army Automated Command and Control System (AUSTACCS) was to be developed.⁹⁵ Further attempts to increase operational readiness in the 1980s involved expanding mechanised and parachute capabilities and improved logistics. The SASR meanwhile increased its counter-terrorist capabilities by developing a Tactical Assault Group for urban operations and an Offshore Installation Assault Group.⁹⁶

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, p. 10; David Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle: A History of the Australian Special Air Service*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1989, chap. 22.

⁹⁴ *The Army in the 1980s*, p. iii.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹⁶ 'Forecast of Capabilities and Operational Status of the Army at the end of the 1980s', para. 6. See also Horner, *SAS: Phantoms of the Jungle*, chap. 23.

The Army's series of *Kangaroo* exercises in the 1980s tested aspects of the new Army organisation in what was styled 'conventional low-scale mid-intensity conflict'.⁹⁷ *Kangaroo 89* involved up to 18 000 troops, 3000 vehicles including light-armour, and various aircraft including new Blackhawk battlefield helicopters.⁹⁸ For training purposes, a new doctrinal pamphlet, MLW Three 2.2, *The Musorian Armed Forces*, was published in 1980.⁹⁹ This pamphlet provided a notional opposing force (OPFOR) that was an amalgam of regional armed forces. The Musorians employed 1960s Soviet-style conventional and unconventional warfare, including amphibious lodgment and airborne special operations.¹⁰⁰ By the early 1990s, training doctrine had expanded to produce another pamphlet, the MLW Three 2.3, *Kamarian Armed Forces*, a Maoist-style notional enemy, organised and equipped to conduct an indirect strategy of low-level operations across northern Australia.¹⁰¹

In the early 1980s Australian Army doctrine began to concentrate on developing appropriate concepts to match the force structure changes introduced since the late 1970s. These concepts included developing the operational level of war and low-level conflict and investigation of the philosophy of directive control. In 1983 Training Command estimated that 200 pamphlets were required to align the

⁹⁷ Horner, 'Ready Reaction and Specialisation', p. 318. The Army's structure was described in 1982 as being designed principally 'to engage in limited conventional war in defence of Australia and its interests', *The Army in the 1980s*, p. 3.

⁹⁸ Commonwealth of Australia, *Defence Report 1990–91*, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1992, pp. 49–60.

⁹⁹ Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part Three, Training, Volume 2, Training for War, Pamphlet No. 2, *The Musorian Armed Forces*, Army Office, Canberra, 1980.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. vii–ix.

¹⁰¹ Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part Three, Training, Volume 2, Pamphlet No. 3, *Kamarian Armed Forces*, Army Office, Canberra, 1993.

Army's doctrine with organisational change.¹⁰² In the course of the 1980s pamphlets were published to provide new doctrine for such areas as command and control, formation tactics, counterinsurgency, peacekeeping and tactical deception.¹⁰³

The 1985 Fundamentals and the Operational Level of War

At the beginning of 1985 the Army published a new edition of *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations*, which extended and modernised the provisional 1977 version.¹⁰⁴ The new edition's major innovation was the introduction into Australian Army doctrine of the concept of an operational level of war—a concept that had not previously been identified in doctrine and which was viewed as part of the term 'high command'.¹⁰⁵

The notion of an operational level of war had been debated by the 1984 Senior Officer Study Period (SOSP) and was considered by the CGS, Lieutenant General Bennett, to be perhaps the most important step in Army doctrine since the end of the Vietnam War.¹⁰⁶ The 1985 *Fundamentals* defined the operational level of war as 'the planning and conduct of campaigns'.¹⁰⁷ Although the new

¹⁰² Author's interview with Major General S. N. Gower (Retd), 12 October 1998. Gower was Colonel, Doctrine, in Training Command in 1983.

¹⁰³ See Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part One, The Conduct of Operations, Volume 1, Pamphlet No. 2, *Command and Control*, 1983, Army Office, November 1983; Volume 1, Pamphlet No. 4, *Formation Tactics*, 1987, Army Office, Canberra, July 1987; Volume 3, Low Intensity Operations, Pamphlet No. 1, *Counter-Insurgency Operations 1980*, Army Office, Canberra, June 1980; Volume 3, Low Intensity Operations, Pamphlet No. 3, *Peacekeeping 1980*, Army Office, Canberra, May 1980; Training Information Bulletin No. 66, *Tactical Deception*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, April 1987.

¹⁰⁴ *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations 1985*.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

¹⁰⁶ Author's interview with Gower, 12 October 1998.

¹⁰⁷ *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations 1985*, para. 213.

pamphlet was clearly influenced by the US Army's 1982 edition of FM 100-5, *Operations*—which had introduced the operational level of war into American Army practice—it sought to define an Australian context for campaign planning.¹⁰⁸

The 1985 *Fundamentals* observed that a campaign could be conducted in low-level conflict by much smaller forces using manoeuvre and the indirect approach to strategy. 'Manoeuvre', noted the publication, 'forms an integral part of all operations, be they offensive or defensive'.¹⁰⁹ At the tactical level of war, manoeuvre sought to position forces on the battlefield to maximise firepower. At the operational level of war, the aim of manoeuvre was different: it aimed at throwing the enemy off balance, wresting the initiative from him and gaining the freedom of action to impose one's own concept of operations. The difference between manoeuvre at the operational and tactical levels of war concerned not only the size of forces, but their aim and function.¹¹⁰

Like its 1977 predecessor, the 1985 *Fundamentals* devoted a chapter to what it described as the 'Australian Doctrinal Approach'. The five special characteristics of Army doctrine identified in 1977—self-reliance, mobility, logistic support, austerity and resilience—were revised in 1985. The existing notion of austerity was particularly emphasised in the new pamphlet. Since the Army would have to fight at the end of a long, expensive and vulnerable line of communications backed by a limited logistics, 'the requirement for austerity [would] be a prime characteristic of operations'.¹¹¹ Surveillance, intelligence, surprise, deception and optimal use of the environment were all recommended as methods to

¹⁰⁸ Author's interview with Gower, 12 October 1998.

¹⁰⁹ *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations 1985*, para. 311.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, paras 309–11.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, para. 521.

offset austere operating conditions and to help foster 'lean and uncluttered' units.¹¹²

In the 1985 edition of MLW One 1.1, three new special doctrinal characteristics were introduced. First, the Army needed to be *adaptable to different environments*, second it needed to develop the *use of technological advances* and, third, land forces were required to practise *dispersion* as fundamental to operations. The characteristic of logistic support identified in 1977 was considered so vital that, in the 1985 *Fundamentals*, it was removed as a special characteristic altogether and given a separate chapter under the title of Administration.¹¹³

Under the special characteristic of adaptability to different environments, it was stated that the Army had to be capable of operating effectively in any of the climates or terrain found in Australia and its offshore territories.¹¹⁴ In terms of the characteristic of using advanced technology, the Army argued in the pamphlet that, to be successful against numerically superior forces, Australian units had to make selective use of new technologies in weapons, surveillance, target acquisition and automated command and control systems.¹¹⁵ The special characteristic of dispersion stemming from the needs of wide-area ground surveillance was reinforced in importance as a mode of operation.¹¹⁶ In 1985, then, the list of the Army's special doctrinal characteristics comprised self-reliance, resilience, adaptability to different environments, mobility, use of technological advances, dispersion and austerity.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, para. 525.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, chap. 4.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, paras 513–15.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 518.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, paras 519–20.

Strategic Guidance, Low-level Conflict and Directive Control, 1986–89

Following the 1985 *Fundamentals of Land Force Operations*, the most significant development in Australian Army doctrine was the movement towards low-level warfare doctrine and its command and control requirements. The Army's doctrinal activity coincided with the March 1986 *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* (the Dibb Report) and the evolution of clearer strategic guidance in the form of the 1987 White Paper, *The Defence of Australia*.¹¹⁷ In July 1986 the CGSAC noted:

The priority demands on our ground forces are for the protection of military and infrastructure assets that support the projection of our air and maritime power, and the defence of civilian population and key points in the north of Australia from a protracted campaign of dispersed raids.¹¹⁸

The 1987 White Paper introduced the military strategy of self-reliance based on a layered defence-in-depth and the concepts of low-level, escalated low-level and more substantial conflict.¹¹⁹ The strategic guidance of the new White Paper confirmed the broad thrust of Army reorganisation and doctrine development since 1977.

The Army's role was defined in the White Paper as the defence of northern Australia against credible low-level contingencies and the provision of defensive depth on land should an enemy penetrate

¹¹⁷ Commonwealth of Australia, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister for Defence by Mr Paul Dibb*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986; *The Defence of Australia 1987*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1987.

¹¹⁸ 'General Concept for the Development of the Army', CGS Advisory Committee Submission No. 22/1986, CGSAC Minute No. 31/86, 4 July 1986, p. 1.

¹¹⁹ *The Defence of Australia 1987*, pp. vii–x; 24–7.

Australia's maritime approaches.¹²⁰ To this end, the 2nd Cavalry Regiment (and subsequently the 1st Brigade) was to be relocated to Darwin. Army mobility was to be further enhanced by augmenting the ODF with an armoured personnel carrier (APC) squadron and a parachute battalion group. A Logistic Support Force (LSF) was to be formed to assist the 1st Brigade, while the Army Reserve was to have a greater role in defending the north.¹²¹

In September 1988 Training Information Bulletin (TIB) 68, *Low-Level Conflict 1988*, was published. TIB 68, in conjunction with MLW One 1.4, *Formation Tactics 1987* (for higher-level operations), sought to provide comprehensive doctrine for the conduct of land force operations on the Australian mainland.¹²² TIB 68 was concerned with the operational level of war, and with giving guidance to commanders and their staff in low-level operations.¹²³ Much of its content was derived from lessons learnt from the *Kangaroo* exercises of 1983, 1986 and 1987.¹²⁴

Chapter 1 of TIB 68 stated that 'in conforming with recent Defence policy, the Army has adopted the concept that its most probable initial operational commitment will be to low-level conflict'.¹²⁵ The pamphlet defined low-level conflict as 'conflict in which the opponent engages in politically motivated hostile acts ranging from non-violent infringements of, to small scale military actions against, Australian sovereignty or interests. It is a form of indirect strategy'.¹²⁶ To meet low-level contingencies, the ODF brigade-sized group would undertake short-notice deployment to any

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 53–60; 63–4.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–4.

¹²² Australian Army, *Low-Level Conflict 1988*, Training Information Bulletin No. 68, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, September 1988; *Formation Tactics 1987*, chap. 1.

¹²³ *Low-Level Conflict 1988*, para. 2.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, para. 3.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 102.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 103.

part of Australia. The parachute battalion group would assist in securing a point of entry for the ODF and a second brigade would deploy as a follow-on force.¹²⁷

The pamphlet stated that low-level operations against Australia could include harassment of national shipping, intrusions of Australian airspace and seaspace, and single or sustained raids on national soil by enemy forces.¹²⁸ Australia might be confronted by terrorists and saboteurs and possibly a temporary seizure of territory or installations by small, dispersed groups, or by a larger force concentrated against specific targets.¹²⁹

To meet such challenges, TIB 68 envisaged four types of operations for the Army, working in conjunction with the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) and the Royal Australian Navy (RAN), under what later became Commander Joint Forces Australia (CJFA). The first type of operation involved reconnaissance and surveillance missions by the SASR, the RFSU and armoured reconnaissance elements into a tactical area of operations (TAOR). Second, the land force was required to deploy in tactical control operations involving pre-emptive or reactive deployment of the ODF and parachute troops. The third type of Army mission encompassed protective operations of vital national assets and key points. Fourth, the Army was required to have the capability to mount offensive operations to contain and capture or destroy the enemy.¹³⁰ The pamphlet also outlined command and control arrangements, described rules of engagement and analysed various matters arising from the civil–military context of low-level operations on Australian soil.¹³¹

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 209.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 209.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. 5, section 5-3.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, chap. 6.

The needs of low-level conflict persuaded the Army that it required a more decentralised command and control system. A new edition of MLW One 1.2, *Command and Control 1983*, had sought to streamline decision-making by introducing the commander's planning process, including the commander's appreciation into operations. The appreciation system was aimed at assisting senior officers to plan a concept of operations that would communicate their clear intent to subordinates working in headquarters whose resources were often physically remote.¹³²

Following the CGS Exercise in 1987, Lieutenant General Peter Gration decided to adjust the Army's command system further by incorporating the concept of directive control into Australian Army doctrine. In October 1985 Lieutenant General Gration described directive control as follows:

This [directive control] requires from a superior officer a clear statement of mission and an allocation of resources, and from subordinates a determination to achieve that mission. It also requires a degree of risk taking by the superior officer, who must be prepared to accept occasional mistakes. He must delegate freely and supervise lightly; he must praise action and censure inaction.¹³³

In November 1988, Training Information Letter (TIL) 1/88, *Directive Control 1988*, was published to provide a new command method for conducting highly mobile and wide-area operations.¹³⁴ 'Directive control', TIL 1/88 noted, 'has particular relevance in the Australian context because of the probability of our forces having to operate in a widely dispersed mode regardless of the level of conflict'.¹³⁵ The pamphlet stated that the policy of Defence of Australia had caused

¹³² *Command and Control 1983*, chap. 4.

¹³³ Speech by Lieutenant General P. C. Gration, 24 October 1985. Document in author's possession.

¹³⁴ Australian Army, *Directive Control 1988*, Training Information Letter No. 01/88, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, November 1988.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 7.

a fundamental review of tactical doctrine in which the main thrust of conventional tactical doctrine had shifted from battles of attrition, based on seizing and holding ground, to an emphasis on manoeuvre and wide-area operations with a capability for rapid concentration.¹³⁶

To meet this shift in tactical emphasis, there was a need for independent and flexible execution of the command and control cycle.¹³⁷ The term ‘directive control’ was defined as describing ‘a decentralised approach to command and control’—aimed at exploiting battlefield opportunity, maximising speed of manoeuvre and avoiding the use of detailed plans.¹³⁸ TIL/88 described the application of directive control as increasing a subordinate’s knowledge of a superior commander’s intent. A subordinate commander would, in turn, gain greater freedom to modify plans and adopt new tasks within the general framework of a mission. The overall aim was to decrease detailed control of operations at formation level, bringing greater certainty of execution at unit or sub-unit level and a more rapid response to local tactical situations.¹³⁹ The pamphlet argued that this was an approach well suited to the nature of the Australian soldier:

Traditionally, Australian Army doctrine for command and control has placed emphasis on the need for commanders to be given latitude . . . and for subordinates to be capable of taking action in an independent manner . . . This well established approach to command which is ideally suited to the independent nature and initiative of the Australian soldier, does not of itself constitute directive control. However, it does provide a good basis for the transition to directive control as the normal approach to exercising command.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, paras 2–3.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 7.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 9.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 10.

The prerequisites of directive control were mutual trust and understanding between commanders at different levels, and the possession of command qualities such as responsibility and decision-making.¹⁴¹ There was also a requirement for clarity of aim using the appreciation process to enhance understanding between superior and subordinate. The TIL/88 stated that such measures would, in the future, make directive control ‘the normal means of exercising command’ in the Australian Army.¹⁴²

In mid-1988, Land Command and Training Command established a validation system for testing selected aspects of doctrine on field exercises. This validation system was based on measuring collective training performance through analysing post-exercise reports. Using this system a considerable amount of low-level conflict doctrine was validated during the 1989 *Kangaroo* exercise.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, para. 11.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, para. 12.

¹⁴³ Australian Army, *Doctrine Status and Development*, Training Command Instructions 02/91, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, November 1990, p. 5.

Army Doctrine in the 1990s: From Continental to Maritime Concepts of Strategy

The 1990s began with the evolution of Army doctrine for the defence of continental Australia; they are ending with radical transformation in that the Army has adopted new doctrine to support a maritime approach to operations. The case of Australian Army doctrine for continental operations is a cautionary tale of how the development of detailed planning for a doctrine of war can become so ingrained in the logic of its authors that it becomes, as was the case with the French Army during the 1930s, an elegant but abstract dogma unrelated to broader political realities.¹⁴⁴ In the mid-1990s, the Australian Army was confronted by a crisis of anticipation in, and adaptability to, new politico-strategic conditions.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the Army planned to develop doctrine against a background of two important factors. The first factor was the growing influence of joint-service doctrine on Army thinking, which had been given impetus by the publication of the 1987 White Paper. The second factor was the need for further restructuring for low-level land force operations in defence of Australia. Both the doctrinal focus on joint operations and low-level warfare were reinforced by the strategic guidance documents that emerged between 1990 and 1994. These documents included a force structure review in 1991, two strategic planning reviews between 1990 and 1993, and a new White Paper in 1994.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁴ See Robert A. Doughty, *The Seeds of Disaster: The Development of French Army Doctrine, 1933–1939*, Archon, Hamden, Connecticut, 1985.

¹⁴⁵ Commonwealth of Australia, *Force Structure Review 1991*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1991; *Australia's Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1992; *Strategic Review 1993*, Australian Government Publishing Service, 1993; *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994.

The 1991 *Force Structure Review* envisaged an Army combat force of some 11 000 regulars and 24 200 reserve personnel based on ten brigades, with an emphasis on independent brigade operations in the north.¹⁴⁶ The 1990 and 1993 strategic reviews continued the trend of directing Army operations towards low-level conflict scenarios.¹⁴⁷ In November 1994, the White Paper, *Defending Australia*, reaffirmed the 1987 defence strategy of defence-in-depth, but replaced the 1987 matrix of low-level, escalated low-level and more substantial conflict with the dual terms ‘short-warning conflict’ (SWC) and ‘major conflict’.¹⁴⁸ The 1994 White Paper confirmed that the Army’s main role remained the defence of northern Australia through surveillance and reconnaissance, protection of assets and infrastructure, and interception and defeat of hostile forces.¹⁴⁹ To assist the Army in this role, the White Paper announced a major new assessment of land force structure and capabilities entitled *The Army in the 21st Century (A21) Review*. The review aimed at examining the number and readiness of infantry units, the benefits of additional ground reconnaissance units, the balance between Regular and Reserve elements, and the resource implications required for further change.¹⁵⁰

Yet, within three years, the main ideas behind the A21 Review were rendered largely obsolete by new strategic guidance emanating from the publication of *Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997 (ASP 97)*. The Army’s slow response to strategic change in the mid-1990s represents an interesting case study in how the ‘closed politics’ of military institutions can work to transform doctrine from an innovative method of preparing for future war into a straitjacket designed to hold in place old verities.

¹⁴⁶ *Force Structure Review 1991*, pp. 23–7.

¹⁴⁷ *Australia’s Strategic Planning in the 1990s*, pp. 22–3; *Strategic Review 1993*, p. 43.

¹⁴⁸ *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, pp. 24–5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 48–52.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

The Impact of Joint Doctrine, 1990–99

The movement towards joint doctrine was symbolised in July 1990 when the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) established the ADF Warfare Centre (ADFWC) and charged it with responsibility for the development of all joint defence force doctrine. A Joint Operations Doctrine Group (JODG) was formed to provide executive advice from the single services to the ADF Warfare Centre in the production of general joint doctrine and procedures and, in particular, the two key ADF doctrine manuals: ADFP 1—*Doctrine*, and ADFP 6—*Operations*.¹⁵¹

The creation of the ADF Warfare Centre and the formation of the JODG were followed in January 1997 by the establishment of Headquarters Australian Theatre (HQAST) in Sydney. The significance of HQAST was that, for the first time in its history, the ADF formed an operational-level theatre headquarters with embedded joint and single-service staff. HQAST placed the single-service Land, Maritime and Air Commanders under the operational control of Commander Australian Theatre (COMAST) as component commanders in a joint headquarters. The Army's Headquarters Special Operations (HQSO) also came under the control of the new theatre headquarters. Headquarters 1st Division and Commodore Flotillas were reconstituted as a Deployable Joint Force Headquarters (DJFHQ) which, together with Headquarters Northern Command (HQNORCOM), was to provide COMAST with command and control at the tactical and operational levels.¹⁵²

¹⁵¹ Australian Army, *Doctrine Status and Development 1991*, pp. 6–7, paras 12–15. It is important to note that the ADF Warfare Centre grew out of the Australian Joint Warfare Establishment (AJWE).

¹⁵² Department of Defence, 'Establishment of Headquarters Australian Theatre', Circular Memorandum No. 21/97, 7 April 1997, pp. 1–2.

Because COMAST was the senior operational commander, he was given responsibility for the development of operational art and campaign planning in the ADF. Accordingly HQAST's Doctrine, Training and Interoperability (J7) Branch took control of the ADF Warfare Centre and its joint doctrine function.¹⁵³ During 1997–98, HQAST produced an interim edition of *Decisive Manoeuvre*, a pamphlet on operational level warfighting concepts and provisional doctrine on operational control entitled *Theatre Command*. Both documents are to be integrated into ADF doctrine during 1999.¹⁵⁴ Finally, during 1997, the ADF adopted a common joint staff system at the operational level based on a version of that used by the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO).¹⁵⁵

Low-level Operations, the 1992 Fundamentals of Land Warfare and the Operational Art

During the first half of 1990s, Army planners sought to take account of low-level short-warning conflict to establish how land forces would operate as part of a joint force at all levels and across all battlefield functions. In his Development and Training Directive for the period 1 July 1990 to 30 June 1993, the CGS, Lieutenant General John Coates, tasked Training Command to review Army doctrine. His aim was to ensure that existing doctrine accorded with strategic guidance and was focused on the most likely, rather than the least likely possibilities. Particular emphasis was placed on 'application appropriate to Australia's circumstances, and on

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Australian Defence Force, *Decisive Manoeuvre: Australian Warfighting Concepts to Guide Campaign Planning*, Headquarters Australian Theatre, Sydney, November 1997, interim edn; *Theatre Command: Australian Defence Force Provisional Doctrine*, Defence Publishing Agency, Canberra, July 1998.

¹⁵⁵ Australian Army, *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, Training Command Instruction 2/96, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, November 1996, p. 15, para. 62.

producing the doctrine relevant to low-level operations that has not yet been written'.¹⁵⁶

In 1991 updated pamphlets on command and control and formation tactics were issued.¹⁵⁷ The new edition of *Command and Control* incorporated the philosophy of directive control outlined in TIL/88 and described the qualities required by a commander.¹⁵⁸ The new version of *Formation Tactics* emphasised a manoeuvreist approach to land warfare and emphasised the need for defensive depth by the Army should 'the [air-sea] battles of the approaches fail'.¹⁵⁹ These publications were followed in March 1992 by a revised edition of the keystone pamphlet MLW One 1.1, entitled *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*.¹⁶⁰

The 1992 *Fundamentals* represented a more detailed approach to doctrine than had been the case with its predecessors in 1977 and 1985. This approach was largely due to the growing influence of joint-service concepts and definitions, especially at the operational level of war.¹⁶¹ For the first time, the Army used the ADF definition that doctrine represented 'fundamental principles by which military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national

¹⁵⁶ *Doctrine Status and Development 1991*, p. 4, para. 7.

¹⁵⁷ Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part One, Conduct of Operations, Volume 1, Pamphlet No. 2, *Command and Control 1991*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, October 1991, chap. 1; Pamphlet No. 4, *Formation Tactics 1991*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, October 1991, chap. 1.

¹⁵⁸ *Command and Control 1991*, chaps 2–3.

¹⁵⁹ *Formation Tactics 1991*, p. 1-1, para. 102 and chap. 4.

¹⁶⁰ Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part One, The Conduct of Operations, Volume 1, Pamphlet 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, Army Office, March 1992. An unrestricted version of the 1992 *Fundamentals* was issued by Training Command in 1993 to provide the Australian community with an Army perspective on warfare and to stimulate discussion on the role of land forces.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, para. 1.22.

objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application'.¹⁶² The new pamphlet acknowledged the primacy of joint doctrine over single-service doctrine by stating that joint operations represented 'the cornerstone of successful military campaigns'.¹⁶³ The main purpose of the Manual of Land Warfare series was described as ensuring that all Army commanders had a common foundation on which to base their training and plans.¹⁶⁴

The 1992 edition of the *Fundamentals* incorporated the interim doctrine outlined in TIB 68 for low-level operations and the philosophy of directive control. In considering the need to develop low-level conflict, the pamphlet introduced the concept of Defence of Australia Conflicts. This concept represented credible contingencies and embraced the three levels of conflict—low-level, escalated low-level and more substantial conflict—as outlined in the 1987 White Paper.¹⁶⁵

Low-level conflict was described as a form of unconventional warfare waged against the Australian mainland and offshore territories. Escalated low-level conflict was described as military operations against Australia of a more conventional nature that might include air and naval attack and more intensive ground operations.¹⁶⁶ More substantial conflict constituted 'a sustained major assault against Australia' and merged into what was defined as External Conflicts—embracing the less likely contingencies of limited war, general war and global nuclear war.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶² Australian Defence Force, Joint Services Publication, JSP (AS) 101—*Doctrine*, Headquarters Australian Defence Force, 3rd edn, July 1989, para. 102.

¹⁶³ *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare 1992*, para. 8.4.

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 4.34.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, paras 4.33 – 4.36.

Since the military capabilities for a major attack on Australia did not at the time exist in the region, the main focus in Army doctrine was on low-level and escalated low-level conflict. The 1992 *Fundamentals* defined the difference between low-level and escalated low-level conflict as lying in ‘the preparedness of the enemy to directly confront [Australian] military forces’.¹⁶⁸ In developing an Australian joint military strategy to counter low-level conflict, the key tasks of the land force would be to conduct reconnaissance and surveillance; protect vital assets; and to intercept, capture and destroy the enemy.¹⁶⁹ While such tasks defined a defensive posture, MLW One 1.1, 1992, insisted that the Army would continue to pursue offensive operations based on an indirect approach to strategy:

The execution of these security operations . . . will be offensive. The objective will be to commit small forces with high mobility and firepower to dislocate the enemy by aggressive action, manoeuvre, concealment, timely intelligence and effective deception. This concept for operations seeks to wrest the initiative from the enemy through effective manoeuvre, not through attrition. Hence it may be regarded as an indirect approach.¹⁷⁰

The indirect approach reinforced the use of manoeuvre as the basis of Army’s doctrine for applying the principles of concentration of force, economy of effort, and surprise to destroy or disrupt the enemy.¹⁷¹ ‘Manoeuvre’, stated the 1992 *Fundamentals*, ‘may enable smaller forces to succeed against larger forces. Manoeuvre is the preferred tactical approach of the Australian Army’.¹⁷²

The major innovation in the 1992 *Fundamentals* was, however, the concept of the operational art. The planning and conducting of

¹⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, para. 5.17.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 5.23.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 5.24.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*, para. 3.38.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, para. 3.42.

campaigns at the operational level of war, which had first been outlined in the 1985 *Fundamentals*, was expanded and refined in the 1992 edition by the introduction of the operational art into Army doctrine. ‘Operational art’, observed the 1992 *Fundamentals*, ‘is the art of winning campaigns. It fits between tactics, the art of winning battles and strategy—the art of winning wars. It is the art of using tactical events, either battle or the refusal to give battle, to achieve success’.¹⁷³ Various conceptual components of operational art—the centre of gravity, decisive points, lines of operation, the culminating point and tempo—were discussed in the 1992 pamphlet as major features in Australian campaign planning and execution.¹⁷⁴ Success in the practice of operational art was linked firmly to the use of directive control as ‘a philosophy of command and a system for conducting operations’.¹⁷⁵

The 1992 pamphlet made no mention of the special characteristics of Australian doctrine outlined in the 1977 and 1985 editions of *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations*. The new pamphlet focused on what it described as ‘Influences on Australian Doctrine’ based on policy and changes in circumstances. These influences were described as defence policy, strategic circumstances, level of threat, technological advances, experience from operational service and training, and agreements with allies.¹⁷⁶

The A21 Review and Short-warning Conflict, 1994–96

After the publication of the 1992 *Fundamentals*, the most significant events in Army doctrine development stemmed from the A21 Review between 1994 and 1996. This review had been recommended by the Chiefs of Staff Committee (COSC) in July 1994 and was announced in the November 1994 White Paper.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, para. 3.15.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, paras 3.19 – 3.32.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, para. 3.6.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, para. 8.2.

The main aim of the review was ‘the defining of an appropriate force structure to satisfy the demands of the defence of Australia in short-warning conflict’.¹⁷⁷

The review sought to remedy a number of serious deficiencies in the manning, equipment and readiness of both Regular and Reserve components of the Army. These deficiencies had been exposed during *Kangaroo* exercises in 1989, 1992 and 1995, and had led to a prevalence of hollow units—which meant that the Army had insufficient combat power to meet the demands of concurrent operations.¹⁷⁸

Through a rigorous analytical study, the Army’s force structure was to be reshaped to meet the future needs of low-level, short-warning conflict. Infantry, armour, artillery and engineers were to be integrated into seven task forces, which in turn would form the nucleus of the 21st-century Army as an Enhanced Combat Force (ECF). These task forces were to be characterised by increased mobility, improved equipment and a heavier reliance on a more effective reserve component in the Total Force. The intention was to create a land force capable of maintaining a sustained operational focus on northern Australia and developing notional adversary capabilities from a defence-in-depth posture.¹⁷⁹ Australian light-armoured vehicles (ASLAVs) and Bushranger light infantry-mobility vehicles were to be acquired, and M113 tracked

¹⁷⁷ See the A21 terms of reference in Australian Army, *Restructuring the Australian Army*, Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications, Canberra, 1997, p. 9.

¹⁷⁸ For the background to the A21 Review, see the remarks of the Minister for Defence, Ian McLachlan, in *Restructuring the Australian Army*, pp. iii–iv.

¹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9–10. See also Lieutenant General J. M. Sanderson, ‘An Australian Army for the 21st Century’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, XVII, November 1996, pp. 41–7.

armoured vehicles were to be upgraded to improve land force mobility.

The ADF conducted the A21 Review throughout 1995 as an in-house study, with the Army providing the major team input. The study was led by Brigadier Peter Dunn, the Director-General Force Development Land (DGFD—L) in Headquarters, ADF. Following strategic guidance, the review team initially attempted to define an appropriate force structure based on short-warning conflict. In the 1994 White Paper, short-warning conflict was described as ‘the types of conflict which could be sustained [by capabilities available in the region] . . . The scale and intensity of short-warning conflict could range from small raids to larger and protracted operations’.¹⁸⁰

The difficulty with this definition was that it did not limit the scale, range or intensity of operations. Many Army planners believed that the 1994 White Paper had an ill-defined conception of the transition from low-level to major conflict. It was argued within the Army that strategic guidance for low-level conflict was based on an unrealistic appreciation and expectation of force expansion.¹⁸¹ The concept of short-warning conflict was seen as having limited usefulness for the development of doctrine for operations in defence of Australia.¹⁸² In July 1995, the CGSAC recommended that Army doctrine needed to be sufficiently adaptable and versatile to cope with the movement from short-warning conflict to major conflict.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ *Defending Australia: Defence White Paper 1994*, p. 24, para. 4.12.

¹⁸¹ Colonel P. F. Leahy, Director of Army Research and Analysis, ‘Short-Warning Conflict as a Basis for Defence Planning’, Directorate of Army Research and Analysis Discussion Paper for CGS, 13 September 1995, p. 2.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 2; *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, p. 14, para. 53.

¹⁸³ Chief of the General Staff’s Advisory Committee Minute 07/95, 7 July 1995, pp. 2–3.

In order to provide clarity on this issue, the CGS, Lieutenant General John Sanderson, directed that short-warning conflict was not to be used as a generic term for developing Army doctrine. Instead, the term ‘operations in defence of Australia’ was to be used. Lieutenant General Sanderson stated:

Low force-to-space operations and protective operations of the type foreseen for the immediate future are a necessary focus for contemporary doctrinal development . . . and it is these not short-warning conflict which should be the immediate subject of our doctrine.¹⁸⁴

In September 1995, Lieutenant General Sanderson approved a Training Command Statement of Doctrinal Principle in order to give further direction to doctrine development in the context of the A21 force structure review.¹⁸⁵ The statement outlined five priorities for doctrine development. First, to meet the demands of dispersal on Australian soil, the Army was to move towards the brigade as the fundamental building block for operations in defence of Australia. Brigades were to be structured to conduct independent and dispersed operations.¹⁸⁶ Second, traditional divisional-level operations were to be discarded. However, because brigade operations were likely to be widely dispersed, it was considered that command and control might still need to be exercised by a superior tactical-level headquarters that might be joint.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, p. 15, para. 55.

¹⁸⁵ Army Doctrine Centre, ‘Outline Plan for Introduction of the Statement of Doctrinal Principle into Australian Army Doctrine’, Minute, Headquarters Training Command, 14 September 1995. See also ‘Message from the Director of the Army Doctrine Centre’, *Combat Arms Journal*, December 1995, I, pp. v–vi.

¹⁸⁶ ‘Outline Plan for Introduction of the Statement of Doctrinal Principle into Australian Army Doctrine’, p. 1; *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, pp. 10–11, paras 32–40.

¹⁸⁷ ‘Outline Plan for Introduction of the Statement of Doctrinal Principle into Australian Army’, p. 4.

Third, doctrine for major conflict was to be developed using the American, British, Canadian, Australian Standardisation Agreement (ABCA) corps model rather than the 1st Australian corps model outlined in TIB 28 in the mid-1970s. The Army's aim was to try to ensure that doctrine to support lower-level operations would be developed within a framework that would assist force expansion if necessary. The CGSAC also believed that the use of the ABCA corps model would facilitate the development of doctrine for combined operations.¹⁸⁸

Fourth, while the need for flexible and versatile doctrine to guide the transition from low-level operations to major conflict was acknowledged, the Army's first priority was declared to be 'the development of doctrine to support the types of operations anticipated in the defence of Australia based on the force-in-being'.¹⁸⁹ This approach meant that immediate emphasis had to be given to the development of Army doctrine for self-reliant, low force-to-space operations and protective operations as envisaged by Lieutenant General Sanderson. Fifth, the Army was required to be able to integrate forces into a larger force structure. An Australian brigade would become part of a multinational corps composed of two US divisions, a British division and a Canadian brigade.¹⁹⁰

A reorganised Army Doctrine Centre was created in Training Command in early 1995, designed to assist in developing the priorities outlined in the Statement of Doctrinal Principle and to guide the conduct of force restructuring. The main task of the Doctrine Centre was to develop a conceptual framework for

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 4; *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, pp. 10–11, paras 32–40.

¹⁸⁹ *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, p. 11, para. 36.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 11, paras 37–40.

operations in defence of Australia.¹⁹¹ During 1996 MLW pamphlets entitled *Campaigning, Operations in Defence of Australia* and *Task Force Operations in Defence of Australia* were issued as Army doctrine.¹⁹²

Collectively these pamphlets sought to address the issues of land force deployment and combat power in a joint-force area of operations (JFAO) using task forces optimised for dispersed low-level operations. MLW One 1.9, *Campaigning*, described Army doctrine ‘for the conduct of military operations on land, in pursuit of strategic objectives’.¹⁹³ The pamphlet elaborated on doctrine from ADFP 6—*Operations*, and outlined the Army’s philosophy and approach to the planning and conduct of land campaigns in a joint environment. The publication sought to provide guidance for commanders functioning at the interface of the tactical and operational levels of war.¹⁹⁴ It stressed the importance of operational art in designing and executing a campaign in low-level conflict.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 7–8; 14, paras 48–52. The Army Doctrine Centre replaced the Army Doctrine Branch with the inclusion (but not relocation) of the doctrine staff in the corps schools. Other priorities of the reorganised Centre were stated to be doctrine development for command and control, surveillance, motorised, amphibious and airborne operations.

¹⁹² Australian Army, Manual of Land Warfare, Part One, The Conduct of Operations, Volume 1, Pamphlet No. 9, *Campaigning 1996*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, February 1996; Pamphlet No. 3, *Operations in Defence of Australia 1996*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, December 1996; Volume 2, Pamphlet No. 1, *Task Force Operations in Defence of Australia, 1996*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, December 1996.

¹⁹³ *Campaigning 1996*, p. v.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. v; chaps 1–2.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, chaps 3–4. It should be noted that several senior Australian Army doctrine developers believe that MLW One 1.9, *Campaigning*, was an aberration in that the publication was pitched above the tactical level and trespassed on ADFP 6—*Operations*.

MLW One 1.3, *Operations in Defence of Australia*, was the most important of the Army's 1996 doctrine publications. The pamphlet introduced the term 'operations in defence of Australia' and was designed to be 'a statement of the fundamental doctrine for operations in defence of Australia and Australian interests'.¹⁹⁶ MLW One 1.3 laid down a general concept for the conduct of land force operations based on detection, protection and response.¹⁹⁷ Special attention was paid to the problem of low force-to-space ratios in TAORs in northern Australia and to specific land force tasks in a joint-force area of operations.¹⁹⁸

Detection, protection and response operations and security in support areas were described in detail, with response options grouped according to tactical areas, wide areas and offshore areas using a range of force elements.¹⁹⁹ The pamphlet dwelt on the enduring operational problem of reconciling rapid deployment with combat power in wide-area, dispersed operations across the breadth of northern Australia using ready deployment and manoeuvre forces. While airmobile forces at Tindal and Jabiru could deploy quickly over much of the Top End of northern Australia, they were limited to foot-mobility and lacked speed once on the ground. The pamphlet stated that 'there may be a requirement for airmobile response forces to marry-up with vehicles in the JFAO'.²⁰⁰ Finally, MLW One 1.3 stressed the vital need for integrated logistics in maximising combat effectiveness across all military levels.²⁰¹

A companion pamphlet to MLW One 1.3, MLW One 2.1, *Task Force Operations in Defence of Australia*, provided interim tactical doctrine for a core concept for brigade-style land

¹⁹⁶ *Operations in Defence of Australia 1996*, p. v.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, paras 2.2 – 2.6.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, chaps 2–3.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, para. 3.26.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, para. 3.24.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, chap. 4.

operations. This core concept was based on deployment, offensive response by protective forces and provision of a flexible reserve in the form of a Theatre Response Force (TRF).²⁰² The pamphlet introduced the notion of a layered land defence: an outer layer of surveillance forces; an inner layer of forces to locate and identify enemy targets; and a final protective layer providing a tactical response to defeat hostile forces.²⁰³ MLW One 2.1 also described TRF operations, ground-based air defence and the use of special forces.²⁰⁴

Restructuring the Australian Army and the Impact of the 1997 Strategic Review

The years 1997 and 1998 were marked by fundamental challenges to the Army's doctrinal thinking as it had evolved through the 1977, 1985 and 1992 editions of the *Fundamentals* to the 1995 A21 Review. Most of these challenges stemmed from the formulation of new strategic guidance. The development of Australian Army doctrine after 1997 can only be understood in the context of revised strategic thinking at the political level. In March 1996, the Labor Government, which had been in office for thirteen years, was defeated by the Liberal–National Coalition. It soon became evident that in the post–Cold War era, the Coalition Government considered Australian defence policy to be too insular and insufficiently integrated with foreign policy objectives. This was an approach that the Army largely failed to anticipate.

What the political scientist F. A. Mediansky has described as the Australian 'conservative diplomatic style' based on a nexus between international role and military strength began to exert

²⁰² *Task Force Operations in Defence of Australia 1996*, chap. 1.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–6, para. 1.18 and chap. 2.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, chaps 3–6.

influence on defence policy-making.²⁰⁵ According to Mediansky, the essence of this style is that ‘a nation’s foreign policy must be closely integrated with that of defence . . . Indeed the military strength of a nation may largely condition the means employed by foreign policy in seeking to achieve its purpose’.²⁰⁶ This approach was reflected by the close coordination between the new Government’s 1997 foreign policy and strategic policy documents, *In the National Interest* and *Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997* (ASP 97).²⁰⁷

Initially, the Coalition Government appeared to accept the main principles and concepts of the A21 Review to guide what was now called the Restructuring the Army (RTA) scheme.²⁰⁸ In December 1996, a CGS Directive pushed ahead with procedures for the development of Task Force trials doctrine based on the concepts of the A21 study.²⁰⁹ The key defence priority of the Australian Army remained the development of military forces for the defence of the continent. However, in February 1997, in the Army’s publication, *Restructuring the Australian Army*, the Minister for Defence, Ian McLachlan, announced that he intended to steer the RTA plan in a direction ‘to better meet the Government’s strategic posture’.²¹⁰ The Government stated that, while defence of Australia remained

²⁰⁵ F. A. Mediansky, ‘The Conservative Style in Australian Foreign Policy’, *Australian Outlook*, April 1974, II, i, p. 51.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁷ Commonwealth of Australia, *In the National Interest*, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Canberra, 1997; *Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997*, Department of Defence (Directorate of Publishing and Visual Communications), Canberra, 1997.

²⁰⁸ House of Representatives, Ministerial Statement, ‘Defence Policy’ by the Hon. Ian McLachlan, AO, MP, Minister for Defence, 15 October 1996, pp. 1–4.

²⁰⁹ CGS Directive 13/96, 20 December 1996.

²¹⁰ Ian McLachlan, Message from the Minister, preface to *Restructuring the Australian Army*, p. iv.

a foremost concern, ‘the Land Force must be capable of conducting offshore operations, either unilaterally or as part of a coalition’.²¹¹

In December 1997 the Government’s strategic posture became clearer with the publication of ASP 97. The new strategic review began a shift away from the narrow policy of defence of Australia towards a broader maritime concept of strategy that placed the Asia-Pacific region as central to Australian security.²¹² Although this maritime concept of strategy envisaged the use of mainly air and naval forces, the emphasis on reactive, low-level contingencies—contingencies that lay at the heart of the RTA plan—was replaced by the concept of a range of possible onshore and offshore conflicts.²¹³ This new approach to defence planning challenged the basic assumptions of the A21 review which were based on a reaction strategy using detection, protection and response mainly on Australian soil.

The review advanced three basic tasks for the ADF: defeating attacks against Australia (DAA), defending Australia’s regional interests (DRI), and supporting Australia’s global interests (SGI).²¹⁴ The concept of warning was defined as having two dimensions: capability warning for major attack and crisis warning for short-notice conflict.²¹⁵ Although defeating attacks against Australia remained the core force structure priority, regional conflicts were declared to be more likely than direct attacks on Australia.²¹⁶

In another challenge to the assumptions of the A21–RTA scheme, ASP 97 considered that, in terms of defence posture, ‘preparedness levels will be determined more by the requirements of regional

²¹¹ *Restructuring the Australian Army*, p. 3.

²¹² *Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997*, pp. 7; 44.

²¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 29–34.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 36.

operations and deployments in support of global interests . . . than by the needs of defeating attacks on Australia'.²¹⁷ The Army was required to place a regular brigade group at a high level of readiness to improve response capability. Such a capability was described as being 'particularly useful for short notice operations overseas'.²¹⁸ This decision affected both the concept behind, and the resources available to, the RTA scheme as derived from A21 processes. In particular, it struck at the key assumption of the RTA that 'the most likely adversary scenario, which the Land Force would be required to deal with, would be concurrent operations by a number of Special Forces teams across northern Australia, possibly supported by terrorist actions in other areas'.²¹⁹

In February 1998, Hugh White, the Deputy Secretary of Strategy and Intelligence in the Department of Defence, summed up the impact of the publication of ASP 97 on the Army. In White's opinion, the new review meant that the focus of Army development had to shift away from dispersal and defensive operations towards more compact deployments for offshore roles. He noted that this was exactly the opposite direction to the A21 vision, adding wryly, 'it could be an unpleasant irony if we finally develop an army to support the policy of 1987 just at the time we realised it is the wrong policy'.²²⁰

The Army was slow to adapt to the new strategic policy environment. The 3 October 1997 CGS Directive—issued only a few weeks before the release of ASP 97—listed the strategic-level objectives to support the development of a largely unchanged A21 vision.²²¹ Objective four, 'Developing Army Doctrine at the Tactical Level in Defence of Australia', outlined Army Trials

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

²¹⁹ *Restructuring the Australian Army*, p. 16.

²²⁰ Hugh White, 'The Strategic Review: What's New', *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, December 1998, IXX, p. 59.

²²¹ CA Directive 12/97, 3 October 1997.

Doctrine (ATD).²²² MLW One 1.3, *Operations in Defence of Australia*, was confirmed as the keystone document for the ATD process based on the concepts of the A21 Study Phase 3 Report into the year 2000. The Army was to develop doctrine for the A21 Theatre Response Force and was to produce an updated Musorian Armed Forces pamphlet to provide Exercise Enemy doctrine.²²³

Only in June 1998 did the Army seek to make the RTA trials more compatible with changes in defence policy. In a revised RTA Trials Master Plan, it was stated that ‘trials will be conducted within operational scenarios drawn from analysis of the 1997 strategic review, “Australia’s Strategic Policy” (ASP 97)’.²²⁴ Phase 2 of the RTA Trials was to ‘assess the adaptability and versatility of the Phase 1 TF to the off-shore DAA, DRI and DGI tasks identified in ASP 97 in order to identify additional capabilities that may be required in the ECF [Enhanced Combat Force]’.²²⁵ By December 1998, the current of strategic change had effectively rendered MLW One 1.3, *Operations in Defence of Australia 1996*, and MLW One 2.1, *Task Force Operations in Defence of Operations 1996*—both fundamental to the A21 scheme—obsolete only two years after their publication. Both documents were to be superseded by new Army Trials Doctrine.²²⁶

²²² Australian Army, *Doctrine Status and Development 1998*, Training Command Instruction 01/98, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, January 1998, p. 7, paras 24–7.

²²³ *Ibid.*; Australian Army, *The Musorian Armed Forces*, Army Trials Doctrine 4.3, 1st edn, Version 1, Land Operations, Tactics, Techniques and Procedures, Parts 1 and 2, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, January 1998.

²²⁴ Australian Army, Office of the Chief of Army, ‘Restructuring of the Army Trials Master Plan’, 6 June 1998, p. 1. Minute signed by Lieutenant General John Sanderson. Copy in author’s possession.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*

²²⁶ Australian Army, *Doctrine Status and Development 1999*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, December 1998, p. 18, para. 46. The aim of Army Trials Doctrine was to provide a separate

Maritime Strategy and the Modernisation of Australian Army Doctrine, 1998–99

In October 1998, the new Chief of Army, Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, announced that the Army would embrace a maritime concept of strategy.²²⁷ Lieutenant General's Hickling's statement represented a watershed decision in that it ended an era in Army doctrine and force structuring. After a quarter of a century of preparing for mainly continental defence operations as outlined by Lieutenant General Hassett in 1975, the Army embraced the primacy of offshore operations.

In March 1999, Lieutenant General Hickling outlined his philosophy in more detail in an important address to students at the Command and Staff College. The Chief of Army's address took place against a background of economic crisis in the Asia-Pacific region and declining political stability in Indonesia and East Timor—events that had persuaded the Australian Government in February 1999 to increase the readiness of the 1st Brigade and to expand the strength of the 3rd Brigade Ready Deployment Force (RDF). These measures represented the most significant level of force readiness by the Regular Army since the end of the Vietnam War.²²⁸

mechanism for developments to be assessed, thus creating a process whereby relevant material could eventually be integrated into mainstream Army doctrine.

²²⁷ Lieutenant General Frank Hickling, Chief of Army, 'Address to Senior Officers', Chief of Army Exercise, Russell Offices, Canberra, 22 October 1998. Notes taken by author. For a background study, see Michael Evans, *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy*, Working Paper No. 101, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, September 1998.

²²⁸ The force readiness plans are Project Trident (developing a rotation force to replace the 1st or 3rd Brigades) and Project Tine (the expansion of the RDF).

In his address, the Chief of Army described the 1995 A21 study as ‘the high watermark in the continental strategy that Army had adopted after Vietnam’.²²⁹ Lieutenant General Hickling acknowledged that the A21 scheme had helped the Army to embrace the concepts of the primacy of the decision cycle and to accept a manoeuvrist approach to operations, but he also declared the plan to be ‘out of harmony’ with ASP 97. He went on to state:

A21 was a passive, defensive strategy not only in the operational sense; but worse, it was condemning the Army to a bit part in defence thinking . . . When I took over this job 8–9 months ago it was clear that the Army had to change direction. It was also clear that some of our long-held assumptions had to go.²³⁰

The Chief of Army went on to list what he described as A21’s ‘fatal flaws’. First, A21 was too one-dimensional and insular; second, it was too continental in approach; third, it was overly positional and static, ‘denying tactical manoeuvre above unit level’; fourth and ‘worst of all it was based on the policy that the Army could play no part in the maritime strategy called for in ASP 97, at least until the blue-water Maginot Line of the air–sea gap was breached’.²³¹ The Army had to realise that the new priority in defence policy was the desire to resolve security challenges as far from Australian soil as possible. Lieutenant General Hickling went on to state:

The Army has to get into the business of operating in a maritime setting, as well as being able to operate effectively on the Australian continent as *a defence of last resort*. Consequently, as I told people at the [1998] CA’s Exercise, I have committed myself to a maritime strategy; and as a result I have nailed Army’s colours to that mast.²³²

²²⁹ Chief of Army’s Address to the Command and Staff College, Fort Queenscliff, Victoria, 11 March 1999, p. 1.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

²³² *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4. Emphasis added.

The Army had to put priority into forces that could be used to project power and influence the maritime approaches, and it had to accept the need for increased force readiness.²³³

The new thinking outlined by Lieutenant General Hickling was reflected in the decision to review Army doctrine and to create a new Land Warfare Doctrine structure to replace the Manual of Land Warfare series. By the mid-1990s, the GOC Training Command, Major General Michael Keating, expressed reservations over the continuing relevance of the MLW series, which was widely seen as being limited by its corps orientation. The latter was an obstacle to developing timely and relevant Army doctrine from the RTA trials, and from a combined-arms and joint-services perspective.²³⁴

During 1996-97 Major General Keating took several important decisions in an effort to modernise Army doctrine. First, the Army developed a new military appreciation process (MAP), with an emphasis on interoperability in staff processes.²³⁵ Second, in mid-1997, a Doctrine Steering Group (DSG) was created to provide improved guidance for the development, production and validation of Army doctrine. The DSG included representatives from Army Headquarters, Training Command, Land Command, Defence Force Headquarters and the ADF Warfare Centre.²³⁶

Third, in December 1997, in order to ensure that doctrine and force structure were on converging paths, the Army Doctrine Centre became the Doctrine Wing of a new Combined Arms Training and Development Centre (CATDC), with a Centre for Army Lessons (CAL) to capture data. Fourth, a comprehensive list of Army Tactical Tasks (ATT) aimed at integrating the imperatives of force

²³³ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²³⁴ *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, p. 7, para. 14.

²³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17, paras 64–7.

²³⁶ *Doctrine Status and Development 1998*, p. 9, paras 28–9.

development and training with doctrine was approved in November 1997.²³⁷ Fifth and finally, the CATDC was to relocate from Sydney to Puckapunyal and to focus on enhancing the capability development process within the Army.²³⁸ By early 1999, through a merger of the CATDC's Doctrine Wing and the Capability Development Wing, Army doctrine development was to become the responsibility of a new Force Development Group (FDG).²³⁹

In January 1998, a new Land Warfare Doctrine Hierarchy was announced in a five-year plan to 2003. There were to be three broad levels of Army doctrine. At the first level, philosophical-level pamphlets would explain the fundamental principles of land warfare in a joint environment. At the second level, application-level pamphlets would describe how the principles were to be applied practically. At the third level, procedural-level pamphlets were to cover minor tactics, techniques and procedures for all corps training.²⁴⁰ Philosophical and application-level pamphlets would avoid organisational detail and were to be referred to as Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD). Procedural pamphlets were more prescriptive and were to be known as Land Warfare Procedures—General (LWP-G) for all-corps training, and Land Warfare Procedures—Special (LWD-S) for procedural doctrine which was relevant within a specific corps. The new hierarchy was aimed at establishing a functional rather than a corps basis for doctrine and at creating better compatibility between Army and joint doctrine.²⁴¹

A Doctrinal Transition: Land Warfare Doctrine 1, The Fundamentals of Land Warfare, 1999

²³⁷ Australian Army, *List of Army Tactical Tasks*, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, 24 November 1997, Initial Draft.

²³⁸ *Doctrine Status and Development 1999*, pp. 1–2, paras 2–3; p. 11, para. 36.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1, para. 2.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15, paras 50–1.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

In March 1999, the Army's new keystone doctrine manual LWD 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, was published.²⁴² It is an ambitious document, symbolising the Army's attempt to move itself forward from the narrow confines of the A21 scheme developed in the immediate post-Cold War era into a broader paradigm of thinking associated with 21st-century conflict.

First, LWD 1, 1999 is a philosophical tract on land warfare that seeks to explain the importance of armies as a component in modern statecraft. Second, the manual seeks to be a practical blueprint that tries to balance current force preparedness with future capability development. The aim is to provide the Government with broader land-force options to meet the needs of a more complex strategic environment. Third, the new *Fundamentals* attempts to outline what it sees as a technological transformation in the conduct of land operations stemming from the impact of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).

In recognition of the challenges presented by the linkages between these three factors, the Chief of Army has described LWD 1, 1999 as a 'work in progress' aimed at encouraging analysis and debate before the publication of a more refined edition in 2001.²⁴³ The new *Fundamentals* outlines the contours of a philosophy of land power within the parameters of joint operations. Land forces are described as being fundamental to implementing military strategies based on shaping Australia's strategic environment.²⁴⁴ The publication describes soldiers as the ADF's 'human face' who remain 'significantly more employable and versatile in satisfying a wide range of objectives than are platform-based fighting systems'.²⁴⁵

²⁴² Australian Army, Land Warfare Doctrine 1, *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, Sydney, 1999.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. ii.

²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2-16.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2-17.

The advantages of using land forces are declared to be the provision of continual presence and a capacity to stabilise collapsing societies. The deployment of troops symbolises political will since it represents ‘the most profound signal of commitment available to the Government’.²⁴⁶ This philosophy of land power is an attempt to conceptualise a broader role for the Australian Army following the abandonment of the A21 scheme and the adoption of a maritime concept of strategy. Lieutenant General Hickling’s statement that the new doctrine represents a ‘reassertion of Army’s intellectual leadership of defence processes’ reflects this broader, more proactive approach.²⁴⁷

The LWD 1, 1999 manual also seeks to be a practical blueprint that links current force preparedness with future capability development. The Army intends to match preparedness of land force elements for short-notice crisis-warning missions (predominantly high-readiness Regular operations) with longer-term capability-warning tasks (predominantly lower-readiness Reserve operations).²⁴⁸ To this end—and unlike past editions of the MLW *Fundamentals* in 1977, 1985 and 1992—LWD 1 devotes considerable detail to the relationship between doctrine and the methodology of a concept-led and capability-based approach to analysing land warfare. A concept-led approach is designed to optimise future capability through a continuum of development from the current Army-in-Being (AIB) to the next force, the ECF (5–20 years in the future), and subsequently to the Army-After-Next (AAN)—a force that looks 20–30 years forward.²⁴⁹ This approach is aimed at ‘transforming the

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁷ Speech by Chief of Army, Russell Offices, Canberra, 1 March 1999. Notes taken by author.

²⁴⁸ *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare 1999*, pp. 3-20 – 3-21.

²⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-7.

Army from one designed in the industrial age to one suited to the demands and possibilities inherent in the information age'.²⁵⁰

In this important transition, doctrine is declared to be 'fundamental to the Army's concept-led, capability-based approach to providing prepared land forces that are organised, trained and equipped to conduct effective military operations'.²⁵¹ Doctrine is seen as the key to unifying planning, the conduct of operations and command decision-making.²⁵² There are several continuities with the MLW series in doctrine for operational-level warfare and directive control. In particular, the doctrinal principle of austerity, first advanced in the 1977 edition of MLW One 1.1, but not mentioned in the 1992 version, is reintroduced in LWD 1, 1999. Acceptance of austere conditions and scarce forces across the conflict spectrum is again specifically and repeatedly expressed in LWD 1, 1999 as a critical factor in assisting the Army to develop innovative doctrine and to develop adaptable force elements.²⁵³

The 1999 *Fundamentals*' linkage of doctrine, concepts and capabilities is intimately related to the way land forces will confront the challenges of a new strategic environment. The Army's vision of the future strategic environment embraces a spectrum of conflict from peace to total war. Future conflict is seen as being conditioned by new international factors, including globalisation and ethnic strife on the one hand and by the Revolution in Military Affairs on the other.²⁵⁴ The spectrum of conflict embraces both symmetric (force-on-force operations) and asymmetric (unconventional or disproportionate operations) conflict.²⁵⁵ Land forces have two major roles: *warfighting* (a focus on defeating an adversary) and *military*

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1-2.

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 1-9.

²⁵² *Ibid.*, pp.1-6 – 1-7.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-5; 3-13; 3-21.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-2 – 4-4.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-7 – 2-9.

support operations (a focus on overcoming a problematic environment).²⁵⁶ In both roles, the importance of manoeuvre at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of war is seen as critical to success.²⁵⁷

The most revolutionary feature of the Army's new doctrine is, however, the institutional embrace of a maritime strategy for the land force. LWD 1, 1999 defines a maritime concept of strategy as 'a military strategic preference to achieve decisions in the maritime environment'.²⁵⁸ The concept is described as proactive; the intention is to shape the strategic environment by countering any threat before it reaches Australia in the maritime approaches. The focus is on joint littoral operations—an environment in which the operational domains of sea, land and air merge.²⁵⁹

The 1999 *Fundamentals* effectively reverses a quarter of a century of Army preparation for security operations on Australian soil. In the hierarchy of land force tasks, *manoeuvre operations in a littoral environment* represent the Army's primary mission for the 21st century. These operations are followed by the need for *protective and security operations on Australian territory*—in essence the defence of Australia role as enshrined in the 1987 and 1994 White Papers. The need to shape the strategic environment by *contributing to coalition operations worldwide* is listed as the Army's third and final task.²⁶⁰ Collectively this hierarchy of tasks aligns the Army more closely with the imperatives of ASP 97 and emerging strategic realities.

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-10 – 2-11.

²⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 2-13 – 2-15.

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 3-15.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 3-18 – 3-19.

To execute a maritime strategy, the Army intends to exploit the RMA in sensor technology and systems integration.²⁶¹ The aim is to improve manoeuvre capability through command, control, communications, computing, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance systems (C4ISR); by the application of information operations (IO); and through professional mastery of military art. The fusing of these three factors of C4ISR, IO and professional mastery generates the key advantages of situational awareness and decision superiority. The latter two features are closely related: situational awareness is described as ‘that knowledge of the operational environment necessary to achieve decision superiority’. The definition of decision superiority is ‘the ability to make and implement more informed and accurate decisions at a faster rate than the enemy’.²⁶²

The 1999 *Fundamentals* sees modern land warfare as characterised by the technological transformation of the conventional battlefield with linear fronts and flanks to a more dynamic *battlespace* based on nonlinear or distributed operations.²⁶³ To increase its capacity to wage nonlinear operations, the Army seeks to embrace what it describes as Network-centric Warfare (NCW): the effective integration of sensor systems, command support systems and weapons systems throughout the battlespace to synchronise military engagements in a theatre of operations.²⁶⁴ NCW is an expensive and complex way of integrating combat assets, and it is by no means certain that the land force will ever possess sufficient resources to employ such a system. Nevertheless, NCW is viewed as particularly relevant to the Australian Army because it permits relatively small, high-technology forces to achieve disproportionate effects throughout the battlespace.²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 4-10.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5 – 4-7.

²⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 4-11.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-11 – 4-14.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-15 – 4-17.

LWD 1, 1999 seeks to integrate the Army's combat capability with the application of technology, training and ethos. The method by which the Army generates its capacity to fight and win is described as *fighting power*, a term derived from recent British military doctrine.²⁶⁶ Fighting power combines three components: an *intellectual* component (knowledge through professional mastery); a *moral* component (the will to fight, which draws on the ANZAC tradition); and a *physical* component (the means to fight).²⁶⁷ Six interlinked elements of land force capability underpin physical fighting power—people, organisation, support and facilities, training, equipment and doctrine—known collectively as POSTED. In combination, the POSTED elements are linked to the Army's Battlespace Operating Systems (BOS) based on reconnaissance, surveillance and intelligence (RSI), command and control, combat service support (CSS), manoeuvre, fire support, information operations, mobility and survivability, and air defence.²⁶⁸

Fighting power is applied by the concept of 'fighting smart', which is described as 'provid[ing] the doctrinal basis on which the Army prepares land forces for operations'.²⁶⁹ The idea of fighting smart involves the application of tactical manoeuvre and battle-cunning.²⁷⁰ Tactical manoeuvre involves using detection, response, protection, sustainment and information.²⁷¹ Its aim is to facilitate the Army's traditional indirect approach to warfare by the massing of effects rather than forces—particularly throughout the littoral environment—using amphibious, naval and air capabilities linked by the electromagnetic spectrum.²⁷²

²⁶⁶ *Design for Military Operations: The British Military Doctrine 1996*, pp. 4-1 – 4-7.

²⁶⁷ *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare 1999*, pp. 5-2; 5-5.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-9 – 5-10.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6-17.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6-2.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 6-8 – 6-11.

²⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 6-5 – 6-6.

The concept of battle-cunning—a term apparently derived from previous leadership pamphlets—is defined as being ‘the hallmark of the Australian “digger” and a characteristic of the Australian Army’.²⁷³ Battle-cunning—an essentially traditional Australian skill in small-unit battle tactics—forms the basis of a ‘bottom-up’ approach to the conduct of land force operations.²⁷⁴ Finally, fighting smart is enhanced by exploiting the ‘knowledge edge’ gained from using information technology. Exploiting the ‘knowledge edge’ was the highest capability development priority listed in ASP 97.²⁷⁵ In LWD 1, 1999, the Army concentrates on developing its ability to link sensors (the means of information collection) to shooters (battlespace weapons systems). The aim is to gain near real-time awareness and superior command and control arrangements in the future.²⁷⁶

Overall, the 1999 *Fundamentals* symbolises the end of twenty-five years of continental defence doctrine. It breaks the mode of insularity and rigidity that gripped Army doctrine between 1992 and 1997. In contrast LWD 1, 1999 is a forward-looking document that concentrates firmly on maritime-littoral operations in a new strategic environment, envisaging the use of weapons systems derived from the information revolution. It is hoped that the ‘knowledge edge’ created by the information age will enable the Army to play a major role in joint operations in the 21st century. Much of LWD 1, 1999 will be open to debate, controversy and challenge—particularly aspects of manoeuvre warfare and logistical support—which is part of LWD 1’s intent. From this perspective, it is possible that the new pamphlet may come to serve the same ‘devil’s advocate’ purpose as

²⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 6-7. The ‘art of battle-cunning’ appears in Australian Army, *Junior Leadership on the Battlefield*, 2nd edn, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, March 1994, chap. 6.

²⁷⁴ *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare 1999*, p. 6-7.

²⁷⁵ *Australia’s Strategic Policy 1997*, pp. 56–60.

²⁷⁶ *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare 1999*, p. 6-14.

the US Army's 1976 version of FM 100-5, *Operations*. Like the latter document, the 1999 *Fundamentals* may serve as the catalyst for a fundamental revision of land force doctrine in the next century.

Problems in Australian Army Doctrine, 1972–99

There are perhaps two ways of viewing the development of Australian Army doctrine from the release of TIB 28 in 1975 to the publication of LWD 1 in 1999. On one level, there can be little doubt that it was a considerable achievement for the Army to develop, over a period of a quarter of a century, a body of coherent doctrine for defending continental Australia. From another perspective, it is possible to argue that Army doctrine in this period became too narrow and inward looking, and ceased to have a meaningful influence on the formulation and shape of strategic guidance. According to this latter view, inadequate doctrine was partly responsible for a growing perception in the 1990s that the Army had become the Cinderella service—a land force confined to a constabulary role in northern Australia and seemingly unwilling or unable to influence broader post–Cold War strategic thinking in Australia. One way of evaluating the merits of these contending positions is to examine briefly some of the key problems Australian Army doctrine developers faced from the early 1970s to the late 1990s.

Four main problems can be identified in the development of Australian Army doctrine since 1972. First, Army doctrine development did not have the benefit of clear strategic guidance for fifteen years between 1972 and 1987. Second, while the Australian Army has produced a considerable body of doctrinal literature, doctrine development has long suffered from a lack of central direction. Third, the Army's powerful heritage of tactical excellence has often worked to prevent a full embrace of some of the more difficult challenges posed by operational-level warfare. Fourth, there has been the presence of an anti-intellectual culture within the Army,

which has sometimes limited the development of the type of vigorous debate and feedback of ideas that are necessary to nourish doctrine.

Lack of Strategic Guidance

The Army's doctrinal movement away from forward defence towards defending continental Australia would have been challenging even under ideal circumstances. The problem of strategic guidance that the Army encountered between withdrawal from Vietnam in 1972 and the release of the 1987 White Paper made a difficult challenge even more complicated.

There can be little doubt that the slow evolution of Australian strategic guidance seriously affected the Army's ability to formulate doctrine. As Lieutenant General Hassett recognised in his 1975 Training Directive, the Army itself had to develop doctrine suited to defending continental Australia in a strategic vacuum.²⁷⁷ Although the 1976 White Paper sketched a general picture of the policy of Defence of Australia, for over a decade defining the contribution of the Army became essentially an exercise in successive Chiefs of the General Staff attempting to interpret the meaning of strategic guidance.

The problem of inadequate strategic guidance was compounded by the impact on the Army of the organisational changes of the Dunstan–Bennett era between 1977 and 1984. The time lag between the Army's field practice and its doctrine development increased markedly between the late 1970s and early 1980s. Despite this unfavourable situation, Major General S. N. Gower, a former head of doctrine and GOC Training Command, has argued that doctrine development did achieve some considerable successes—particularly in the first half of the 1980s. 'The early 80s', Gower points out, 'saw the concepts of campaigning and the operational

²⁷⁷ 'Report on Doctrinal Conference', 16–17 July 1975, p. i.

level of war introduced to the Australian Army doctrinally (concepts everyone has taken up, but no easy feat at the time), and it was by no means a simple derivative of prevailing US practice'.²⁷⁸

In addition, by the time of the 1987 White Paper, the decision to introduce directive control into Army doctrine had been taken in principle by Lieutenant General Gratton. Overall, then, given the legacy of imprecise strategic guidance from 1972 to 1987, the Army's adoption of the operational level of war and directive control by the late 1980s, and subsequently of operational art in the early 1990s, were important and enduring advances.

The Lack of Central Direction in Army Doctrine

Compounding the problem of weak strategic guidance is the fact that the Australian Army has tended to lack a consistent top-down approach to doctrine development. The result has been doctrinal fragmentation and a lack of corporate memory in doctrine development. This in turn has led to the predominance of corps doctrine over Army-wide doctrine and of task doctrine over conceptual doctrine. One of the major lessons that can be derived from other English-speaking Western armies that have used doctrine as a force for change is that doctrine requires the imprimatur of the most senior officers. The roles of General William DePuy and of Field Marshal Sir Nigel Bagnall in driving change in the United States and British armies respectively are good examples of the top-down approach to using doctrine.²⁷⁹

²⁷⁸ Letter to the author by Major General S. N. Gower (Retd), 28 September 1998.

²⁷⁹ Roger J. Spiller, 'In the Shadow of the Dragon: Doctrine and the US Army after Vietnam', *RUSI Journal*, December 1997, CXXXXII, vi, pp. 41–54; John L. Romjue, 'The Evolution of American Army Doctrine', in Gooch, *The Origins of Contemporary Doctrine*, pp. 70–4; John Kiszely, *The British Army and Approaches to Warfare since 1945*, The Occasional No. 26, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, Camberley, 1987, pp. 26–8.

A key to developing effective doctrine is, therefore, a firm institutional mechanism for central direction. This type of direction has tended to be missing over the past quarter of a century in the Australian Army. The recommendation of the July 1975 Army doctrine conference that doctrine development be centralised through a committee system by Army Headquarters proved untenable because of a lack of coordination that can be traced to inadequate manpower and scarce material resources.

A well-staffed and resourced system designed to produce timely and relevant doctrine has eluded every doctrine organisation in Training Command from the TCDC in the mid-1970s through the Doctrine Branch in the 1980s to the Army Doctrine Centre of the mid-1990s. Successive doctrine development sections in Training Command have confronted constant downsizing and the steady loss of doctrine-dedicated establishment positions as the Regular Army's strength has fallen during the last twenty five years.

Lacking enough qualified officers, doctrine writing often became slow, parochial or moribund—particularly in the first half of the 1990s.²⁸⁰ In 1995, the GOC Training Command, Major General Gower, admitted that the Army had to 'develop rigorously our doctrine. It is accepted that this process has waned somewhat in recent years'.²⁸¹ In 1996 a Training Command publication on doctrine status warned that the Army possessed a weak doctrinal development system. The publication stated: 'the Australian Army's professional understanding of warfare is reflected in its doctrine. Although Army has maintained a significant body of doctrine for many years there remains confusion over its definition and purpose'.²⁸²

²⁸⁰ Gower's letter to author, 28 September 1998.

²⁸¹ 'Outline Plan for the Introduction of the Statement of Doctrinal Principle into Australian Army Doctrine', 14 September 1995, para. 7.

²⁸² *Doctrine Status and Development 1996*, p. 5.

The publication went on to warn that doctrine was too often seen as a ‘closed loop’—a process that ended with pamphlet publication—instead of being viewed as an intellectually dynamic process requiring constant review, validation and updating.²⁸³ As the British doctrine analyst Brian Holden Reid has observed, the publication of a doctrinal manual is not proof of the acceptance of a doctrinal policy. Doctrine needs institutional acceptance and its provisions must be enforced by senior officers.²⁸⁴

Since the mid-1970s, then, a lack of central direction, inadequate resources and sufficiently qualified officers have been major factors in creating and perpetuating the gulf between Australian Army field practice and written doctrine. In 1998, Major General Gower summed up the effects of these weaknesses on Australian Army doctrine:

Too long is taken to draft [Army] doctrine, arising from a combination of inadequate writers, lack of priority and lack of strategic direction that might conceivably bear some passing relevance to future operations. Doctrine should be a basis for continual improvement and stimulation of thinking, but [in the Australian Army] it never really has been.²⁸⁵

The absence of a systematic and properly resourced intellectual process in doctrine development has meant that the Army has had great difficulty in giving life to the triangular dialogue of the *enduring*, the *practical* and the *predictive*—that nexus between past experience, present operational requirement, and future conflict—which is at the heart of effective doctrine. Only since the mid-1990s has the need to develop a combined-arms, Army-wide perspective to doctrine been seriously addressed. Colonel Vincent Williams, a former head of Army doctrine, believes that, by late 1996, land

²⁸³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁸⁴ Holden Reid, *A Doctrinal Perspective, 1988–98*, p. 14.

²⁸⁵ Gower’s letter, 28 September 1998.

force doctrine had deteriorated to the point that ‘there was anarchy in Army’s doctrine over which we [Training Command] had little effective control’.²⁸⁶ Colonel Williams argues that the modernisation measures devised by Major General Keating between 1997 and 1999 represent the most important attempt to rejuvenate and unify Army doctrine during the 1990s.²⁸⁷ However, it is likely that developing and sustaining a unified approach to doctrine development, that is sanctioned by the apex of the Army’s command, will be the biggest challenge facing the new Force Development Group of the CATDC.

Tactical Heritage, Training and Doctrine

The 1985 *Fundamentals of Land Force Operations* declared, ‘the essence of soldiering is excellence at the execution of the tactical level of warfare’.²⁸⁸ The Australian Army has a history of success at the tactical level of war that is second to none in modern warfare. However, in recent years, familiarity with the tactical level of warfare has sometimes become a refuge from the complexities of operational-level warfare.

The tendency of many Army officers to fall back on tactical solutions was noted in September 1992 when the staff of the Director General Force Development—Land in Headquarters ADF produced a discussion paper on doctrine policy. The paper noted that, along with strategic guidance, ‘the main influence on doctrine tends not to be innovative and original thought, but our military heritage (which has a distinctly cultural as well as a historical dimension)’.²⁸⁹ The paper’s authors wondered whether Army

²⁸⁶ Author’s discussion with Colonel Vincent Williams (former Director, Doctrine Wing, CATDC, January 1997 – January 1999), 23 June 1999.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *The Fundamentals of Land Force Operations 1985*, para. 231.

²⁸⁹ Headquarters ADF, Directorate General Force Development—Land, ‘Discussion Paper on Policy for the Development of Doctrine’, Doctrine Officers’ Training Seminar, September 1992, p. 6.

doctrine was lagging because of ‘an individual and an institutional attachment to the past which is essentially emotional rather than intellectual’.²⁹⁰

This penchant for the tactical level has added to the difficulty of incorporating doctrine into training and course instructional content at the operational level. This disconnection between doctrine and training was well exemplified by an Army Doctrine Branch report on the use of directive control in late 1993.²⁹¹ The report noted that, although directive control had been authorised doctrine for training since 1988, ‘directive control is not employed throughout the Army nor is it generally understood’.²⁹² It warned that directive control required ‘greater intellectual application than just tactics and movement’.²⁹³ Directive control was critical to successful manoeuvre because it was a command philosophy that enabled agility, tempo and dislocation of the enemy’s decision cycle.²⁹⁴ Unless the Army absorbed directive control as a fundamental *modus operandi* in peacetime training, its understanding of the indirect approach and of manoeuvre warfare would be flawed and might lead to attrition warfare.²⁹⁵

Throughout the 1990s, Training Command continued to urge the officer corps to develop the skills necessary for effective operational level planning. In 1997, Brigadier C. A. M. Roberts, a former Chief of Staff, Training Command observed:

While I have great admiration for our Army’s tactical ability, we could be better, particularly in the area of the professional knowledge

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁹¹ See Australian Army, *Doctrine Status and Development 1994*, Training Command Instruction 01/94, Headquarters Training Command, Sydney, December 1993, pp. 1–2.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

of our officers. I despair that we will ever understand the operational art . . . Our officers are not well read in their profession. When confronted with new situations people will generally fall back on what they know best. For our officers it is tactics. It is my view that tactical applications to operational level problems leads [sic] to an attrition approach.²⁹⁶

The embrace of low-level conflict for operations across northern Australia after 1988 reinforced the power of the Army's tactical heritage. By the mid-1990s this approach had bred a degree of insularity and parochialism about operational thinking, with less emphasis on higher-level offensive capabilities and power projection. To some officers, the steady movement away from limited mid-intensity conventional war to low-level conflict contributed to what Major General Gower has described as a 'doctrinal void' in the Army of the 1990s.²⁹⁷

There was scepticism among a significant number of senior officers about the philosophy of low-level, credible contingencies. This scepticism hinged on doubts about the Army's capacity to execute a successful transition from tactical operations in defence of Australia to operational-level coalition operations in offshore situations. In 1995, the Director of the Army Doctrine Centre Colonel Adam Fritsch stated: 'it is easier to come down from the high-level to fight at the low-level; it is almost impossible to come up from the low-level to fight at the high-level—probably offshore—without huge preparation and readjustment'.²⁹⁸

In January 1997, the Commander of the 1st Brigade, Brigadier Jim Molan, went further. In an important ABCA post-exercise report, Molan argued that optimising the Regular Army for low-level warfare in a specific geographical location struck at the very heart

²⁹⁶ Letter to the author from Brigadier C. A. M. Roberts, 20 May 1997.

²⁹⁷ Gower's letter, 28 September 1998.

²⁹⁸ Author's interview with Colonel Adam Fritsch, Director, Army Doctrine Centre, 17 May 1995.

of interoperability and therefore at the Australian Army's professional credibility in higher-level coalition operations.²⁹⁹ In Molan's view, a concentration on low-level operations in the training cycle could only weaken the Army's capacity for larger conventional operations. Since coalition operations with allied forces were far more likely than any defence of Australia contingency, there was a need for more emphasis on higher-level military thinking, organisation and doctrine.³⁰⁰

Army Doctrine and the Culture of Anti-intellectualism

A fourth problem that the Army has encountered is that of an anti-intellectual culture within its ranks. A striking characteristic of the Australian Regular Army is the paradox of an officer corps composed of many highly talented individuals but possessing a weak collective intellectual ethos. As a measure of the Army's individual excellence, it is worth noting that, of the nine Chiefs of the Defence Force Staff and Chiefs of the Defence Force between 1976 and 1998, five have been Army officers holding office for a collective period of fifteen years.³⁰¹ In stark contrast, a lack of collective intellectual rigour in the Army's culture has affected both doctrine development and intellectual debate over the last quarter of a century. In terms of doctrine development, progress has often been compartmentalised and dependent on what one senior officer has called 'the intellectual horsepower of individuals' rather than on institutional effort.³⁰²

²⁹⁹ American, British, Canadian, Australian Armies Program, *ABCA Exercise Cascade Peak 96: Post Exercise Report*, ABCA Primary Standardisation Office, Washington D. C., 20 January 1997, pp. 18–19, para. e.

³⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁰¹ See Jeffrey Grey, *A Military History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, rev. edn 1999, Appendix 1.

³⁰² Author's discussion with Colonel Vincent Williams, Director, Doctrine Wing, CATDC, 20 August 1998.

The officer corps has often demonstrated an intellectual reluctance to debate new concepts in the context of a doctrinal framework. For example, operational concepts such as ‘defensive manoeuvre with a counter-stroke capability’ first advanced by the CGS, Lieutenant General John Grey, in 1993, and ‘strategic manoeuvre’, which was formulated by Lieutenant General Sanderson in 1995, were never fully debated by the officer corps.³⁰³ In the 1995 Statement of Doctrinal Principle, it was suggested that it would be valuable for the Army to articulate an ‘Australian Way of Conducting Operations’ that drew together the various historical strands of the Australian approach to warfighting in order to clarify a future direction.³⁰⁴ However, such a project was not undertaken.

The distinguished British historian, Michael Howard, has argued that military innovators must seek to be versatile, flexible and adaptive. In times of relative peace, they must be like ‘intelligent surf riders spotting the essential currents on which to ride’.³⁰⁵ An intellectual failing in the Australian Army during the first half of the 1990s was a failure to identify such essential currents of change. There was an almost institutional inclination to assume that defence policy would continue to reflect enduring features of continental defence as outlined in the 1987 White Paper. The 1992 *Fundamentals* reflected this mindset when it failed to anticipate any changes in defence policy stemming from the end of the Cold War. The pamphlet stated:

³⁰³ Lieutenant General J. C. Grey, ‘Land Aspects of Australian Strategy’, *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, October 1993, XIV, i, pp. 32–4. Lieutenant General J. M. Sanderson, ‘A Perspective on the Operational Art’. Keynote Address to the Senior Officer Study Period, Command and Staff College, Fort Queenscliff, 25 September 1995.

³⁰⁴ ‘Outline Plan for the Introduction of a Statement of Doctrinal Principle into Australian Army Doctrine’, p. 5.

³⁰⁵ Michael Howard, ‘Military Science in an Age of Peace’, *RUSI Journal*, March 1974, CIX, i, p. 8.

The 1987 [defence] policy was not based on a high level, high technology threat, nor on providing large expeditionary forces; instead it was based on the enduring features of Australia's geo-strategic position. Thus, despite the momentous changes in Europe in the late 1980s and early 1990s, including the liberation of Eastern Europe, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War, there was no immediate need to change Australia's Defence policy.³⁰⁶

This stance clearly underestimated the possibility that defence policy might change under the impact of variable as opposed to enduring factors. In particular, it demonstrated little understanding of the alternative strand in Australian strategic thinking that linked defence planning more closely with variables in foreign policy—a strand associated with the conservative Coalition parties in Australian politics.³⁰⁷ The Coalition parties' belief that the 1994 White Paper was unsuited to post-Cold War conditions had been expressed publicly in 1995.³⁰⁸ By the time of the 1996 general election, Coalition defence policy was committed to the need for

³⁰⁶ *The Fundamentals of Land Warfare 1993*, para. 4.7. It is interesting to note that the 1992 *Fundamentals* seemed to ignore the ADF's Gulf War deployment. During the 1990–91 Gulf War, the Army was unable to provide options for a land force commitment. The Army's continental defence mindset may have also been reinforced by the firm strategic guidance provided by the 1987 and 1994 White Papers—a firmness that had, in stark contrast, been missing in the period from 1972 to 1987.

³⁰⁷ For a discussion see Robyn Lim and A. D. McLennan, 'Self-Reliance as Panacea: Muddling Strategic Thinking in Australia', *Agenda*, 1996, III, iii, pp. 267–75; and Michael Evans, 'From Defence to Security: Continuity and Change in Australian Strategic Planning in the Twentieth Century', in Dennis and Grey, *Serving Vital Interests; Australia's Strategic Planning in Peace and War*, pp. 116–40.

³⁰⁸ See 'Australia's Defence Policy: Lessons from the Past, Principles for the Future', Address by the Hon. John Howard, MP, Leader of the Opposition, to the Victorian Branch of the Australian Defence Association, Thursday, 5 October 1995, p. 2.

a broader definition of Australian strategic interests that reflected a better interaction of defence with foreign policy.³⁰⁹

As a result, the Army was intellectually unprepared for the new currents in strategic thinking that emerged in 1996–97 following a change of government. Within five years of the release of the 1992 *Fundamentals* and three years after the 1994 White Paper, the direction of Australia's defence policy changed from defence of the continent and its approaches to a maritime–littoral focus. Consequently the Army was forced to review its doctrine between 1997 and 1999 in a way that was as dramatic as that of the years from 1972 to 1977.

The Australian Army would clearly benefit from a broader intellectual approach to doctrine that reflects a better appreciation of the impact of social and political factors in analysing future war. One measure might be to integrate the talents of the Doctrine Steering Group, the CATDC, the Land Warfare Studies Centre (LWSC) and the Command and Staff College. In particular, selecting a cadre of the Army's best and brightest Staff College graduates to work on doctrine—perhaps along the lines of the US School of Advanced Military Studies (SAMS)—would stiffen the intellectual rigour of the doctrinal process.

Conclusion

In November 1978, Robert O'Neill, one of Australia's most distinguished military intellectuals, argued that adopting the policy of continental defence did not absolve Australian forces from maintaining a forward-defence capability from their own soil. 'I believe', stated O'Neill, 'that it is a *sine qua non* of an effective defence posture that Australia should have forces which can strike

³⁰⁹ Liberal and National Parties, *Australia's Defence*, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 3–5.

at targets as far from the coast as two thousand miles'.³¹⁰ Unfortunately, in the years that followed O'Neill's statement, Australian defence planners emphasised the reach of air–sea forces rather than of air–sea–land forces in a joint strategy.

Consequently, by the late 1980s, strategic guidance had forced the Army to develop a defensive and reactive doctrine for low-level continental defence, which, while challenging in its immense geographic implications, was also insular and one-dimensional in operational focus. By the 1990s, the Army's role in continental defence was confronted by great changes in the international strategic environment. Army doctrine, derived from strategic policy formulated in the Cold War era, could only be transferred to the post–Cold War environment if a narrow conception of continental geography remained the key factor in defence thinking. By the mid-1990s this was becoming less and less likely. As it had done with the unsuccessful Pentropic divisional plan in the early 1960s, the Army was forced to abandon many of the assumptions behind the flawed A21 scheme by the late 1990s. In the face of new strategic guidance, the Army had to develop new doctrine for more versatile and broader operations, primarily for joint and combined maritime scenarios.

At the end of the 20th century, then, the Australian Army finds itself in the position that nearly twenty-five years of doctrine development must be revised to meet new strategic conditions. This situation conforms to Michael Howard's view that the real conceptual problems of military science are always operational rather than procedural.³¹¹ As Howard puts it, in a now-celebrated statement on the hazards of formulating doctrine:

³¹⁰ Robert O'Neill, *The Defence of Continental Australia*, Working Paper No. 1, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, November 1978, p. 1.

³¹¹ Howard, 'Military Science in an Age of Peace', p. 5.

I am tempted indeed to declare dogmatically that whatever doctrine the Armed Forces are working on now, they have got it wrong. I am also tempted to declare that it does not matter that they have got it wrong. What does matter is their capacity to get it right quickly when the moment arrives.³¹²

This capacity ‘to get it right’ largely depends on how effective a doctrine system is in stimulating learning, anticipation and adaptation in a military organisation. It is through the interaction of these three elements that a modern army develops the intellectual skills necessary to identify the constants and variables that are critical in preparing for the next war. From the mid-1970s to the mid-1990s, the Australian Army clearly learnt much about the doctrinal implications of defence of Australia, but it was less successful in anticipating and adapting to new trends outside this narrow framework. In the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, the Australian Army developed and promulgated valuable operational doctrine under difficult conditions; however, by the first half of the 1990s, there was a hardening of doctrinal categories around low-level operations for fighting in northern Australia. Eventually, this geographical imperative contributed to the Army’s failure to anticipate and adapt new ideas to meet changing strategic conditions.

In the next century, the new LWD series must seek to remedy weaknesses in anticipation and adaptability by encouraging the feedback of creative ideas on doctrine from within the officer corps, even if this is sometimes critical in tone. The Army must recognise the validity of Clausewitz’s statement that, in preparing for the deadly practice of war, ‘criticism exists only to recognise the truth, not to act as judge’.³¹³ Used in this positive way, doctrinal debate has the potential to help clarify and encapsulate a philosophy for the employment of force based on the triangular interaction of military

³¹² *Ibid.*, p. 7.

³¹³ Quoted in Peter Paret, *Clausewitz and the State*, Oxford University Press, New York, 1976, p. 341.

history, operational experience and technological possibility. However, the success of such an approach depends on willing intellectual activity from within the Australian Army officer corps. As the leading American military historian Peter Paret reminds us, the most important aspect of military innovation is ‘not the development of weapons or methods, nor even their general adoption, but their intellectual mastery’.³¹⁴

Finally, the British strategist Air Marshal Lord Tedder once observed that the best military doctrine looks ‘*forward* from the past . . . not *back* to the past’.³¹⁵ The Australian Army may need to draw on its illustrious past and on the fortitude and flair of the Digger for developing doctrine, but such doctrine must be designed to reflect a vision of future war. A key lesson of the period between 1972 and 1999 is that developing doctrine is not a destination—for a destination can too easily become a *cul de sac*. Rather, the formulation of doctrine is a journey that must be ongoing and intellectually rigorous—always seeking to identify constants and variables in conflict—and taking account of both technological and political change. It is a journey that the Australian Army must begin in the 21st century.

³¹⁴ Peter Paret, *Innovation and Reform in Warfare*, United States Air Force Academy, Colorado, 1962, p. 2.

³¹⁵ Lord Arthur Tedder, ‘The Unities of War’, in *The Impact of Air Power: National Security and World Politics*, ed. Eugene M. Emme, D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., New Jersey, 1959, p. 339. Emphasis added.

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