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Many strategists but little strategy: addressing a deficiency in Australia

Michael Scott

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PO Box 7917 CANBERRA BC ACT 2610 Tel + 61 02 6266 0352 Email cdr.publications@defence.gov.au
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Many strategists but little strategy: Australia's military strategy absence

Michael Scott

We have lived too long now in a strategy-free mode.

Retired USMC General Jim Mattis to US Congress in 2015¹

Defence in Australia – the combined Department of Defence and Australian Defence Force (ADF) – has no readily implementable military strategy to apply Australian military power for the achievement of government objectives. Military strategy and defence strategy are not the same thing. However, a combination of inconsistent language regarding strategy, a lack of a military strategy tradition and structural changes in Defence over the past 25 years have led to a focus on enterprise ‘defence strategy’ for long-term generation of military capability at the expense of executable ‘military strategy’. However, Australia still needs a flexible and adaptive military strategy developed for the near-term strategic environment, one which can be adapted for any looming conflict. Defence must organise at the strategic level to develop, implement, monitor and adapt military strategy.

The terms ‘policy’, ‘strategy’ and ‘strategic planning’ are frequently used in high-level Australian defence documents, as well as in position titles inside Defence. The terms are used in the *2016 Defence White Paper* (DWP), the *2020 Defence Strategic Update* (DSU), *The Strategy Framework 2021* and *2021–25 Defence Corporate Plan*. These documents, however, do not relate to ‘military strategy’ for achieving the government’s strategic objectives through the application of military power in the near-term. Defence at the strategic level is predominantly structured for enterprise ‘defence strategy’ for long-term capability generation.

1 James N Mattis, ‘A new American grand strategy’, *Hoover Institution*, 26 February 2015. <https://www.hoover.org/research/new-american-grand-strategy>

Currently, the ADF has a bottom-up approach to applying military power, which has the potential to lead to strategic surprises or missed strategic opportunities.² *The Strategy Framework 2021* depicts military strategy (as ‘force employment’) being divested to a subordinate ADF command below the ‘strategic level’ as a ‘theatre campaign plan’.³ Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) at the ‘operational level’ distil their interpretation of strategic policy documents to achieve what the Chief of Joint Operations (CJOPS) believes the military strategic intent to be, while the Services can simultaneously do likewise. The Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) and Secretary of the Department of Defence (Secretary) – and the government – are then briefed on these plans, sometimes relatively close to execution. This divested approach is less than ideal in the current geostrategic climate.

In short, by highlighting the importance of effective military strategy this article demonstrates the reason why military strategy should be established in Defence. Our allies have experienced the effects of no or poor military strategy in recent conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq. Their national security apparatuses have reflected on the outcomes of these ‘Long Wars’ and derived lessons for military strategy. Australia must learn from these to understand why military strategy is important.

This article will address the problem in four steps. First, it will clarify the confused lexicon: the terms policy, strategic policy, strategy and strategic planning are used interchangeably, while defence and military strategy are not differentiated. Second, it will trace the evolution of the Defence entities responsible for strategy and show how Defence has come to a position where it no longer has a focus on – and no two-star or above responsible for – military strategy. Third, through a study of two allies who have traditions of military strategy, the US and UK in the Second World War then Afghanistan and Iraq, this article will affirmatively answer the question, ‘Does Defence need a military strategy approach?’ Contemporary arguments for strategy will be offered. Finally, principles will be recommended for systematic and organisational changes in Defence to establish the military strategy approach needed to succeed in complex multi-domain and multi-agency strategic competition and conflict.⁴

2 Justin Kelly and Mike Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College Press, Carlisle PA, 1 September 2009, p 96. <https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/2009/pubs/alien-how-operational-art-devoured-strategy/>

3 Department of Defence (DOD), *The Strategy Framework 2021*, Australian Government, Canberra ACT, 2021, pp 12–13.

4 Multi-domain referring to the land, maritime, air, space and cyber/electro-magnetic operating environments and multi-agency referring to Joint (multi-service), interagency and multinational actors.

Defining defence strategy, military strategy and strategic planning

This section attempts to provide clear distinctions between the often conflated terms defence strategy, military strategy and strategic planning. It is acknowledged 'military strategy' means different things to different people: military and non-military, Defence and non-Defence. A common language will assist in establishing the need for military strategy and strategic planning. Scholars have attempted to define and differentiate policy and strategy,⁵ although, as Freedman notes in *Strategy*, rarely providing a conclusion.⁶ Adding military, national or foreign policy strategy on top can confuse the reader even more. Indeed, this has been a problem when executing a strategy no one has been able to define. The case studies provided later in this article will highlight these exact problems.

This lack of a common language is important because the primary document providing current strategic policy direction and the government's overarching purpose for Defence is the 2020 DSU. This document gives high-level direction for generating military power, albeit in a broad sense: shape, deter and respond.⁷ The document lacks 'the ways' of achievement; however, this is an issue beyond the scope of this article. That said, it would be ideal to have an uninterrupted strategy continuum from applying military power in the present to the envisaged future upon which new capability is based.

Defence strategy

As a case in point, very little literature defines 'defence strategy' despite the term's frequent use, including in the 2016 DWP and 2020 DSU. The first likely reason why Defence currently lacks military strategy is a lack of definition and purpose, and differentiation from defence strategy. The UK Ministry of Defence

5 For this article, the following definition of policy is used: Policy dominates strategy by its articulation of a government's objective end-state—the *what* and the *why*—and its guidance regarding assumptions, resources, limitations on actions or similar considerations. This definition is distilled from the academic theories of Freedman, Gray and Strachan and the institutional definitions in the 2019, *Australian Policy Handbook*, the 2010 UK House of Commons review, *Who Does UK National Strategy?*, the 2017 Royal College of Defence Studies handbook, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, and the 2019 US Joint Doctrine Note, *(JDN) 2-19 Strategy*. For this article, the following definition of strategy is used: Strategy is a theory for achieving an objective that maintains a balance between ends (a future state or condition defined by *what* and the *why*), ways (the possible approaches defined by *how*, *when* and *where*), means (the authorities and resources defined by *who*) and actual circumstances (the *context*). This definition is gleaned from the academic writings of Freedman, Lissner, Metz, Murray and Van Riper, as well as from official publications, such as the 2006 Australian Department of Defence, *Strategy Planning Framework Handbook*, the 2017 Royal College of Defence Studies handbook, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, the 2020 US Joint Publication, *(JP) 5-0 Joint Planning*, and the 2021 Marine Corps War College, *Strategy Primer*.

6 Lawrence Freedman, *Strategy: A History*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2013, p xi.

7 Department of Defence (DOD), *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, Australian Government, Canberra ACT, 2020, p 6.

attempts to discern defence strategy in *How Defence Works*. The publication affirms ‘Defence Strategic Direction’ and sets out how the defence strategy ‘will achieve the “Future Force”’. It ‘provides the central framework for long-term planning and describes the Defence Planning Assumptions that are an integral part of the Defence Force Development process and inform Policy, Strategy and Planning’.⁸ While not definitive, it suggests defence strategy primarily focuses on long-term capability generation to achieve long-term government policy objectives.

The 2016 DWP and 2020 DSU are the articulation of Australian defence strategy objectives and focus. The 2016 DWP states:

The Government’s defence strategy will ensure Defence is prepared to respond if the Government decides the pursuit of Australia’s interests requires the use of military force. This strategy sets out three Strategic Defence Interests which are of fundamental significance for strategic defence planning.⁹

The 2016 DWP looked out 20 years. It included an assessment of the future strategic environment and incorporated a capability investment program that was fully funded over 10 years.¹⁰ But the clear focus of the 2016 DWP was on future capability generation. The faster than anticipated deterioration of the strategic environment required a ‘new strategy to sharpen defence planning’ and led to the 2020 DSU, which updated the 2016 DWP.¹¹ The DSU sets out the government’s new strategic defence policy framework, which provides clearly identified geographical, operational and capability priorities.¹² But it also focuses on capability priorities. The 2020 DSU is the new defence strategy, a strategic defence policy framework which focuses on future capability and force structure to ‘ensure the future ADF can project military power’.¹³ It can thus be deduced that:

8 Ministry of Defence (MOD), *How Defence Works*, version 6.0, United Kingdom Ministry of Defence, London, September 2020, p 13. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/920219/20200922-How_Defence_Works_V6.0_Sep_2020.pdf

9 Department of Defence (DOD), *2016 Defence White Paper*, Australian Government, Canberra ACT, 2020, p 17.

10 DOD, *2016 Defence White Paper*, p 9.

11 DOD, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, p 3.

12 DOD, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, p 21.

13 DOD, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, p 55.

Defence strategy is an enterprise-wide theory for creating military power to be used,¹⁴ or threatened to be used, in support of achieving a government's long-term policy ends – principally defending the state and its national interests – in an assessed future security environment.¹⁵

Military strategy

Academic definitions for military strategy, such as those of Freedman, Lykke and Gray, relate to employing military power to achieve military objectives in support of national strategic ends. Perhaps paradoxically, the superseded 2006 *Strategy Planning Framework Handbook* defined military strategy as 'that component of national or multinational strategy, presenting the manner in which military power should be developed and applied to achieve national objectives or those of a group of nations'.¹⁶ Similarly, the focus in UK and US publications is employing or applying military power. Military strategy involves a process: establish military goals and objectives to achieve political ends and to prioritise and allocate military capabilities.

Military strategy is a theory for applying military power – the use or threatened use – to achieve a government's ends, where the strategic military objectives are a subset of the national strategy goals.¹⁷

Strategic planning

Strategy is not *planning*. This is a constant theme across the literature; yet academics provide limited insight into what constitutes strategic planning. Gray notes, 'planning makes strategy actionable'.¹⁸ Mintzberg provides the first

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- 14 In these definitions, the term 'theory' is being used in the sense of a concept and set of principles which can be used to describe a broad strategic approach to a problem.
The following definition of military power is used: Military power is the sum of a state's weapons and equipment, trained manpower, organisations, doctrines, industrial base, and sustainment capacity, used to generate force or the threat of force, or enable others to use or threaten force, to achieve a government's objectives.
This definition is drawn from US Marine Corps definitions in MCDP 1-1, *Strategy*, and the 2021 Marine Corps War College, *Strategy Primer*.
- 15 The 1986 report on the *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities* (The Dibb Review) is an example of defence strategy. The report recommended a 'strategy of denial' (a defensive policy) and structuring the ADF accordingly. Paul Dibb, *Review of Australia's Defence Capabilities: Report to the Minister for Defence*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1986, pp 5–6.
- 16 Department of Defence (DOD), *Strategy Planning Framework Handbook*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra ACT, 2006, p 10.
- 17 The following definition is used: Grand or national strategy is an intellectual framework from which a theory can be derived for creating and orchestrating the instruments of power (a state's *means*) in support of a state's national interests and long-term policy *ends*.
This definition is aligned to that in the 2017 Royal College of Defence Studies handbook, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, Royal College of Defence Studies (RCDS), *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, UK Ministry of Defence (MOD), London, 2017.
- 18 Colin S Gray, *Strategy and Defence Planning: Meeting the Challenge of Uncertainty*, Oxford University Press, Oxford UK, 2014, p 29.

indication, 'strategy is the start point for planning'.¹⁹ Thus, planning is derived from a strategic theory: an agreed concept and set of principles which are used to describe the broad strategic approach to a problem. Metz's study, *Eisenhower as Strategist*, notes Eisenhower was 'a consistent advocate of clarity in strategic planning' who 'methodically developed a general notion of ultimate goals, defined preliminary objectives, avoided distractions, and delineated the limits of risk and cost for the attainment of objectives.'²⁰ Strategic planning is strategy in detail.

The 2006 *Strategy Planning Framework Handbook* unified 'the functions of strategy development, deliberate planning for operations and capability development'.²¹ Outputs of strategy development in this framework include 'defined linkages between strategic intent and operational planning, providing a shared, coherent basis for operational level decision-making' and military strategic planning guidance and detailed strategic plans.²² US JP 5-0 *Joint Planning* notes plans 'translate the broad intent provided by a strategy into operations; successful operations achieve the strategy's objectives'.²³ Most simply, the US Marine Corps War College *Strategy Primer* states planning 'translates the broad approach (that is, the strategy) into a detailed solution (that is, the plan)'.²⁴ For the purposes of this article, the following definition will be used:

Strategic planning is the process that translates a strategy's theory of victory or success into a detailed solution and provides the authorities and resources necessary to execute the required activities.

Therefore, the developed definitions cascade hierarchically. Strategy requires policy ends, although the formulation of strategy can also influence policy development—an iterative process. Both defence and military strategy are subordinate to national strategy but have different time horizons and desired outcomes—their formulation and execution should occur in parallel, each influencing the other. Strategic planning is simply the detailed process by which strategy is implemented. With a clear understanding of the lexicon for policy, strategy and planning, a study into how Defence arrived at its current approach to military strategy can be undertaken and recommended improvements made.

19 Henry Mintzberg, *The Rise and Fall of Strategic Planning*, The Free Press, New York, 1994, p 333.

20 Steven Metz, *Eisenhower as Strategist: The Coherent Use of Military Power in War and Peace*, Strategic Studies Institute, US Army War College Press, Carlisle PA, 1993, p 17. <https://publications.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/1659.pdf>

21 DOD, *Strategy Planning Framework Handbook*, p 2.

22 Department of Defence, *Strategy Planning Framework Handbook*, p 4 and p 21.

23 Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Joint Publication (JP) 5-0 Joint Planning*, Director Joint Force Development, Doctrine, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington DC, 2020, I-2.

24 United States Marine Corps (USMC), *The Marine Corps War College Strategy Primer*, The Marine Corps War College, Marine Corps University, Quantico VA, 2021, p 89.

What has led to Defence not having military strategy?

While a confused lexicon is the first likely reason Defence currently lacks military strategy, other likely factors explaining why Defence does not formulate or execute military strategy in the ways defined above are tradition and structure. Defence expresses a form of defence strategy for future capability generation but does not produce readily implementable military strategy using the available force-in-being executed via strategic plans from CDF. Is this deliberate? Neither the ADF nor its preceding entities had a tradition of military strategy. While a tradition may not have been embedded, the organisation of the ADF previously supported military strategy.²⁵ A review of structural changes since the 1973 Tange report shows how Defence has become an organisation that does not readily support military strategy and instead focuses at the strategic level on defence strategy and crisis management. However, first, it is helpful to look back on Australia's involvement in Second World War strategy, when our US and UK allies used military strategy to profound effect while Australia was a bystander.

Australia has a history of deferring formulation of military strategy to our allies. Horner notes there is no evidence during the Second World War of Australia's government or military leaders employing the terms 'grand strategy' or 'military strategy'. Australian national security leaders had not previously been involved in 'top-level strategic decision-making'.²⁶ The Australian War Council, because of a lack of coherent deliberate military strategic planning guidance formulated from an Australian perspective, was forced in the war's early stages to 'repeatedly defer decisions until strategic advice and estimates were available from Britain'.²⁷ As war progressed, Australia primarily drew on concepts of strategic command from Britain and America, although Australian practice was somewhat different.²⁸ Unlike in the First World War, the Australian Government 'demanded some influence over the strategic use of her forces',²⁹ although Australia 'placed its forces under the operational control of allied or coalition commanders'.³⁰ Australia's strategic military commanders advised the government on the military objectives to be achieved by its forces; however, they

25 The 1987 Baker Report provides an extensive review of military strategy and strategic headquarters functions and activities. Chapter 5 of the report, 'Military strategy and operational concepts', and Chapter 6 'Roles of HQADF and service offices' are useful references for studies of military strategy.

26 David M Horner, *High Command: Australia and Allied Strategy 1939–1945*, George Allen & Unwin (Publishers) Pty Ltd, North Sydney NSW, 1982, p xviii.

27 Australian Defence Force (ADF), *ADDP 5.0 Joint Planning*, 3rd edn, Defence Publishing Services, Canberra ACT, 2018, pp 3–11.

28 David M Horner, *Strategic Command: General Sir John Wiltton and Australia's Asian Wars*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne VIC, 2005, p xvi.

29 Horner, *High Command*, p xix.

30 Horner, *Strategic Command*, p xvii.

did not exercise command over the deployed forces. For example, Australian forces in the Pacific were placed under General Douglas MacArthur who dealt directly with Prime Minister Curtin.³¹ This is how the Australian military has been employed in almost all conflicts, including Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, primarily to demonstrate Australia's commitment to its US alliance.³² Baker noted the objectives 'were of a foreign policy rather than defence nature'.³³

Demonstrating Australian military strategy is possible, the closest available example that exhibits an attempt to do so is the de-classified *Appreciations of the Strategic Position of Australia*, produced by the Chiefs of Service Committee for the government in 1946 and 1947.³⁴ These documents contained theories of strategic approaches to the initial stages of the Cold War and enunciated objectives, principles for defence, available resources and prioritised strategic military actions. Subsequent reports to the government were titled *Strategic Basis of Australian Defence Policy*. These were developed by the Defence Committee and contained assessments and broad defence policy overviews, as now seen in unclassified DWP. Therefore, there is no established military strategy tradition in Defence; but that does not mean one should not be established.

Australia's inability to establish a military strategy tradition may be a consequence of the way the Defence structure and roles have morphed over the past half-century. Once it was capable of both defence and military strategy. Now, as was made clear in the earlier discussion on the DWP and DSU, Defence is focused on just one: defence strategy. This shift can be traced through the consequences of three significant reviews: the 1973 Tange report that led to the ADF's formation, the 1997 Defence Efficiency Review (DER), which confused defence and military strategy, and finally the 2005 Wilson review, which recommended restructuring ADF higher command and control arrangements.

31 Horner, *Strategic Command*, p xvii.

32 John Blaxland, Marcus Fielding and Thea Gellerfy (eds), *Niche Wars: Australia in Afghanistan and Iraq, 2001–2014*, Australian National University Press, Canberra ACT, 2020, p 329, <https://press-files.anu.edu.au/downloads/press/n7364/pdf/book.pdf>.

33 John S Baker (Brigadier), *Report of the Study into ADF Command Arrangements (An Abridged Version)*, Australian Defence Force, Canberra ACT, 1988, p 2-1; In these most recent conflicts, there are parallels with Vietnam. Australia provided a 'carefully calibrated and constrained contribution to operations in Afghanistan and Iraq' but with a 'lack of thought-through strategy for what the ADF would do there'. Blaxland, Fielding and Gellerfy (eds), *Niche Wars*, pp 331–332. As the Chilcot report highlights, the British and Americans were also found wanting when it came to a coherent military strategy. John Chilcot, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry: vol V*, Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 2016, p 125.

34 Stephan Frühling, *A History of Australian Strategic Policy since 1945*, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra ACT 2009, pp 51–135.

The ADF was officially established on 9 February 1976, based on the model outlined in the 1973 Tange report. It recommended the individual Service departments be combined into a single Department of Defence, the Service Boards be abolished and the creation of the Chief of the Defence Force Staff (CDFS) as a statutory authority.³⁵ A new deputy secretary (DEPSEC) strategic policy and force development would be responsible for 'Australia's international Defence relations and strategic policy; analysis and recommendation of force structures and associated major weapons and equipment requirements; [as well as] development of industrial capacity in support of Defence objectives.'³⁶ In essence, this group's function was to deliver defence strategy as defined above. Within the new ADF, in direct support of the CDFS, was a Chief of Joint Operations and Plans responsible for joint policy (the reconciliation of military objectives with other national policies),³⁷ plans and operations. The division of defence strategy and military strategy between the department and the ADF (while mutually supportive) continued throughout the 1980s and most of the 1990s, albeit with various name changes and adjustments in responsibilities at the division (two-star/Band-two) level.³⁸ This delineation was clear and broadly effective.

However, the 1997 DER precipitated the erosion of military strategy in Defence. This review, undertaken by a mix of military, bureaucrats and 'CEOs of major private concerns',³⁹ sought to 'make recommendations for reforming Defence management and financial processes to ensure that they: are carried out in the most efficient and effective manner possible; [and] eliminate duplication between and within Defence programs'.⁴⁰ A major concern of the DER panel was the way 'strategic policy and planning support [was] provided to the CDF and Secretary, which [boiled] down to the respective roles of the DEPSEC S&I [Strategy and Intelligence] and the VCDF' (Vice Chief of the Defence Force).⁴¹ The report noted 'there are several areas where the staffs of DEPSEC S&I and VCDF are

35 Arthur H Tange (Secretary, Department of Defence), *Report on the Reorganisation of the Defence Group of Departments*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra ACT, 1973, pp 4–5, https://www.defence.gov.au/SPI/publications/1973reorg/AustralianDefenceForceReorganisation1973_opt_Part1.pdf

36 Tange, *Report on the Reorganisation of the Defence Group of Departments*, Annex F.

37 Tange, *Report on the Reorganisation of the Defence Group of Departments*, p 24.

38 For a detailed history of structural changes in Defence see: Mick Scott, 'Military strategy a casualty of successive restructures', *The Forge*, n.d., <https://theforge.defence.gov.au/publications/military-strategy-casualty-successive-restructures>.

39 Eric Andrews, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, vol V, Department of Defence, Oxford University Press, Melbourne VIC, 2001, p 279.

40 Department of Defence (DOD), *Future Directions for the Management of Australia's Defence: Report of the Defence Efficiency Review* (Report of the Defence Efficiency Review), Australian Government, Canberra ACT, 1997, p 1.

41 DOD, Report of the Defence Efficiency Review, p 11.

duplicatively structured. Strategic guidance and force structure are two of the most prominent.⁴² The differentiation between defence and military strategies was not made. Within the integrated Australian Defence Headquarters (ADHQ), the report recommended DEPSEC S&I responsibilities included strategic policy and plans, long-term planning and preparedness policy while VCDF responsibilities included capability development and military plans. Consequently, both areas had mixed civilian–military staffs,⁴³ including a two-star Head Strategic Policy and Plans working for DEPSEC S&I. The DER noted this restructuring was ‘in the interests of efficiency’ and recommended ‘in the interests of effectiveness ... a greater emphasis on producing longer-term strategic analyses’.⁴⁴ The ADHQ experiment only lasted until 2000 and was changed (after more reviews) due to government dissatisfaction with Defence acquisitions.⁴⁵ In mid-2004, the position of Head Strategic Policy and Plans transitioned to the Senior Executive Service and was retitled First Assistant Secretary Strategic Policy.

The 2005 Wilson review further contributed to the degradation of military strategy. This review recommended establishing HQJOC under command of the VCDF to make ADF command and control at the strategic and higher operational levels more effective.⁴⁶ The review sought efficiencies and brought together in HQJOC planning elements from the strategic and operational levels to achieve synergy, noting the VCDF straddled both the strategic and operational levels.⁴⁷ At the time, HQJOC included a dedicated Strategic Plans Directorate responsible for writing CDF’s orders and strategic-level planning.⁴⁸ However, when HQJOC was placed under dedicated command of CJOPS in 2007, to ‘provide a more suitable balance between the management of Defence business at the strategic

42 DOD, Report of the Defence Efficiency Review, p 12.

43 DOD, Report of the Defence Efficiency Review, p 12.

44 DOD, Report of the Defence Efficiency Review, p 22.

45 Eric Andrews, *The Australian Centenary History of Defence*, pp 288–299.

46 Richard G Wilson (Major General), *Report on the Review of Australian Defence Force Higher Command and Control Arrangements*, Australian Defence Force, Australian Government, Canberra ACT, 2005, p 5; *The 1987 Report of the Study into ADF Command Arrangements* by Brigadier John Baker was seminal in defining the strategic, operational and tactical levels in ADF doctrine. A detailed study of the operational level is not needed for this article.

47 The *strategic level* is concerned with the coordination and direction of national power to secure national objectives. The strategic level includes the national strategic and the military strategic levels. The *military strategic level* plans and directs military campaigns and operations to meet national strategic objectives. At the *operational level*, campaigns and operations are planned and conducted to achieve [military] strategic objectives. This level is primarily the responsibility of a theatre commander (usually CJOPS). The focus of command at the operational level is on forming joint forces, deploying them into areas of operations, monitoring and controlling operations, and sustaining them logistically. See Australian Defence Force (ADF), *ADF-P-0 Command and Control*, 2nd edn, AL2, Defence Publishing Services, Canberra ACT, 2021, pp 38–39; Wilson, *Report on the Review of Australian Defence Force Higher Command and Control Arrangements*, p 5.

48 Wilson, *Report on the Review of Australian Defence Force Higher Command and Control Arrangements*, p 32.

level and command of operations',⁴⁹ the change of focus to the operational level did not result in reallocation of strategic planning staff to the strategic level. By late-2007, no two-star officer was responsible for military strategy or deliberate (that is, non-crisis and non-contingency) strategic military planning.

At the strategic level, there remains a focus on defence strategy, despite minor restructuring in 2019 to establish the position of Head Military Strategic Plans (HMSP). The role of HMSP is restricted to 'the development of long-range force-level military campaign planning' focused on the 'long-term geo-strategic environment' to provide 'future military options to Government' and inform 'the design and delivery of an advanced future force'. The planning-horizon for HMSP is greater than five years and the role does not include developing military strategy for employing the available force-in-being.⁵⁰ In 2022, Defence at the strategic level is focused on defence strategy under DEPSEC SP&I and under VCDF is concentrated on long-term contingency planning,⁵¹ establishing new military commitments, overseeing existing operations and ADF activities, and crisis management. There is no focus on military strategy in Defence. But should there be?

Is military strategy required?

With no tradition of military strategy in Australia, should Defence adopt such an approach? Sceptics posit the process of strategy formulation imposes rigidity on policymaking and that 'the ritual of crafting strategy encourages participants to spin a narrative', which magnifies the 'scope of the national interest and exaggerates global threats'.⁵² In the place of long-term planning, they proffer a model of 'emergent strategy' favouring 'incrementalism, short-term adaptation and crisis response'.⁵³ The latter, it can be argued, is the current Australian approach. These views assume strategy is a rigid and linear process or a detailed blueprint that must be precisely followed. Strategy, however, is a theory of how to solve a significant problem, one articulating a concept and set of principles that

49 Brendan Nelson (Minister for Defence), *Defence management changes* [media release], (archived), 19 September 2007. <https://web.archive.org/web/20080730091651/http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/NelsonMintpl.cfm?CurrentId=7078>

50 Department of Defence (DOD), *Strengthening military strategic planning: Joint Directive 10/2018 by the Chief of the Defence Force and Secretary*, Australian Government, Canberra ACT, 2018, pp 1–2.

51 Retitled DEPSEC Strategy, Policy and Industry from DEPSEC Strategic Policy and Intelligence on 1 September 2020. The position of Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI) – to include the role of Strategic J2 – was established in September 2020 to command the new Defence Intelligence Group, which was formed from the intelligence agencies and functions of SP&I Group.

52 Rebecca F Lissner, 'What is grand strategy? Sweeping a conceptual minefield', *Texas National Security Review*, November 2018, 2(1):64. <https://tnsr.org/2018/11/what-is-grand-strategy-sweeping-a-conceptual-minefield/>

53 Rebecca F Lissner, 'What is grand strategy?', p 64.

can be used to express a broad strategic approach to the problem. A competent strategist should not take a dogmatic approach to strategy formulation and a skilled strategic leader should monitor the strategic environment and adapt strategy to changing circumstances, including unanticipated actions by others. While sceptics could be right if strategy is done poorly, they are wrong with competent strategists.

Our closest military partners, the US and UK – countries with military strategy traditions – have recognised the same issue Australia is facing and adapted their organisational structures and processes to better formulate, communicate and execute military strategy. The US began this in the late-1930s, when a Second World War looked likely, and have relooked at the issue in the wake of Afghanistan and Iraq. Similarly, the UK has made changes over the past decade by implementing recommendations from the Levene review and Chilcot report. Neither the US nor UK have perfected their approaches, but they are useful models of similar organisations (albeit of different scales) to which Australia can look for adopting military strategy. To show the importance of military strategy, the next section will consider historic examples of where military strategy has been essential to success and where a lack of military strategy has contributed to failure. Two periods will be examined – the Second World War then the Afghanistan and Iraq wars – and the military strategies of the US and UK analysed. The Second World War will show how successful US military strategy was achieved, while contemporary conflicts will demonstrate the results of a lack of quality military strategy.

Second World War

The US was caught short at the start of the Second World War regarding national and military strategy, but they were able to rapidly transform to a unified joint structure. There were two principal factors of US military function at the strategic level that proved successful in the Second World War: a *structure* that unified staff effort to effectively coordinate military strategies with grand strategy and adapt to changing circumstances, and *staff ability* to develop concise theories of victory to focus holistic Allied military power.

The first success factor for Allied military strategy was structural. The US Army directed by General George Marshall (which included the future US Air Force) focused its strategic direction around one organisation: the War Plans Division

(WPD), whose name changed to Operations Division (OPD) in March 1942.⁵⁴ It was the 'primary liaison agency for the War Department' with the Executive and other government departments, sat on interdepartmental committees and provided the membership on joint Army–Navy boards. Importantly, the WPD Chief would attend the Wartime Allied Conferences, commencing with the Arcadia Conference in December 1941.⁵⁵ More broadly, an outcome of the Arcadia Conference was agreement by British and American leaders to provide 'strategic control of operations' through the 'Combined Chiefs of Staff' (CCS).⁵⁶ The US created the Joints Chiefs of Staff (JCS),⁵⁷ as their half of the CCS.⁵⁸ Reporting to these committees was a system of staff planners. These planning staffs drafted strategic assessments and concept papers for consideration by the CCS–JCS and Allied political leaders, then turned agreed strategies into executable strategic plans for issuing to theatre commanders.

From its 'knowledge of strategic plans and from the detailed operational information made available' to the WPD/OPD, the division amassed a 'uniquely comprehensive understanding' of current strategic military issues, which enabled rapid adaptation of military strategy when strategic circumstances changed.⁵⁹ The WPD/OPD and its counterparts 'helped lay down the foundations of strategy and military policy which, once approved...provided a frame of reference for the guidance' of Allied activities.⁶⁰ The combined staffs were able to ensure global operations were consistent with grand strategy and coordinated 'strategy and operations with the mobilisation and munitions-producing capacity' of their nations.⁶¹ Unified staff effort at the strategic level proved fundamental, ensuring constrained resources were prioritised in accordance with greatest overall strategic needs.

The second factor was the strategic planning staffs' ability to develop concise theories of victory to focus limited military resources, which could be understood by both political leaders and military theatre commanders. A prime example was

54 United States Army (US Army), *US Army in World War II: The War Department: Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, Center of Military History, US Army, Washington DC, 1951, p 2.

At the critical time, just after entry of the US into the Second World War, then Major General Dwight D Eisenhower assumed the role of Chief of the WPD and OPD as the Assistant Chief of Staff from 16 February – 23 June 1942. US Army, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, p 363.

55 US Army, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, p 88.

56 The CCS met for the first time on 23 January 1942.

57 The JCS met for the first time on 9 February 1942.

58 US Army, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, pp 98–101.

59 US Army, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, p 81.

60 US Army, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, pp 118–119.

61 US Army, *Washington Command Post: The Operations Division*, p 89.

'The Victory Plan'.⁶² The Victory Plan was derived by assessing the US national objective, determining the military strategy to achieve the objective, calculating the forces required to execute the military strategy, then determining how military forces would be organised, equipped and trained.⁶³ The 14-page plan produced by Major Albert Wedemeyer succinctly outlined US policy objectives and explained the concept for how victory was to be accomplished, based on existing war plan requirements.⁶⁴ It determined both Germany and Japan would need to be defeated but efforts would need to be concentrated first against Germany. The plan noted naval and air forces were the primary strengths of the Western powers, but land forces would be required to win the war.⁶⁵ The plan also accommodated 'contemporary political and military realities' in the US.⁶⁶ The concise plan was 'in effect a comprehensive statement of American strategy that served as a fundamental planning document' for the war and set up the Allies for success.⁶⁷ The strategy provided the needed theory of victory,⁶⁸ which was the basis for prioritising limited resources and managing politics.

This provides an example that Australia could follow as a lead nation in the Indo-Pacific:⁶⁹ a strategy that articulates realistic theories for victory, gives prioritised objectives, is adaptable and, most importantly, incorporates political and military realities.

62 Formally, the Victory Plan was titled the *Joint Board Estimate of United States Over-All Production Requirements*. A copy can be found at <https://history.army.mil/html/books/093/93-10/index.html>; A second example is the Marshall Memorandum (formally *Operations in Western Europe*) produced by the OPD in March 1942. The Marshall Memorandum was a key document clearly articulating a theory for victory in Europe, providing a concept for applying military power and assessing the scale of resources required to achieve victory. The premise of the theory of victory in the Marshall Memorandum was to prefer the European theatre of operations over any other and defeat Germany by the shortest route through France in a concerted effort between the combat forces of the US, UK and Soviet Union. A copy can be found at http://www.alternatewars.com/WW2/Roundup/Marshall_Memorandum.htm

63 Charles E Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present: Writing the Victory Plan of 1941*, Center of Military History, US Army, Washington DC, 1990, pp 60–61.

64 'The Victory Plan' explicitly noted, 'The specific operations necessary to accomplish the defeat of the Axis Powers cannot be predicted at this time.' Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, p 125.

65 Mark A Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front: American Military Planning and Diplomacy in Coalition Warfare, 1941–1943*, Greenwood Press, Westport CT, 1977, p 11.

66 Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, p 116.

67 Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, p 122.

68 As footnoted previously, the theory of victory is a concept and/or set of principles which can be used to describe a broad strategic approach to successfully solving a problem and achieving desired goals. For 'The Victory Plan', the theory of victory was to defend the US and Western Hemisphere, effectively conduct operations in the European Theatre and equip the military forces of associate and friendly powers. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, p 126.

69 DOD, *2020 Defence Strategic Update*, p 22.

Long wars

Our allies (like Australia) have not successfully delivered military strategies in the past two decades. The recent wars in Afghanistan and Iraq (the 'Long Wars') are viewed as short-term tactical and operational successes but strategic failures.

One major factor for the US – the leader of the coalitions who invaded Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003 – was the disconnect between the US Joint Staff and US Central Command (USCENTCOM) resulting from the US Government's Executive Branch primarily working directly with the operational level. Gordon and Trainor noted for Iraq in 2003, 'Rumsfeld and [General Tommy] Franks dominated the planning; the Joint Chiefs of Staff were pushed to the margins and largely accepted their role.'⁷⁰ This contrasts with the success of Second World War strategic command arrangements where the Joint Staff planners formulated government-endorsed military strategy and then provided direction to theatre commanders. Consequently, military strategy and strategic planning was largely absent (or at best underdeveloped) for the Afghanistan and Iraq wars.

A key US lesson was 'senior military planners must pay more attention to the linkage between political and military objectives. Civil and military planning for post-conflict stability operations was inadequate.'⁷¹ This linkage is central to military strategy. Hoffman observed, 'we had a narrow and implicit theory of military victory for Afghanistan in 2001 and in Iraq in 2003, but the US lacked a more comprehensive theory of success', and questioned if the US 'ever framed a coherent theory of strategic success in Afghanistan'.⁷² Likewise, retired US Army General Daniel Bolger conceded 'strategy and operational art translate to "the big picture" (your goal) and "the plan" (how you get there). We got both wrong.'⁷³ The various studies concluded there was a deficit of US military strategy for both

70 Michael R Gordon and Bernard E Trainor, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq*, Vintage Books, New York, 2007, p 577; The JCS only met with the US President twice on the war plans for Iraq. Richard D Hooker and Joseph J Collins (eds), *Lessons Encountered: Learning from the Long War*, National Defense University Press, Washington DC, 2015, p 49.

71 Hooker and Collins, *Lessons Encountered*, p 9.

72 Frank G Hoffman, 'The missing element in crafting national strategy: a theory of success', *Joint Force Quarterly*, 2nd Quarter, April 2020, 97, p 60. <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Media/News/News-Article-View/Article/2106508/the-missing-element-in-crafting-national-strategy-a-theory-of-success/>

73 Daniel P Bolger, *Why We Lost: A General's Inside Account of the Iraq and Afghanistan Wars*, Mariner Books, New York, 2015, p xv; The first lesson in the RAND report, *Improving Strategic Competence*, included, 'The US government has experienced a persistent deficit in understanding and applying strategic art. The blurry line between policy and strategy requires both civilians and the military to engage in a dynamic, iterative dialogue to make successful strategy, but often failed to occur.' The lesson continued, 'The ends, ways, and means did not align, whether because the policy objectives were too ambitious, the ways of achieving them ineffective, or the means applied inadequate.' Linda Robinson, Paul D Miller, John Gordon IV, Jeffrey Decker, Michael Schwille, Raphael S Cohen, *Improving Strategic Competence: Lessons from 13 Years of War*, Arroyo Center, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica CA, 2014, pp-xii-xiii. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR816.html

Afghanistan and Iraq resulting in short-term success at the operational level but long-term strategic failure. Australia must heed these lessons.

The British – the senior coalition partner – had similar experiences and the 2016 Chilcot report came to the same conclusions regarding military strategy.⁷⁴ The Chilcot report found ‘UK strategies tended to focus on describing the desired end state rather than how it would be reached’ and there was ‘little evidence of thorough analysis of the resources, expertise, conditions and support needed to make implementation of UK strategy achievable’.⁷⁵ The degree to which senior British military leaders failed in their duty to ‘articulate a coherent strategy’ became known during evidence to the Iraq Inquiry.⁷⁶ Evidence from the Iraq Inquiry indicated strategic failure in Iraq stemmed from an ‘unconstrained operational level of command’ (USCENTCOM, with whom British planners were embedded) resulting in the UK becoming ‘committed to an operational plan designed to win a battle, but with little consideration for the war that would follow’.⁷⁷ From the British perspective, a lack of military strategy resulted in a focus on operations and tactics which were successful at achieving the initial objective of Iraqi regime change but failed (or severely struggled) in the long-term. Instead, a single concept should unify all effort from the strategic to the tactical.⁷⁸ Military objectives for applying military power were not an embedded subset of national strategy goals. There was no British military strategy for Iraq.

74 Formally *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry*. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-report-of-the-iraq-inquiry>

75 RCDS, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, p 2; John Chilcot, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry*, vol VI, p 568. The Chilcot report stated the British government did not take the ‘decisions needed to prepare a flexible, realistic and fully resourced plan integrating UK military and civilian contributions’. In short, resources (the *means*) had not been sufficiently estimated at the strategic level to ensure achievement of the *ends*.

76 Frank Ledwidge, *Losing Small Wars: British Military Failure in Iraq and Afghanistan*, Yale University Press, New Haven CT, 2011, p 121.

77 Thomas R McDermott, *Man, the state, or war: UK strategic decision making in the Iraq intervention, 2003–2009* [unpublished PhD thesis], Australian National University, accessed 26 March 2021, p 25 and p 50.

78 Specific findings in the Chilcot report included: a lack of ‘clear Ministerial oversight of post-conflict strategy, planning and preparation, and effective co-ordination between government departments, failed to analyse or manage those risks adequately’; and ‘there was no coherent US/UK strategy for Security Sector Reform. The Chilcot report also found a ‘military timetable should not be allowed to dictate a diplomatic timetable’ such that if ‘a strategy of coercive diplomacy is being pursued, forces should be deployed in such a way that the threat of action can be increased or decreased according to the diplomatic situation and the policy can be sustained for as long as necessary’. John Chilcot, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry*, vol VI, pp 123–130. Structurally, the 2011 Levene review found ‘existing departmental management structure was demonstrably not working well’ and part of the reason was ‘balance between ministerial/civilian and military roles and authority’. This balance resulted in ‘weaknesses in the Department’s ability to think strategically, and to contribute coherently and effectively to the government’s strategies for influence overseas, and over the balance between policy and military advice in relation to strategy and operations’. The full title of the report is *Defence Reform: An Independent Report into the Structure and Management of the Ministry of Defence*, available at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27408/defence_reform_report_struct_mgt_mod_27june2011.pdf

A military strategy significantly contributes to strategic success in war – especially where tactical success has been the norm – although analysis of each conflict will produce other factors. The contrasting extremes of military strategy in an existential global war and no military strategy in a conflict of choice means there are variations in between; however, the examples illustrate the utility of military strategy. In these limited wars, neither the US nor UK defined suitable objectives for military power to achieve, nor adjusted the ends to the limited means available. Additionally, neither country managed civil–military relationships sufficiently to produce a coherent strategy.⁷⁹ No coalition member appreciated the type of conflict they were embarking upon beyond the first phase. The strategic level should be thinking one-to-two steps ahead and planning for the next phases of competition/conflict/war in line with a military strategy articulating the theory of strategic success, allowing the operational level to plan and execute the present phase. While USCENTCOM were planning the invasion of Iraq, the Joint Staff should have been planning the phases beyond ‘decisive battle’ with other government agencies. In this way, effective military strategy can help validate and refine national strategy.

Future conflicts

The importance of military strategy has been demonstrated in times of conflict, but in the contemporary strategic environment it is equally as important. Moving forward, where our competitors employ hybrid warfare tactics,⁸⁰ use political warfare,⁸¹ or unrestricted warfare,⁸² to confront a more militarily powerful West, “national campaigns”...cannot conceivably be planned or their execution coordinated other than at the highest strategic levels’.⁸³ The British *Integrated Operating Concept 2025* outlines how their military will address the future

79 Hew Strachan, ‘Strategy and democracy’, *Survival*, 23 March 2020, 62(2):78. <https://www.tandfonline-com.ezproxy-f.deakin.edu.au/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2020.1739949>.

80 Frank Hoffman defines *hybrid warfare* as wars that ‘incorporate a range of different modes of warfare, including conventional capabilities, irregular tactics and formations, terrorist acts including indiscriminate violence and coercion, and criminal disorder.’ Frank Hoffman, *Conflict in the 21st Century: The Rise of Hybrid Wars*, Potomac Institute for Policy Studies, Arlington VA, 2007, p 29. https://www.potomacinstitute.org/images/stories/publications/potomac_hybridwar_0108.pdf

81 George Kennan wrote in 1948, ‘*Political warfare* is the logical application of Clausewitz’s doctrine in time of peace. In broadest definition, political warfare is the employment of all the means at a nation’s command, short of war, to achieve its national objectives. Such operations are both overt and covert. They range from such overt actions as political alliances, economic measures (as ERP), and “white” propaganda to such covert operations as clandestine support of “friendly” foreign elements, “black” psychological warfare and even encouragement of underground resistance in hostile states.’ George F Kennan, *The Inauguration of Organisation Political Warfare* [Redacted version], History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, 30 April 1948, p 1, accessed 18 March 2021. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/114320>

82 *Unrestricted Warfare* is a book published in China in 1999 written by two People’s Liberation Army officers, Colonel Qiao Liang and Colonel Wang Xiangsui, which explores strategies that militarily and politically disadvantaged nations might take to successfully attack a geopolitical superpower like the US.

83 Kelly and Brennan, *Alien: How Operational Art Devoured Strategy*, p 80.

complex operating environment, emphasising ‘the importance of integration with allies, of the levers of statecraft, and across the five operational domains⁸⁴ – multi-domain integration’.⁸⁵ Military strategy will be key to Australia’s success, whether leading military operations in the Indo-Pacific or contributing to a coalition. The requirement to align all instruments of national power behind a military campaign in competition or conflict – and provide integrated coercive options to a government’s national strategy⁸⁶– necessitates a military strategy and not just an operational plan. Defence can respond and adopt the needed military strategy approach.

How can military strategy be established in Defence?

With military strategy a fundamental requirement for the successful application of military power, how can Defence establish a military strategy approach as the basis for successful application of Australia’s military power? The derived definitions and lessons of our allies will be used as the basis for developing principles for which alternative solutions can be formed. The principles will be applied to recommend systematic and organisational changes required to establish a military strategy approach in Defence.

Principle 1: *A commonly understood approach and lexicon is essential.* The Royal College of Defence Studies handbook, *Getting strategy right (enough)*, states ‘strategy and its associated lexicon do have genuine utility in the broader context if used appropriately’.⁸⁷ Mutual understanding of what constitutes policy, strategy (national, defence and military) and planning – and their interdependence – is essential to ensure unity of purpose and effort in achieving the government’s objectives. The Wilson review noted consistent language use is important to ‘overcome the ambiguity and misunderstanding’ often associated with high-

84 The five domains are the land, maritime, air, space and cyber/electro-magnetic operating environments.

85 Albert Palazzo, *Planning to not lose: the Australian Army's new philosophy of war*, Australian Army Occasional Paper no. 3, Australian Army Research Centre, Canberra ACT, 2021, p 3. Palazzo suggests, ‘What we are witnessing is the compression of the dimensions of war in which domains will largely be irrelevant, the blending of tactics into strategy, and a reduction in the constraints traditionally imposed by distance and time in the conduct of operations.’ He expands by saying ‘as the strategic and the tactical blend into each other the principles of the strategic must dominate’.

The US military have similar concepts in the form of the *Joint concept for integrated campaigning* (available at https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/concepts/joint_concept_integrated_campaign.pdf?ver=2018-03-28-102833-257) and *The US Army in multi-domain operations 2028*, TRADOC Pamphlet 525-3-1 (available at <https://api.army.mil/e2/c/downloads/2021/02/26/b45372c1/20181206-tp525-3-1-the-us-army-in-mdo-2028-final.pdf>).

86 The online *Macquarie Dictionary* defines *coercing* as ‘to restrain or constrain by force, law, or authority; force or compel, as to do something.’ Coercion can be achieved through deterrence or compellence.

87 RCDS, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, p 6. Similarly, it can be inferred from Krulak in *MCDP-5 Planning* a realistic appreciation of the nature of the strategy process and its related requirements is essential for effective strategy. United States Marine Corps, *MCDP 5 Planning*, Headquarters USMC, Department of Navy, Washington DC, 1997, Introduction.

level command and control within the ADF.⁸⁸ Language is key; everyone involved in strategy formulation, approval and implementation must be talking about the same concept and same objectives.⁸⁹

Principle 2: *Ensure the government has all the information it needs to make decisions regarding the employment of military power, not just what it thinks it needs, including the type of conflict being entered, the limits of military power and an assessment of risk.* Strategic military advice should extend to the end of the requirement for military power and include potential consequences of military action – if the strategy executes as designed or, more likely, does not go to plan including escalation.⁹⁰ Advice to government should assess a competitor/enemy's strategy, including reasoning behind their objectives and their concept of success, and measure the relative will of their military forces and support of their population compared to Australia's. Our strategists must provide our Defence leaders with sufficient information to be able to edify the government (and our allies) on relevant history, theory and probabilities of success. Comprehensive and frank advice is necessary.

Principle 3: *Whole-of-government engagement at the highest levels is required from the outset.* The military is just one instrument of national power that can be used to achieve government objectives. Baker noted military strategy is concerned with 'the overall generation and application of military power within a national framework of political, diplomatic, economic, legal and social actions'.⁹¹ Interdependent plans and actions must be developed in a mutually supporting manner from the start. When commencing military strategy formulation, it is essential to determine interdependencies and who is supported or supporting separate phases and activities.

88 Wilson, *Report on the Review of Australian Defence Force Higher Command and Control Arrangements*, p 2; The 'importance of the language of strategy' was stressed in the RCDS booklet, which emphasised that to be understood language used in strategy must be 'clear, accurate, unambiguous and easily (and expertly) translated'. RCDS, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, p 27.

89 Further, military strategy must use military terminology to ensure proper execution, but this terminology requires accurate communication to government so there is no confusion about what decision is being made.

90 As Clausewitz noted in *On War*, war is 'more than a true chameleon'; conflict is continually adapting to the changing circumstances of the interplay between violence and emotions, probability and chance, and government policy decision. Strategy will very rarely unfold as designed. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War* (Michael Howard and Peter Paret eds trans), Princeton University Press, Princeton MA, 1989, p 89.

91 Baker, *Report of the Study into ADF Command Arrangements*, 4–2. Baker also notes 'under the pressure of an actual threat or conflict, departmental processes are likely to accelerate'.

Principle 4: *The military objectives must clearly link to the political objectives and the relationship of military power to the other instruments of national power must be understood.* It is essential military strategists understand political objectives and how military power nests with the other instruments of national power to achieve national objectives. Direction from a coherent national strategy should not be relied upon.⁹² It may be necessary for military strategists to write a statement of national objectives as a first planning assumption. This statement should receive government approval.⁹³ Strategy formulation will likely be iterative to ensure national strategy and military strategy align.

Principle 5: *The military strategy must extend to the transition point where military power is no longer required or reaches a steady state.* Military strategy is a theory for applying military power to achieve a state's ends – a future condition defined by 'what' and 'why'. These ends need to be when military power is no longer required or the ends should define conditions for enduring military power, such as the threat of military force in a deterrence strategy. Either way, military strategy and advice to the government should account for the possibility of different ends. The ends may change as the strategy unfolds in a complex environment, with the military strategy adjusting accordingly, but they should always extend to the point of no or limited military power.

Principle 6: *A coherent but uncomplicated theory of victory or success must be clearly expressed that can be visualised in the minds of both political leaders and senior military commanders.* The military strategy should not be a list of broad goals or policy objectives, it must be based upon a theory of success which coherently extends from strategic-level objectives to tactical-level actions. Hoffman argues 'a theory of success should be central' and strategy must have 'an internal logic that ties policy to both ways and means to create desired strategic effects'.⁹⁴ An easily communicated theory of success – publicly understandable – is the heart of a military strategy.

92 This was the case when Wedemeyer wrote the 'Victory Plan' in 1941, where he found the 'clear statements of national policy he needed were "almost as elusive as the philosopher's stone"'. Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, p 61.

93 Kirkpatrick, *An Unknown Future and a Doubtful Present*, pp 62–63.

94 Hoffman, 'The missing element in crafting national strategy: a theory of success', p 57. The British guides, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)* and *The Good Operation*, echo the sentiment for a theory of success. The former calls for a 'big idea' and says a 'strategy which has no unifying idea is not a strategy'. The latter demands a vision which provides 'a clear concept in your mind' and articulates how the strategy starts, how it ends (or transitions to a steady-state), what the operation is designed to achieve, and 'why it is worth doing—why we care'. RCDS, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, p 20; United Kingdom Ministry of Defence (MOD), *The Good Operation: A Handbook for Those Involved in Operational Policy and Its Implementation*, MOD, London, 2017, p 17.

Principle 7: *An accurate assessment of the required resources (including time) is essential – for military and other instruments of national power – as well as clear prioritisation and apportionment to achieve the military objectives.* Means need to be balanced with ends, ways and the specific circumstances when developing strategy. Strategies 'should be resource-informed' and require compromises between competing priorities.⁹⁵ Realistic resource estimates are based on developed operational plans and are essential to military strategy.

Principle 8: *The military strategy must be regularly reviewed against strategic assumptions and measures of effectiveness to determine if the military strategy needs modification or changing to a different strategy.* Military strategy is executed in a dynamic environment. Military strategies must contain sufficient flexibility to adapt to changing circumstances.⁹⁶ Strategy evaluation (independent of strategy makers and executors when possible) is key and should specifically compare strategic assumptions with the reality of the unfolding situation. The evaluation should assess if the principles upon which the theory of success is based need changing, be applied differently or if the whole strategy needs to be changed. Parallel planning and assessments between the strategic and operational levels, and continual monitoring, are essential to timely evaluations. Modifications should be communicated to government and, based on the government's decisions, to the operational level.

Principle 9: *The military strategy must incorporate both the military and political realities.* Military strategy is applied in an ever-changing domestic and international strategic environment. Churchill said, 'It is not possible in a major war to divide military from political affairs. At the summit they are one.'⁹⁷ The best military advice must be 'nested within a larger appreciation of the strategic context and its political, economic, diplomatic, and informational dimensions.'⁹⁸ Military strategies must reflect both political awareness and realities of multi-domain and multi-agency activities.

95 Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Joint Doctrine Note (JDN) 2-19 Strategy*, Director Joint Force Development, Doctrine, Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington DC, 2019, II-2.

96 Noting '100% advanced understanding of the problem to be addressed is never possible' and 'the opposition has a voice'. RCDS, *Getting Strategy Right (Enough)*, p 8; The Chilcot report states 'regular reassessment is essential, to ensure the assumptions upon which policy is being made and implemented remain correct'. Chilcot, *The Report of the Iraq Inquiry*, vol VI, p 630.

97 Stoler, *The Politics of the Second Front*, p 167.

98 Hooker and Collins, *Lessons Encountered*, p 8; Political awareness is a key trait for strategic leaders and strategic planners, particularly being attuned to political motives and dynamics, although senior military leaders must be careful to not become politically engaged. Nicholas Jans, *The Chiefs: A Study of Strategic Leadership*, Australian Defence College, Canberra ACT, 2013, p 61.

Principle 10: *Unified staff effort is essential to ensuring coherence and timeliness in military strategy.* As highlighted in the previous section, the centrality of the WPD/OPD was key to success in the Second World War. The various reviews of Defence have stressed central control and unified staff efforts, although a lack of differentiation between defence and military strategy has resulted in a deficit of unified staff for military strategy.⁹⁹ The Wilson review found an overlap in responsibilities resulted in ‘in tension, friction and inefficiency’.¹⁰⁰ One staff area responsible for military strategy will ensure effective, coherent and timely military strategy.

Employing military strategy in Defence

A military strategy should be used whenever Australian military power is employed or threatened, or even considered, and when military commitments require a formed body and/or major capital assets for achievement of the government’s policy objectives in a complex national security challenge. This should not only be for times of war but also for any time there are competing priorities for constrained military resources, such as periods of strategic competition.¹⁰¹ This includes all major ADF campaigns and operations, as well as the application of military power to achieve the government’s policy of ‘shape, deter and respond’ for the current era of strategic competition. Military strategy is not required for short-duration support tasks, including humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations, although the effects of using military assets in support activities must be considered in other military strategies.

The 2020 DSU provides a current example of how military as distinct from defence strategy should be used to achieve government objectives. Specifically, a military strategy is required to harness all the available force-in-being (including departmental enablers) to achieve the ‘shaping’ effect sought by government. This ‘shaping strategy’ should be the basis against which all major regional deployments and international engagement activities are planned and executed.¹⁰² The ‘shaping strategy’ should be regularly assessed and continuously monitored

99 In his seminal report, Tange aimed to provide ‘greater control of military matters by the Chief of the Defence Force Staff’ and recommended the principle that ‘there is to be more effective central military control of operations and related military activities’. Tange, *Report on the Reorganisation of the Defence Group of Departments*, p 19 and p 23.

100 Wilson, *Report on the Review of Australian Defence Force Higher Command and Control Arrangements*, p 12.

101 The military instrument of power can be used in a variety of ways short of combat, including ‘training allies, establishing presence, or acting as a show-of-force’. MCDP 1-1 *Strategy* stresses, though, ‘the main use of military power is in conflict’. United States Marine Corps (USMC), *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication (MCDP) 1-1 Strategy*, Headquarters USMC, Department of Navy, Washington DC, 1997, pp 2–13.

102 The military strategy should have a planning horizon of two-to-five years.

at the strategic level,¹⁰³ with adjustments made in response to changing strategic circumstances and/or government direction issued through CDF orders. In parallel, the ADF must also have military strategies formulated for the 'deter' and 'respond' effects, should they be required. The deter and respond strategies must include lead-indicators for which the strategic environment is monitored to determine if a change in strategy should be recommended to the government. Other major ADF commitments can be assessed against these 'baseline' strategic competition strategies, so the government is aware of resource pressures if they must make prioritisation decisions.

As the CDF is the principal military adviser to the Minister and provides advice on ADF employment to achieve government objectives,¹⁰⁴ unified staff for military strategy should work for the CDF. The 1997 DER Addendum stated, 'At all times, the higher defence arrangements should reflect, in substance and presentation, an organisation structured for war to ensure the transition from peace to conflict command arrangements is smooth.'¹⁰⁵ This supports the logic that military strategy staff should work for the CDF, who would command the ADF in times of war. If HMSP were to assume responsibility for military strategy, in addition to strategic military contingency planning, greater coherency, continuity and efficiency could be achieved. This should include regular engagement with the interagency and allied counterparts.¹⁰⁶

Having two Defence groups responsible for strategy – VCDF and DEPSEC SP&I – appears contrary to efficiency principles from the various enterprise reviews since 1997. These reviews, however, did not distinguish between defence and military strategy. Noting the relationship between defence and military strategy, to ensure continuity in process, logic and concept, the military strategy staff should also contribute to defence strategy formulation in direct support of DEPSEC SP&I. This would balance the responsibilities of the strong Strategic Centre to deliver a readily implementable military strategy that is attuned to changes in the strategic environment and has continuity from the near to long-term regarding defence strategy.

103 The Wilson review forecast that such monitoring may require 'the reemergence of a second 24/7 C2 capability at the military strategic level in Canberra'. Wilson, *Report on the Review of Australian Defence Force Higher Command and Control Arrangements*, M-2.

104 Linda Reynolds (Minister for Defence), *Ministerial directive to the Secretary of the Department of Defence and the Chief of the Defence Force*, Australian Government, Canberra ACT, 27 January 2021, p 3.

105 Department of Defence (DOD), *Future Directions for the Management of Australia's Defence*, addendum to the Report of the Defence Efficiency Review, Secretariat Papers, Defence Publishing Service, Canberra ACT, 1997, p 42.

106 When Australia is a partner in coalition operations, consideration must be given to providing senior embedded officers in key command and control positions who can influence the coalition's military strategy at both the strategic and operational levels.

Conclusion

What hinders establishing a military strategy tradition in Defence is the current structure and allocated roles, which have morphed over the past half-century from one capable of both defence and military strategy to one focused on defence strategy. Neither the Defence enterprise, nor its component ADF, use military strategy. This is a result of three interrelated factors: a confused understanding of what military strategy is and why it is required, a lack of tradition for military strategy in Australia, and incremental structural changes over the past 25 years, which sought organisational efficiencies but resulted in a loss of military strategy function.

A fundamental challenge to reinvigorating the concept of military strategy and the processes of strategy formulation and strategic planning are the different understandings of the terms and concepts involved. The primary issue is conflation of the terms policy and strategy, although the distinct types of strategy for national security are also poorly understood, especially the difference between defence and military strategy. Defence should adopt a hierarchical strategy lexicon.

Military strategy is fundamental to the effective employment of military power to achieve the government's policy objectives in complex strategic security environments. The unified US and UK Second World War staff efforts produced strategies articulating realistic theories for victory, gave prioritised objectives, were adaptable and, most importantly, incorporated the political and military realities. In contrast, in the limited wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, neither the US nor UK defined objectives suitable for military power to achieve, nor were the ends adjusted to the limited means available. The requirement to align all instruments of national power behind a military campaign in competition or conflict needs a military strategy, not just an operational or tactical plan.

Defence can establish a military strategy tradition for use in strategic competition and in war, with a principles-based framework and minor organisational changes. The ten proposed principles listed above should be integrated into Defence processes, culture and organisation before a major crisis emerges. It is recommended that military strategy to achieve the government's policy objectives in a complex national security challenge be developed whenever military power is employed or threatened. This includes in periods of strategic competition and war. Military strategies should be developed to achieve each effect in the government's policy of 'shape, deter and respond', against which resource requirements for other commitments can be gauged. Finally, military strategy should have a unified staff under the CDF, responsible for military strategy and derived strategic planning.

Williamson Murray said, '[I]t is more important to make correct decisions at the political and strategic level than it is at the operational and tactical level. Mistakes in operations and tactics can be corrected but political and strategic mistakes live forever.'¹⁰⁷ Establishing a tradition of military strategy in Defence will lessen the chances of making such mistakes.



107 Williamson Murray, Alvin Bernstein and MacGregor Knox (eds), *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge UK, 1994, p 3.