

Chapter 1

Relevance, Theory and Practice of Force Projection for Australia's Defence

Relevance

As a land girt by sea, Australia has a number of military choices. It can use geographical advantage and fight enemy forces from continental beaches, and in national airspace and both on and under territorial waters. Alternatively, it can project military force to engage enemies further from the Australian homeland: closer to or in it enemies' homelands—preferably in the company of powerful allies. There is also a choice about responding to regional and international events that require military intervention: stay at home, leaving allies (and the United Nations) to face military and humanitarian emergencies alone, or participate in those operations deemed by the government of the day to be in the national interest. Australian military history testifies to the choices that Australians traditionally make. The Australian people and their governments invariably choose regional and international force projection over 'fortress defence' and isolationism.

Australia also has a geographical dilemma and more military choices. The continent is vast and divided into southern and eastern heartlands, where most Australians live, and a remote western and northern crescent hinterland. This hinterland can be likened to a curved archipelago located forward of the heartlands. It is comprised of an island of people and infrastructure in the southwest, near Perth, and isolated pockets of people and economically important resources and infrastructure extending north to another island of people and infrastructure near Darwin and then east across northern Australia to the Torres Strait Islands. How should Australia defend this national archipelago? Will there be sufficient warning time and political will to permit mobilisation and deployment of sufficient military force from the south and east coasts to the west and north? What proportion of Australia's armed forces should be located in the west and north? Australian military and political responses during the Second World War show that Australians will defend their national archipelago. Western and northern basing and conduct of major exercises in northern Australia in the latter two decades of the twentieth century confirm their choice. The strategic preference is to do so through a combination of pre-positioning forces and projecting military force from the heartlands to the hinterland.

Theory

The functions of military force projection are as old as the formation of nation-states. In rudimentary form, they predate them. From the earliest times when humans gathered in collective defence of their territory, or for conquest, they have executed all or some functions with varying degrees of capacity, proficiency and sophistication. Some clarification and definition is necessary before specifying the purpose and method of this monograph. The following table summarises the 10 enabling functions and describes their supporting elements:

No.	Function	Elements
1.	Generic Preparation	Military capability that is made up of force structure, readiness, mobilisation and sustainability
2.	Command	Command, control, communications and computer systems
3.	Specific Preparation	Concentration of force elements in mounting or home bases, reconnaissance, reinforcement, training, administration and issue of equipment and stocks
4.	Deployment	Concentration of personnel and <i>matériel</i> , loading, movement of force elements to area of operations and, best effect arrival and pre-positioning
5.	Protection	Intelligence, surveillance, contingency rehearsal and rapid response
6.	Employment	Conduct of operations that may include maintaining deterrent presence, manoeuvre and application of firepower
7.	Sustainment	Planning and carrying out the movement of supplies and maintenance of forces through a supply chain
8.	Rotation	Reinforcement, relief, resting, retraining, re-equipping and redeployment of force elements
9.	Redeployment	Protected movement to specified locations, normally home bases
10.	Reconstitution	Return to required level of military capability

Force projection begins with functions that culminate in deployment.¹ Most nation-states maintain pre-positioned extant military capability (generic force preparation) under some form of command and control (force command).² Periodically, they mobilise extant and latent military capabilities and then prepare maritime, land and, in modern times, air force and Special Forces elements (specific force preparation) to take specified military action.³ They then move forces to advantageous locations and circumstances, preferably after thorough reconnaissance, to begin operations (force deployment).⁴ Typically, nations prefer to deploy force elements beyond their borders so that their populations remain safe and their homelands are not laid waste.

After deployment, commanders employ force elements (force employment) under designated command arrangements that are extensions of command in the homeland, while ensuring their protection (force protection) and sustainment (force sustainment).⁵ During longer operations and campaigns, commanders reinforce, relieve, rest, retrain, re-equip and redeploy force elements (force rotation).

Final functions return forces to generic preparedness. After operations and campaigns end, force elements redeploy (force redeployment) back inside borders

or to locations beyond borders. They reconstitute themselves (force reconstitution), either with more capability or less, depending on the perceived level of remaining threat or, more generally, on national will to maintain military capabilities for ongoing defence or further conquest. Reconstitution completes the cycle of force projection back to generic preparedness.

Proficiency in the 10 functions demonstrates Australian military capability and intent, and constitutes an important measurement of national military competence. Since 1885, Australia has projected force nationally, regionally and internationally when governments have decided to take military action. This is Australia's military strategic culture. There have been—and will continue to be—disagreements about the resources required for Australia's defence and the importance of alliances, as well as the purpose, composition and distance from Australian shores of force projection. However, the Australian people and their governments have been—and will continue to be—at one about the need to project military force decisively and effectively whenever and wherever it is required. Thus, proficiency in force projection defines Australian defence posture, measures military competence and has to meet government and public expectations.

Practice

This monograph contains four case studies of Australian regional force projections—an evacuation contingency deployment (Fiji in 1987), a brief armed peacekeeping operation (Bougainville in 1994), an unarmed peace support intervention (Bougainville in 1997–98) and a major multinational armed stabilisation intervention (East Timor in 1999).⁶ It focuses on competence at the strategic, operational and tactical levels of command. It is a critique. However, it contains empathetic and constructive criticism that makes a case for change—an important role of analytical military history.

It is reasonable to ask, 'What is meant by proficiency in the functions of force projection?' For the purposes of this monograph, proficiency is the capability and capacity for prompt, strong and smart military action that results in the strategic effects specified by the Australian Government. The underpinning of proficiency begins with maintaining generic military capability—force structure, modernisation, readiness and sustainability. There should be sufficient warning for orderly assignment of forces as well as their thorough specific force preparation. Preparations should be well-resourced, well-coordinated and well-informed by inputs, such as reconnaissance and intelligence as well as political and cultural information. These preparations (which include assembling and loading personnel and *matériel* on ships, road transport and aircraft) should be followed by protected deployment that enables personnel and their equipment and stocks to arrive with best effect—on time, fresh and ready for employment. Command and sustainment arrangements should facilitate effective, efficient,

intelligent and safe employment of forces to achieve desired results. These arrangements should also facilitate a rate of effort and force rotation that maintains the required tempo of operations. After operations and campaigns, force elements should redeploy safely, and reconstitute efficiently.

This monograph sets each case study within the context of Australian military strategy and the strategic level of command, but does not comment in detail.⁷ Strategic level sources are still classified and there is insufficient space in one monograph to discuss the strategic level satisfactorily as well as to examine the operational and tactical levels of command in detail.⁸ Yet the absence of deep analysis of Australian political and military–strategic processes does not diminish the significance of this monograph. Within the context of force projection and the impact of the Information Age on military operations, the importance of understanding challenges facing lower levels of command has increased. Those operating at the cutting edge defeat hostile forces or create desired effects. Their success or failure often determines operational and strategic success or failure. In conventional land warfare, a divisional attack involving thousands of troops and employment of battlefield manoeuvre and significant firepower is, ultimately, a contest between opposing junior leaders and small teams. In maritime and air warfare, opposing commanders of vessels and their crews and pilots (either individually or in combination with their aircrew) decide outcomes. During land-based peacekeeping operations, junior leaders and small teams establish a deterrent presence and, guided by rules, engage hostile individuals, small teams, groups and crowds who threaten public order with carefully calibrated coercion and possibly lethal force.⁹

The Information Age has elevated lower levels of command. Since the Vietnam War, media representatives have broadcast images and stories from the tactical level instantly to a worldwide audience. Scores of commentators then analyse, explain and critique such developments. As a consequence, there can be substantial political and strategic repercussions if all does not go well at the tactical level. Tactical tipping points—the moments or short periods when tactical contests have significant political and strategic ramifications—are not new. What is new is that the media create tipping points by broadcasting tactical level setbacks or behaviour that would have gone unnoticed in earlier times.

There is also insufficient space in this monograph to discuss and compare Australia's projection of military force with allied force projection or that of other island nations. Both the United States and Britain have and continue to develop rapid joint force projection. The Americans constituted a Rapid Deployment Force in the early 1980s,¹⁰ while the British established a joint rapid response force and a permanent joint headquarters in the late 1990s.¹¹ There have been differences of opinion about these initiatives.¹² This monograph

neither joins this debate nor compares the proficiency and efficacy of Australian force projection to the efforts of other nations.

This monograph does, however, fill some of the gaps in the history of Australia's post-Cold War military operations, in general, and force projection, in particular. Though well covered by the media during their initial phases, Australian regional and international military operations in the late 1980s and during the 1990s have not received significant historical attention.¹³ Few historians have published histories of individual peacekeeping and post-Cold War operations.¹⁴ Aside from David Horner and the author, few have published authoritative accounts or attended to the operational and tactical levels of command in detail.¹⁵

The emphasis is on land force projection.¹⁶ The navy and the air force are intrinsic mechanisms of Australian force projection of maritime and air power.¹⁷ Navy and air force higher commands can prepare and deploy vessels and aircraft into Australia's sea and air space, the northern archipelago and the South Pacific, and around the world as long as there are secure ports and airbases to operate from and logistic resources to sustain them. The roles of maritime and air force elements are generic, well-defined and determined by the design and capabilities of individual vessels and aircraft, as well as their groupings.

The army has a number of more complex challenges. The first is to have forces equipped and rehearsed generically for warfighting as well as a range of likely contingencies. The second is to have sufficient time to conduct reconnaissance and to prepare. The third is to deploy force elements safely and effectively by land, sea and air after efficient loading. The fourth is to adapt to different and often complex and harsh operational environments. The fifth is to accomplish a variety of missions shaped by a number of stakeholders as well as to overcome or deter opponents. The sixth is to maintain a tempo of operations, level of sustainment and rotation to succeed for the duration of an operation or campaign. The seventh is to redeploy safely and reconstitute efficiently. The navy and the air force do not need the army except for securing and protecting threatened bases and providing some air defence. However, the army depends on Australian or allied maritime and air force elements, as well as commercial assets and capabilities, for force projection to hostile operational areas beyond Australian shores. Typically, land force elements rely on navy and air force elements for deployment and protection as well as for the means for sustainment, manoeuvre, additional firepower and possibly redeployment. One of the proficiency tests of Australian force projection is to synchronise maritime, land and air force elements effectively—sometimes called littoral power.¹⁸

This monograph briefly describes the first century of Australian force projection between 1885 and 1985 before closely examining Australia's first post-Vietnam War regional projection in 1987, Operation *Morris Dance*, two

projections to the North Solomons Province (hereafter Bougainville), Operations *Lagoon* and *Bel Isi*, the eastern-most province of Papua New Guinea (PNG), in 1994 and 1997, and to East Timor in 1999 (Operations *Spitfire* and *Warden*). One of the intentions is to reveal what happened at lower levels of command when the Australian Government decided to take military action and the Defence organisation executed the functions of force projection. Another intention is to fill in parts of an operational story that authors sometimes omit. Within the framework of the 10 functions of force projection, the narrative structure of this monograph follows the generic chronology of most regional and international projections, beginning with warnings and responses, not just arrivals and subsequent employment.

Each case study does not cover all of the functions. Operation *Morris Dance* did not involve employment or sustainment of force elements. The operation was a contingency deployment that ended when forces were not required after being pre-positioned. Consequently, it does not examine whether specific force preparation, deployment and force protection arrangements increased or decreased risk after arrival. Nor does it analyse the effectiveness of force command, protection and sustainment over time. There was no force rotation or a need for well-protected and efficient redeployment. Force elements reconstituted efficiently because they returned to home bases with original personnel and *matériel*.

Operation *Lagoon* was also a brief operation. However, it was an armed peacekeeping operation that did test specific force preparation as well as other enabling functions and incorporated the additional complexities of joint and coalition operations. Operation *Bel Isi* had sufficient duration to test all of the functions of force projection over a year, not just a few days or weeks as was the case for Operations *Morris Dance* and *Lagoon*. Though unarmed, this operation was not without threats to life and property. Arrangements for force protection are still classified and are not examined here. Operations *Spitfire* and *Warden* cover all of the functions, but the emphasis in the monograph is given to those that were persistently weak on previous case studies (such as force command and sustainment).

While Australians expect that there will be risks when their governments decide to take military action, they also presume that their political, public service and military leaders will manage and minimise risk. They do not expect priorities and processes within both government and Australia's armed forces to add to the inherent dangers of military operations. These processes did increase risk for Operations *Morris Dance*, *Lagoon*, *Bel Isi*, *Spitfire* and *Warden*. Given media magnification of tactical tipping points, deficient force projection could contribute to tactical setbacks and incidents that result in significant political and strategic embarrassment. Negative consequences may only diminish

Australia's regional and international reputation during peacetime, causing temporary political problems for governments. However, if Australia goes to a substantial military contest as part of an international military emergency or has to defend the approaches to the continent in a time of war, as was the case in 1942, the consequences could be disastrous.

In summary, this monograph contributes to Australian analytical military history through describing and analysing Australia's proficiency in military force projection using case studies. It offers a new framework and narrative structure for examining Australian military intent and competence. It adds to and incorporates other accounts of contemporary regional Australian force projections, such as S.S. Mackenzie's account of the adventures of the Australian Naval and Military Expeditionary Force in 1914, Dudley McCarthy's and David Dexter's official histories of Australia's projections during the Southwest Pacific Campaign during the Second World War and two accounts by the author of operations in Bougainville and East Timor in the 1990s.¹⁹ While the monograph describes the past, it also has potential to shape the future. C.E.W. Bean alluded to the contribution of military history and this type of monograph to the future when he said:

How did the Australian people—and the Australian character, if there is one, come through the universally recognised test of this, their first great war? ... What did the Australian people and their forces achieve in the total effort of their side of the struggle? ... What was the true nature of that struggle and test as far as Australians who took part in it? How well or ill did our constitution and our preparations serve us in it? What were their strengths or weaknesses? And what guidance can our people or others obtain from this experience for further emergencies?²⁰

ENDNOTES

¹ **force projection:** The ability to project military elements of Australia's national power within Australia's borders and beyond in response to Government requirements for military action. The functions of force projection begin with generic preparation and deployment, and end with redeployment and reconstitution back to specified generic preparedness. Adapted from US Department of Defense, 'DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms', Joint Publication 1-02, Joint Doctrine Division, Washington, May 2005. See <<http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/doddict/>> (hereafter DOD). **deployment:** The movement of forces to and within areas of operations, including positioning forces ready for operations and battle (DOD).

² **military capability:** The ability to achieve specified strategic effects. It includes four major components: (1) *force structure* (numbers, size and composition of the force elements that comprise the ADF; e.g., divisions, ships, air squadrons); (2) *modernisation* (technical sophistication of forces, units, weapon systems and equipment); (3) *readiness* (the ability to provide force elements required by commanders to execute their assigned missions); and *sustainability* (the ability to maintain the necessary level and duration of operational activity to accomplish missions. Sustainability is a function of providing for and maintaining those levels of ready forces, *matériel*, facilities and consumables necessary to support military effort.) (DOD). **command and control:** The exercise of authority and direction by designated commanders over assigned and attached forces for mission accomplishment. Command and control functions are performed through an arrangement of personnel, equipment, communications, facilities

and procedures employed by commanders in planning, directing, coordinating, and controlling forces and operations (DOD).

³ **mobilisation:** The act of preparing for war or other emergencies through assembling and organising national resources. More commonly, it is the process by which the armed forces or part of them are brought to a state of readiness for military action, including assembling, organising, training, administering personnel and pre-positioning and/or loading *matériel* (DOD).

⁴ **reconnaissance:** A mission undertaken to obtain, by visual observation or other detection methods, information about the activities and resources of hostile forces as well as stakeholders, or to secure data concerning the meteorological, hydrographic, or geographic characteristics of a particular area (DOD).

⁵ **force protection:** Activities, such as gathering, evaluating and communicating intelligence and employing counterintelligence and protective agents and groups, e.g. Special Forces, to protect individuals, groups and force elements from hostile interference. Force protection includes protection from the vicissitudes of operational environments, such as disease and harsh climates, through preventative health measures, clothing and equipment and conducive living conditions (New definition).

force sustainment: The science of planning and carrying out the movement of supplies and maintenance of forces through a supply chain. In its most comprehensive sense, those aspects of military operations that deal with design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation, and disposition of *matériel*; movement, evacuation, and hospitalisation of personnel; acquisition or construction, maintenance, operation, and disposition of facilities; and acquisition or furnishing of essential services. Also logistics (DOD).

⁶ Renamed Timor Leste from independence in May 2002.

⁷ **strategic level:** The level at which a nation, often as a member of a group of nations, determines national or multinational (alliance or coalition) security objectives and guidance, and develops and uses national resources to accomplish these objectives. Activities at this level establish national and multinational military objectives; sequence initiatives; define limits and assess risks for the use of military and other instruments of national power; develop global plans or theatre military plans to achieve these objectives; and provide military forces and other capabilities in accordance with strategic plans (DOD).

⁸ **operational level:** The level at which campaigns and major operations are planned, conducted, and sustained to accomplish strategic objectives within theatres or other operational areas. Activities at this level link tactics and strategy by establishing operational objectives needed to accomplish the strategic objectives, sequencing events to achieve operational objectives, initiating actions, and applying resources to bring about and sustain these events. These activities imply a broader dimension of time or space than do tactics; they ensure sustainment of tactical forces, and provide the means by which tactical successes are exploited to achieve strategic objectives (DOD). **tactical level:** The level at which battles and engagements are planned and executed to accomplish military objectives assigned to tactical force elements. Activities at this level focus on the ordered arrangement and manoeuvre of combat elements in relation to each other and to hostile forces to accomplish missions (DOD).

⁹ **Rules of Engagement:** Directives issued by competent military authority which specify the circumstances and limitations under which Australian forces will initiate and/or continue combat engagements with other forces encountered. Australian Defence Force Publication 101, Glossary, 1994.

¹⁰ For a short summary of the evolution of US rapid deployment forces and their command and control arrangements, visit <<http://rapid-deployment-forces.ignaut.net/>>, accessed 28 July 2008.

¹¹ See the UK Ministry of Defence website at <<http://www.mod.uk/issues/sdr/jrrf.htm>> for a summary of joint rapid response forces.

¹² Paul K. Davis, *Observations on the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force: Origins, Directions, and Mission*, Paper prepared for 23rd Annual Convention of the American International Studies Association held on 24–27 March 1982, The RAND Paper series, June 1982, available at <<http://www.rand.org/publications/P/P6751/P6751.pdf>>, accessed 14 November 2007; David Isenberg, *The Rapid Deployment Force: The Few, the Futile, the Expendable*, Cato Policy Analysis No. 44, The Cato Institute, Washington DC, 8 November 1984, available at <<http://www.cato.org/pubs/pas/pa044.html>>, accessed 14 November 2007; Keigh Hartley, 'Can the UK Afford a Rapid Deployment Force?', *Royal United Services Institute Journal for Defence Studies* vol. 127, no. 1, March 1982, pp. 18–21; and David Segal, 'Whatever Happened to Rapid Deployment?', *Armed Forces Journal*, March 1991, pp. 39–40. For a working bibliography on rapid deployment, see <http://www.ibiblio.org/pub/academic/history/marshall/military/mil_hist_inst/d/deploy2.asc> on the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's iblio digital archive database, accessed 14 November 2007.

¹³ Of the operations examined in this monograph, the following publications and papers merit perusal: Monica Wehner and Donald Denoon, *Without a gun, Australia's Experiences Monitoring Peace in Bougainville, 1997–2001*, Pandanus Books, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2001; Alan Ryan, 'Primary Responsibilities and Primary Risks': *Australian Defence Force Participation in the International Force East Timor*, Study Paper, no 304, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, November 2002, available at <http://www.defence.gov.au/Army/lwsc/Publications/SP/SP_304.pdf>, accessed 14 November 2007; Alan Ryan, *From Desert Storm to East Timor, Australia, the Asia-Pacific and the 'New Age'*, Study Paper, no. 302, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, January 2000, available at <http://www.defence.gov.au/Army/lwsc/Publications/SP/SP_302.pdf>, accessed 14 November 2007; John Blaxland, *Information-era Manoeuvre, The Australian-led Mission to East Timor*, Working Paper, no. 118, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, June 2002, available at <http://www.defence.gov.au/Army/lwsc/Publications/WP/WP_118.pdf>, accessed 14 November 2007; and Kent Beasley, *Information Operations during Operation Stabilise in East Timor*, Working Paper, no. 120, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Canberra, August 2002, available at <http://www.defence.gov.au/Army/lwsc/Publications/WP/WP_120.pdf>, accessed 14 November 2007.

¹⁴ There have been a few publications on Australian peacekeeping operations, such as (ed.) Hugh Smith, *Australia and Peacekeeping*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, University of New South Wales, Canberra, 1990; (ed.) Hugh Smith, *Peacekeeping Challenges for the Future*, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Australian Defence Force Academy, University of New South Wales, Canberra, 1993; and Peter Londey, *Other People's Wars: A History of Australian Peacekeeping*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2004.

¹⁵ See David Horner, *The Gulf Commitment: The Australian Defence Force's First War*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1992; Bob Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 1998; Bob Breen, *Giving Peace a Chance. Operation Lagoon Bougainville 1994, A Case Study in Military Action and Diplomacy*, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence, no. 142, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, The Australian National University, Canberra, 2002; and Bob Breen, *Mission Accomplished. East Timor: Australian Defence Force Participation in the International Force East Timor*, Allen and Unwin, Sydney, 2001.

¹⁶ **land power**: The ability to project military force by or from individuals and groups operating on land either on foot or from land, sea or aerial platforms, normally accompanied by application of direct and indirect fire support. Air Marshal M.J. Armitage and Air Commodore R.A. Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age*, Urbana, New York, 1985, pp. 2–3.

¹⁷ **maritime power**: The ability to project military force by or from a platform on or below water, normally the sea. **air power**: The ability to project military force by or from a platform in the third dimension above the surface of the earth. Armitage and Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age*, pp. 2–3.

¹⁸ **littoral power**: The ability to combine maritime, land and air power to project military force simultaneously on or below water, on land and in the air in a prescribed area. Armitage and Mason, *Air Power in the Nuclear Age*, pp. 2–3.

¹⁹ See Breen, *Giving Peace a Chance. Operation Lagoon Bougainville 1994, A Case Study in Military Action and Diplomacy*; and Breen, *Mission Accomplished. East Timor: Australian Defence Force Participation in the International Force East Timor*. The story of the AN and MEF appears in S.S. Mackenzie, *The Australians at Rabaul: The Capture and Administration of the German Possessions in the Southern Pacific*, The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918, Vol X, Angus and Robertson Ltd, Sydney, 1927. Accounts of Australian Second World War projections to the near region include Dudley McCarthy, *South-West Pacific Area—First Year Kokoda to Wau*, Official History of Australia in the War of 1939–1945, Series 1, vol. V, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1959; David Dexter, *The New Guinea Offensives*, Official History of Australia in the War of 1939–1945, series 1, vol. VI, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 1961; and E.G. Keogh, *The South West Pacific 1941–1945*, Grayflower Productions, Melbourne, 1965.

²⁰ C.E.W. Bean, 'The Writing of the Australian Official History of the Great War—Sources, Methods and Some Conclusions', (read before the Royal Australian Historical Society on 22 February 1938) in *Despatch*, Journal of the New South Wales Military Historical Society, vol. XXXVI, no. 2, April/June 2001. First published in the Royal Australian Historical Society, *Journal and Proceedings*, vol. XXIV, 1938, part 2, p. 7.