



... in modern war there is no failure like success and no success like failure.¹

Background

Introduction

- 1.1 This introductory chapter outlines the approach taken in the compilation of this report. It addresses the following topics:
- The need for an inquiry into the Army
 - Submissions to the inquiry
 - Previous reports
 - The Report – structure and approach

The Need for an Inquiry into the Army

- 1.2 This is a report into Australia's Army. It is an Army which, in recent times Australians have been justifiably proud. In the face of natural disaster or humanitarian crisis it has brought relief. Deployed into the arena of civil tension and unrest it has acted as an impartial and respected intermediary.

1 Handel, M, 1989, *War, Strategy and Intelligence*, Frank Cass and Company Ltd, London, p. 24.

Called upon to employ force it has done this with consideration, determination and humanity.

- 1.3 Our task was to 'measure' the suitability of the Army for peacetime, peacekeeping and war. In undertaking this task we have been singularly impressed with the men and women who serve within the Army. We base this view on many years of observation by both individual Committee Members and the Committee operating as a group. The Australian soldier we have witnessed is invariably cheerful in adversity, innovative, hard working, courteous and professionally dedicated.
- 1.4 So what good could be served by an inquiry into the Army? To our Committee the purpose was compelling. There were two reasons for this belief:
- The Army's performance in recent years has been impressive. **However, it is following a run of success that militaries have traditionally been most vulnerable to stagnation. The successes of the United States Army in World War II and Korea did not prepare it for failure in Vietnam. It was largely the catharsis of Vietnam that prepared it for subsequent success in the Gulf in 1992.**
 - The East Timor commitment, shifts in Australia's strategic situation and budgetary pressures, have highlighted resource and structural weaknesses which may impair the future suitability of the Army.
- 1.5 The suspicion of structural problems within the Army was reinforced by our review of previous reports and inquiries. This particularly applied to the structure and use of the Army's Reserve component. The Australian Defence Reserve Association noted thirteen inquiries or reorganisations in the last twenty years that have impacted on the Reserve. Since the Millar inquiry in 1974² there has been an almost constant repetition of findings and recommendations in various reports relating to the Army. These findings have often been answered by half changes, or in some cases, no change at all. This difficulty suggests a deeper problem.
- 1.6 This deeper problem appears to be reflected in the wider Army itself. It is an organisation that is uncertain of its place within society and within Australia's defence strategy. Professor Paul Dibb commented during a public hearing, on the apparent confusion within the Army about its role within defence strategy.³ The current difficulties within recruitment likewise may reflect the Army's uncertain position within society.
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2 Millar, T B, 1974, *Committee of Inquiry into the Citizens Military Forces Report*, AGPS, Canberra.

3 See Professor P Dibb, Transcript, pp. 195-196 for an example of the Army's confusion over its role in current strategy.

- 1.7 The Army is also a group tired of implementing change that often seems without clear purpose, consistency and the commitment of necessary resources. As General John Sanderson testified:

One of the difficulties that we found is trying to impart to people in the field a vision and a set of objectives which are not matched by resources. Over a prolonged period of time, they cease to take you seriously when you establish objectives that are not matched by resources. When you are changing those objectives and resources continuously, as I have suggested has happened with the reserve, then you start to lose credibility with the people in the field.⁴

We do not believe that these perceptions within the Army have been brought about by change itself. Rather, the cause of dissatisfaction lies in ambiguous guidance and a misguided attempt to stave off fundamental change through inappropriate compromise and accommodation.

- 1.8 Poor guidance and continuous compromise and accommodation has resulted in a 'death by one thousand cuts'. Old capabilities do not appear to have been removed to make way for new capabilities. They are simply degraded to the point of being dysfunctional or at best, marginal. Hence, we discovered that our Army of nine brigades was, in terms of equipment and personnel, actually an Army of only four brigades or at most five fully operational brigades. As resources have been squeezed in the past a constant series of marginal changes have been made to 'make do'.⁵ We believe, for the sake of the soldiers and for the defence of the nation, this approach must stop.
- 1.9 The Army needs, and deserves, unambiguous direction on its role, tasks and priorities. It must also be valued and be seen to be valued for this role. Ultimately it is Government that must provide this direction and the Community that must provide the necessary recognition and support. We hope this report provides sufficient information to achieve the first and sufficient reason to provide the latter.

4 Lieutenant General J Sanderson, Transcript, p. 152.

5 This situation was improved by the Government's announcement to improve Regular Army numbers by 3,000 on 23 November 1999. This effectively raised the Army from four to six regular battalions. *Minister of Defence Press Release 340/99, 23 November 1999, 'Government Boosts Army and Air Force Strength'*.

Submissions to the Inquiry

- 1.10 We advertised for submissions⁶ for the inquiry on 15 May 1999, and conducted public hearings from 12 November 1999 until 6 June 2000. The inquiry attracted more than 70 submissions, amongst which were a number of supplementary submissions. The received submissions are listed in Appendix A. In addition we received fourteen exhibits. These are listed at Appendix C.
- 1.11 Respondents to the Inquiry included the Department of Defence, the Army, non-government philanthropic organisations, armed service associations, academics, union representatives and concerned private citizens. The evidence received by us in submissions, exhibits and public hearings covered most facets of the Army's activity. This included force structure, defence strategy, funding, personnel management, recruitment, retention and equipment. Inevitably the evidence was more extensive in some areas than in others. The commercial and security sensitivities associated with aspects of equipment acquisition and capability impacted on the detail provided in some evidence.
- 1.12 Public Hearings were conducted in Adelaide, Melbourne, Canberra and Brisbane. The people and organizations that gave evidence at these hearings are listed in Appendix B. To supplement the evidence received in hearings we also conducted:
- visits to military bases in northern Australia and to troops deployed in East Timor during 1999;
 - a public seminar in Canberra to debate defence strategy in June 2000; and
 - private discussions with soldiers, non-commissioned officers and junior officers at Robertson Barracks, Darwin, in August 2000.

Previous Reports

- 1.13 The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade has not previously conducted a report specifically into the Army. A report with similar terms of reference was done in 1984 into the Australian

⁶ Advertising media included *Weekend Australian*, *Brisbane Courier Mail*, *Adelaide Advertiser*, *Canberra Times*, *Northern Territory News*, *Financial Review*, *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Hobart Mercury*, *Army Newspaper*, *Northern Courier*, *Melbourne Age* and the *West Australian*.

Defence Force. The report, *Australian Defence Force – Its Structures and Capabilities*, presaged some of the ideas that were to guide Defence Policy on the release of the 1987 Defence White Paper.

- 1.14 Over the last twenty years there has been an extensive range of reports touching on the suitability of the Army. Some of these report's conclusions have been overtaken by events. However, as discussed in the Introduction, a disturbing number remain valid. The reports we referred to during this inquiry are listed within the sources at the back of this report.

The Report – Structure and Approach

Introduction

- 1.15 The terms of the inquiry stipulated that we were to look at the Army's suitability for peacetime, peacekeeping and war. Our approach to compiling this report was influenced by four issues. These were:

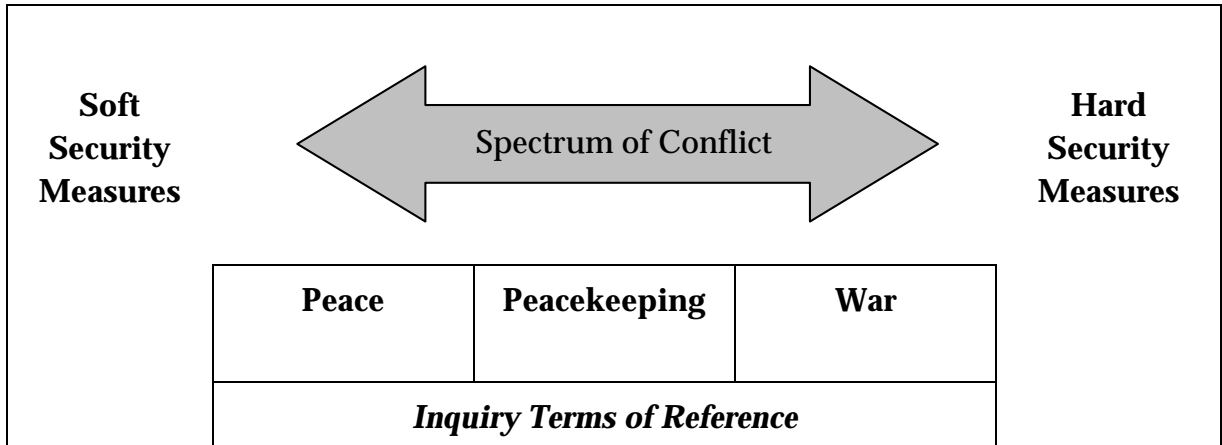
- the interpretation of the words peacetime, peacekeeping and war;
- the concept of suitability;
- the organization of the evidence – the report structure; and
- concurrent developments within the Department of Defence.

An explanation of how these influenced our approach to both the inquiry and the structure of the Report is provided below. The inquiry Terms of Reference are located at the start of this report.

An Interpretation of Peacetime, Peacekeeping and War

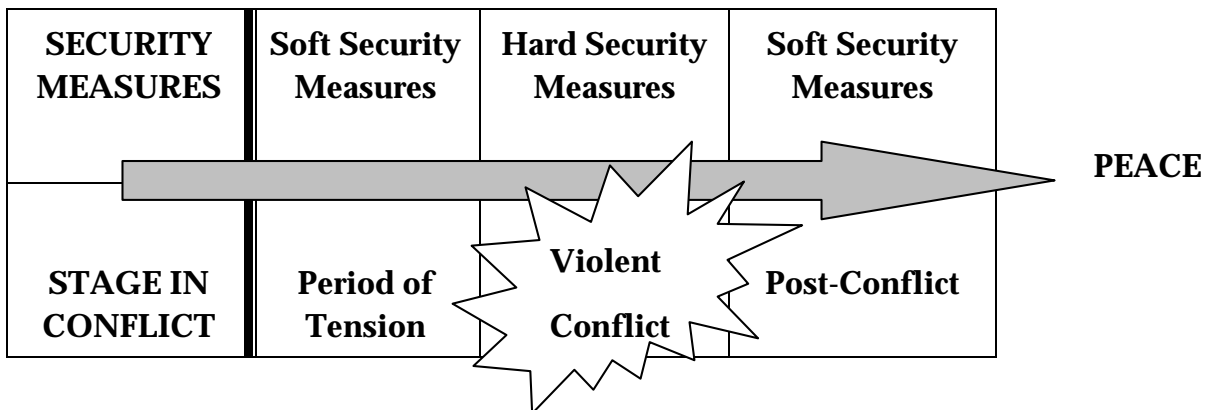
- 1.16 The approach taken by us during the inquiry was that peacetime, peacekeeping and war were not distinct and separable conditions. All armies must be able to operate within a conflict spectrum. To successfully resolve a dispute the Army must be able to be effective at both ends of this spectrum. In situations short of large scale coordinated violence, the Army must be adept at what we termed soft security measures. This includes an ability for negotiation, humanitarian relief and information dissemination. Ultimately, if necessary, the Army must be able to apply physical force in what we termed hard security measures. To place the inquiry terms of reference into this context, our approach is depicted diagrammatically in Figure 1.1.

Figure 1.1 The Inquiry Terms of Reference as Elements within the Conflict Spectrum



1.17 Over the last 100 years the expectations placed on the Army have changed markedly. It is not simply required to fight. Within any conflict, an enduring settlement requires many of the capabilities currently used within peacekeeping and humanitarian relief. Similarly, to prevent a pre-conflict situation erupting into violence also requires skills and capabilities associated with peacekeeping. In short, both pre and post-conflict activities require an army adept at soft security. Of course, if tension erupts in violence then the Army must be highly competent at warfighting – hard security. This concept is represented diagrammatically at Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2 The Necessity for Both Hard and Soft Security Capabilities within the Army



The Concept of Suitability

1.18 The suitability of the Army could be assessed against a number of criteria. Its effectiveness at satisfying defence strategy objectives is one criterion. Another criterion could be how well it has performed in operations that are not a priority within current defence strategy, such as East Timor. Yet a further consideration for evaluating the Army is its ability to sustain a response to a contingency – rather than simply responding in an unsustainable way. As Professor Dibb pointed out:

... can we sustain a deployment to two regional contingencies simultaneously? The answer at present is no, ...⁷

1.19 After much consideration we settled on a number of principles that we thought would provide a meaningful measure of the Army's suitability. These principles we believe will ensure that we have assessed the Army's ability to provide:

... viable and credible land forces able to meet a range of contingencies.⁸

1.20 The principles used to assess the suitability of the Army are listed below. A short explanatory comment is provided against each principle. The principles require the Army to be:

- Relevant - The extent to which the Army is valued within the Community as a credible and useful contributor to defence strategy.
- Credible - The extent to which the Army has a demonstrable and widely recognised capability to carry out the tasks likely to be placed on it by Government.
- Scalable⁹ - The Army's ability to expand and contract in a controlled fashion to meet shifting security requirements.
- Sustainable - The Army's ability to maintain specified levels of commitment for specified periods of time.
- Balanced - The degree to which the Army, and the other Services:
 - ⇒ Have the requisite range of capabilities to meet critical strategic objectives without being dependent on the military capabilities of other nations.

7 Professor P Dibb, Transcript, p. 196

8 Quoted from the inquiry Terms of Reference.

9 Within this report the coined word of 'scalability' is also used to discuss this principle.

- ⇒ Are organised to ensure that capabilities such as air defence are based on at least two integrated and complementary means. No capability should be critically dependent on only a single means or technology.
- Efficient – The degree to which the Army achieves the above principles with the minimum necessary resources.

Concurrent Developments

- 1.21 During the period of the inquiry we were presented with a number of challenges. Most notable was the decision by the Government to review Australia's defence policy. This decision meant that we could not assume that the Army's suitability against the existing policy¹⁰ would remain valid under any new policy.
- 1.22 Normally it would have been prudent to defer finalisation of the inquiry until release of a new policy. However, the Government chose to formulate its new policy in conjunction with an extensive public consultation process. This process was initiated by the release of a public discussion paper on strategy on 27 June 2000.
- 1.23 We decided that we would use the opportunity of the consultation process to make a contribution to this discussion. We would base our contribution on the extensive evidence we had received from the community. We accepted that this approach entailed some risk for the longevity of the report. We considered that it was better to take this risk and thereby broaden the considerations made in the development of the new policy.
- 1.24 At the time of the inquiry, the Army and Defence were also completing a number of internal studies. The most significant included:
- recommendations to the Government on the future employment of the Reserve;
 - the results of the Restructuring the Army Process;
 - the employment of women; and
 - the officer-soldier rank balance.
- 1.25 The majority of these studies would not be concluded until late 2000 or in 2001. In such a large department it is inevitable that investigations and

10 Department of Defence 1997, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Defence Publishing and Visual Communications, Canberra.

change is ongoing. We hoped that our findings would be of assistance to the Army and Defence in concluding the above studies.

The Report Structure

- 1.26 The evidence received during the inquiry, and its discussion, is organised into nine chapters. The first two chapters are intended to provide the reader background and context to the examination of the evidence. The evidence is discussed in Chapters 3 to 8. The final chapter, Chapter 9, draws together the conclusions reached in the preceding chapters.
- 1.27 The reader should be aware that the conclusions reached in Chapter 3, Strategy, impact on the consideration of subsequent issues, such as force structure and equipment. Much of the evidence discussed in a given chapter interrelates with material discussed in others. For instance it is difficult to discuss force structure without a consideration of funding. Because of this, recommendations are deferred until they can be discussed in a broader context within the final chapter, Chapter 9.
- 1.28 Within the report the reader will inevitably be confronted with military terminology. A glossary has been provided in the back of this report to explain the more commonly used words and terms. We would have liked to break with some of this terminology because of the connotations it sometimes evokes. For instance where we have used the word brigade we would have preferred to use a more generic term – such as task force. In place of battalion group we could have used the term battle group or task group. To reduce the burden on the reader we have maintained the use of common military terms. We simply ask the reader to be wary of placing too much historical baggage on our use of military terms and words. The context in which we apply them is the important issue. If still in doubt refer to the glossary.
- 1.29 Finally, the chapters in the report attempt to review the broadest range of evidence relating to the subject being discussed. We were keen that evidence given to us be placed on the public record. However, not all of the issues raised by this evidence have been drawn into our chapter conclusions or final recommendations. We were keen to limit our recommendations in order to provide greater focus to the critical issues impacting on the overall suitability of the Army.

