

## **CIVIL – MILITARY CO-OPERATION**

1. In an article in 'The Conversation' dated 7 June 2021, Professor John Blaxland laments the ill-preparedness of the Army to respond to emergencies when called upon to do so. He lauds the appointment of General John Frewen as the leader of the Corona vaccination Task Force but goes on to express his broader concerns about '.....Australia's growing tendency to call in the defence force to deal with crises outside its normal remit. These are crises that could or should be dealt with by well-resourced civilian government agencies and institutions.'
2. The provisions for call-out of ADF personnel come under Section 51 of the Defence Act covering Aid to Civil Power. They need review. Their shortcomings have been demonstrated time and again during the 20th century in terms of bureaucratic complexity, time delays, cost attribution and impact on pre-assigned tasking. But an even greater imperative has become apparent over the past two decades; the rapidly changing nature of warfare, generated principally by the accelerating rate of technological change, compels an urgent review of our strategic posture, our positioning of Defence Force personnel, weapons and equipment and how we should best use our highly trained, disciplined, skilled, intelligent men and women of the Australian Defence Force in a threatened environment.
3. The purpose of this paper is to propose a revised approach to civil-military modus operandi for the defence and security of the nation.

### **The Evolution of Conflict Resolution and the ADF**

#### **1901- 1945**

4. At the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century it was the custom - world wide—that resort to military conflict was the only option left when disputes between nations could not be resolved by other means. The outcome inevitably depended on innumerable factors but amongst these the size and strength of numbers of personnel and hardware (platforms, weapons, equipment) were key. In WW 1 more attention was focused on the heaviness of armament (think Dreadnoughts), Tanks, Howitzers , Submarines and Torpedoes than was focused on personnel safety, survival and welfare. Personnel losses were huge leaving the impression that men were expendable in the eyes of Army

commanders (Australia lost 62000 KIA). By the end of that conflict in 1918 Air Power and Submarines had become vital elements in military conflict. Biological warfare had demonstrated its lethal capability to such extent that humanity, as a whole, condemned its acceptability as a weapon of war. The Armistice signed in November 1918 brought hostilities to an end but left a toll of human, economic and material misery and destruction the like of which had not previously been experienced.

5. In the 21 years elapsed between the signing of that Armistice and the outbreak of WW2, economic circumstances, resource availability and attempts to establish international measures to prevent the recurrence of military conflict limited the scope for the development of more advanced platforms, weapons and equipment. Generally speaking the tools with which the allies entered WW2 in 1939 were updated, more sophisticated versions of those used in WW1. Notable exceptions to this sweeping generalisation were the introduction of aircraft carriers and radio communication. At the outset of the conflict, manpower-operated systems abounded; automation was in the early stages of development. Rapid technological developments over the 6 year duration of this conflict led to the introduction of radar, early-generation missiles and Electronic Warfare by 1945. Though the military casualty toll was significantly lower than in WW1 (Australia lost 24000KIA) the conflict had been fought on much the same basic beliefs as its predecessor. On the ground, at sea and in the air, most of the fighting involved direct combat between opposing forces.
6. Then came Hiroshima.
7. The birth of The Nuclear Age, announced to the world with the dropping of Atomic Bombs on Japan in August 1945, brought an immediate end to WW2 ; simultaneously it brought the people of the world to a shuddering, frightened standstill. It demonstrated that mankind now had in its hands the power to obliterate itself, its population, infrastructure, achievements and possessions - to bring to an end civilisation as we know it. It superseded every previously-held notion pertaining to the limits of military conflict.

## **1945 – 2001**

8. The world entered the second half of the 20th century in an atmosphere of tension and apprehension. The Cold War was fought in this atmosphere. In the 1950's it was against a background of 'fear of the

unknown' that Australia was involved in conflicts in Korea, Malaya, Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam. Gradually, confidence grew that neither East nor West would press the 'fire' button on the nuclear launcher because the consequence would be mutually assured destruction. The Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962 proved to be the most tension-filled period of the Cold War: its ultimately peaceful resolution was welcomed with relief on both sides of the Iron Curtain.

9. The second half of the 20th century was an era of remarkable innovation and achievement. The Space Age dawned in the late 1950's, Computers 'arrived' in the 60's, Satellites shot skyward from remote parts of the world from the 70's and cracks in the Iron Curtain appeared early in the 80's. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 effectively marked the end of the Cold War and was quickly followed by the demise of the former Soviet Union in 1990. A major contributing factor to the rapidly changing world strategic situation was the communications explosion which was exposing power blocs, nations, communities and individuals to realities and facts never previously known.
10. The end of the Cold War caused Australia to review its strategic situation. Participation in United Nations peace-keeping operations in Africa and activities in the Middle East continued but the end of the ideological struggle between Communism and The Free World was seen by democracies like Australia as a reason to reduce Defence expenditure. Commercialisation, contracting out, and pressure to 'Do more with less', led to reductions in ADF personnel strength which placed extreme pressure on Defence when regional situations demanded a military response. Technological advances like the birth of Internet and mobile phones were having an enormous impact on all facets of society including the ADF. The addition of highly regarded conventional submarines to our maritime capability was welcomed but, in the years leading up to the new millennium, most of the changes made to platforms and weapons were in the nature of up-dates.
11. Then came 9/11 – and with it 'The War on Terror'.

## **2001- 2021**

12. The world was still adjusting to the end of the Cold War when it was brought to a standstill by the horrifying reality of attacks on the Twin Towers in New York on 11 September 2001. Random terrorist attacks

had taken place in many countries in preceding years but nothing approaching the complexity, magnitude and consequences of these attacks had been anticipated or contemplated. A new war had begun, 'The War on Terror'. The perpetrators of the attacks were quickly identified and Australia joined the international force established to bring those responsible to account. Over the next two decades many elements of the ADF were deeply involved in the West's attempts to overcome the Taliban and establish the basis of a democratic government in Afghanistan.

13. While attention was understandably focused on this geographically distant conflict, the world was undergoing technological change at an accelerating pace. The communications explosion which had effectively begun with the birth of satellites in the 1960's accelerated in the 1990's with the arrival of internet and the speeding up of the trend towards globalization. Instantaneous world-wide information exchange became a reality and social media quickly became a tool with both beneficial and damaging potential. Enormous advances in electronics created new possibilities for the use of cyberspace as a weapon of war. Robotics and automation led to the testing and subsequent introduction of unmanned aircraft, vehicles and ships. Drones added yet another dimension to the capability for reconnaissance, weapon delivery and control. Progressively through the 20<sup>th</sup> century technological advances had significantly reduced the necessity for face-to-face contact between military opponents. The need for personnel at the fighting front was shifting perceptibly. We were moving steadily towards the point where it is feasible to contemplate a military conflict without ANY direct contact. This will be critical to the concepts driving the manpower needed for the future ADF.

14. In the first two decades of the millennium the ADF has had multiple involvements other than sustaining and supporting its forces in Afghanistan. While continuing to meet its standing obligations to allies and the United Nations, it has been required to lead or assist in resolving internal difficulties in nations in our region; it has provided relief from natural disasters both at home and in the Indo-Pacific area; it has assisted developing our neighboring emerging nation's defence forces and has encouraged use of our training facilities. It has made a major contribution to the establishment of our Border Force which has successfully put a stop to the arrival of boat people. And in our strategic area of interest it has contributed to the diplomatic task of 'showing a presence' and deterring misunderstandings. (There will always be

need for personnel for international, regional, UN roles and low level conflict situations).

15. These achievements have been made by a Defence Force up-dated as much as commitments and resources have permitted but organized, manned, armed and equipped very much along the lines it was at the end of the 20th century.
16. As already indicated the years since Federation have been notable for the progressive replacement of manpower by machine in waging conflict. We have moved on from an age where the slaughter of thousands and maiming of many thousands more was accepted as the human price of warfare to one where the inhabitants of civilized, western democracies regard life as precious and go to extreme lengths to protect it. By the 2020's, we have reached the point where military force can be delivered from remote locations, by automated weapons or unmanned vehicles/equipment without any direct human contact between opponents.
17. Given the history of conflict resolution over the centuries, achievement of this situation is a remarkable milestone in the evolution of society. It signals and introduces an age of new realities as to the means of achieving conflict resolution. No longer will armies of soldiers, numerical superiority of ships, aircraft and weapons be critical determinants of conflict outcome: they are being (or have already been) replaced by missiles and insidious, invisible electronic methods utilizing technology enabling a nation with malevolent intent to target and attack infrastructure, communication systems, supply lines, administrative organisations – almost every vital organ in the machinery of state.
18. While much of the foregoing suggests that the ADF might be reduced in numbers, there will, nevertheless, be occasional requirements for low intensity expeditionary activities as well as civil aid to smaller nations in our region; these will require significant numbers of trained personnel. The implication is that there may be periods when ADF personnel might be underutilized on military tasks but numbers and skills must be maintained to cope with contingencies.

## THE OUTLOOK

19. The Prime Minister has made known our nation's concern over the strategic outlook and, in conjunction with the appropriate Ministers, has initiated action both within the country and internationally to generate change. Through arrangements made with existing alliances and the recently announced AUKUS it has become clear that Australia will be expected to make a significant contribution to the stability and security of the Indo – Pacific region in the years immediately ahead.
20. Urgent review of the way ahead for Australia's defence and security is already underway, guided by the recently appointed Defence Minister Peter Dutton (who is wasting no time). The decision to introduce nuclear-powered submarines is highly significant in determining our strategic posture.
21. That strategic posture will have to take into account the threats confronting us which may be summarized as follows:
  - Terrorism from religiously inspired ideological zealots worldwide;
  - Terrorism from extremist politically inspired groups within our borders;
  - Belligerent pronouncements from China indicating intent to incorporate democratic Taiwan into the Peoples Republic of China (PRC);
  - Construction of bases in the South China Sea indicative of the PRC's determination to achieve strategic dominance of the region;
  - Civil unrest within emerging nations and territories in the Indo Pacific region;
  - Covert attacks on our machinery of state – the government and matrix of structures, businesses and organizations required to run the country.
22. Recent Terrorist incidents around the world make clear that protagonists will not be constrained by Internationally recognized Rules of order, Laws, Protocols, Conventions, Humanitarian considerations, religious principles, ethics or existing alliances and agreements. They will follow the 'whatever it takes' path to achieve their aims, the primary one being to overturn our society.

## Responding to the Threats

23. We are not well-placed to respond. The ADF is a small, high quality, very well-regarded team capable of integrating into and effectively assisting an allied Task Force (as it has done in the past) but quite inadequate to defend our country on its own. It remains suitable to make an effective contribution to deterring and dealing with conflicts of the type encountered in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but is not now structured, equipped, positioned or supported to provide even homeland and economic zone security in the 21<sup>st</sup>. There is a rapidly widening gap between capability and requirement which can only be plugged by having in place alliances and commitments from long-standing powerful friends and regional allies who share our determination to safeguard our independence, sovereignty and democratic way of life.
24. Reality is staring us in the face. China's fast-growing military behemoth is contemptuously dismissive of Australia and if unleashed could obliterate our defences in a trice.
25. Given our population, the size of our land mass, the length of our maritime boundaries and the volume of our air space, it is unlikely that we can become self-reliant in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This oft-used term is at present a pipe dream, but it is a goal we should always be working towards. Doing so requires political will, overcoming complacent attitudes and significant increase in spending. To its credit the present federal government has made significant moves in this direction.
26. The threats to Australia externally are currently being reviewed by relevant Ministers and their allied counterparts. In the aftermath of the withdrawal from Afghanistan it appears unlikely that Australian Forces will become involved in the foreseeable future in expeditionary type activity or conflicts outside our immediate area of interest. Although we will continue to have UN, alliance and regional commitments to meet, it appears unlikely that we will have Forces participating in areas where we have to also provide land-based personnel for operational, administrative and logistic support. This cannot, however, be guaranteed.
27. The threats to Australia internally – from Terrorism and Covert attacks on our machinery of state – are of a nature we have not had to face until the last two decades. In this period the ADF has been involved in dealing with several potentially dangerous incidents and it has worked alongside other law enforcement, intelligence and security

agencies very effectively in keeping the public safe. It appears, however, that the incidence of covert activities attacking infrastructure, hacking computer networks and disrupting communications is on the rise, thereby placing heavy demands for vigilance on both government and non-government instrumentalities. The frequency of cyber incidents is rising alarmingly.

28. The re-setting of the strategic posture is a matter for political, bureaucratic and military experts in Canberra, advised by security, intelligence and other government appointed authorities. (They will also have available a considerable amount of gratuitous advice from well-intentioned journalists !). Australia's strategic standing and importance has been enhanced by recent announcements concerning nuclear powered submarines and the AUKUS alliance. It seems more than probable that implementation of the new strategic posture will emphasise the necessity for major changes in how ADF personnel are positioned and employed.

### Personnel Considerations

29. The realities of the milestone change in conflict resolution and the consequential reconsideration of our strategic posture necessitate reconsideration of how we can use ADF personnel to best advantage in the years ahead. Other factors impacting are that in all probability:

- Technological change will continue at a possibly accelerating pace;
- Robotics and automation will continue to progressively replace personnel;
- The capability and use of unmanned vehicles underwater, on land and in the air will increase;
- Missiles of increasing lethality, range and accuracy, delivered at up to hypersonic speed, will become the predominant weapons;
- Both offensive and defensive weapon systems will be based primarily on the Australian mainland.
- Ships, even fitted with their own self-defence missile systems, will be unable to survive more powerful missile attacks from onshore;
- Land -based Defence infrastructure and bases will become increasingly vulnerable to attacks from land, sea, air and space as missile technology advances



30. It is too early to make predictions or assessments of the personnel requirements needed to satisfy the strategic posture now under development. It is patently apparent however that, the defence and security of our sovereign territory and people are tasks requiring many more than those currently available to the ADF. Further, they are tasks which require the understanding, participation and co-operation of the populace.
31. Complacency over Defence has become a hallmark of Australians as memories of WW2 recede: it has been jolted during participation in operational conflicts in the Middle East and Asian areas but has lapsed again for most after the conclusion of those Wars. Driven partially by our remoteness from many of the world's major trouble-spots, this complacent attitude is dangerous in the cyber dominated hypersonic global village we inhabit in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The outlook we now face demands a renewed alertness and vigilance from every Australian citizen with progressively more onus resting on each of us as we climb the ladder of life and assume greater responsibility for the welfare of those around us.
32. Reviewing the existing legislation for Aid to Civil Power is a 'first step' along the road-map to achieving a goal where the military and civilian establishments work collaboratively to safeguard our nation and people. It may take many years but with the will and co-operation of relevant authorities it can be achieved. It is timely that a start be made now while:
- (a) the usefulness and versatility of ADF personnel are becoming evident to the public in the assistance they are providing in dealing with the Covid pandemic, and
  - (b) the incidence of cyber attacks is increasing rapidly, indicating more vigilance is needed.
33. In the article which provoked this paper Professor Blaxland asserted that recent crises where ADF assistance was sought '*could or should be dealt with by well-resourced civilian government or agencies and institutions*'. Former Defence Minister Kim Beazley was keen, in the late 1980's, to establish an Australian Coastguard but it was assessed that the country could not afford a separate organization of that nature and the tasks envisaged should be carried out by the ADF. Economic considerations against creating new agencies or institutions are even stronger today. The successful evolution of Border Force illustrates

how effective working arrangements can be established between existing civil agencies and the ADF.

### Getting There

34. Many hurdles will have to be jumped. Each State and Territory has its own organization and agencies for handling emergencies. Emergency Services often have authorities who are reluctant to submit to higher or outside direction, believing they know best how crises should be handled. In some States Reserve Units (eg 51 Btn FNQ Regiment) have assigned tasks. Calls for military assistance under ACP provisions are not infrequently a sensitive issue. Division of responsibilities, command and control, legislation, attitudes, traditional practices and numerous other matters will require review. Changes of this magnitude require time, patience and determination: they can only be effected as an evolutionary process. Perhaps the biggest hurdle may be overcoming the view articulated by Professor Blaxland – i.e. that, effectively, it is wrong to involve the military in matters other than warfare. This opinion is widely held but with the degree of ADF assistance to crises over the past 3 years, and the ADF's continuing involvement in getting the Covid pandemic under control, public attitudes may be changing.
35. Initially, it is proposed that suitable ADF personnel be attached to State Emergency Services organisations for familiarization with existing arrangements and investigation of how assistance can best be provided in that geographic area. Simultaneously, and for the same purpose, suitable ADF personnel should be attached to the headquarters of Commonwealth departments and agencies in Canberra who are being subjected to cyber attacks or hacking.
36. Emphasis is put on the necessity for the move to involve the ADF in the manner outlined being an EVOLUTIONARY PROCESS. Introduced incrementally and managed sensitively, the change could be well received and would gradually draw the civil and the military elements closer together. It would be necessary to make clear from the outset that the line of demarcation which exists between two elements would continue insofar as members of the ADF would not be vested with powers enabling them to be regarded as having disciplinary authority over the populace. The Queen's uniform is generally accepted by Australians as giving those who wear it a degree of common sense and good judgement deserving of respect.

37. In time, as the nation becomes accustomed to the change and recognizes its benefits, everyday use of ADF personnel in support of the civil organization and running of the country might lead to Navy having an increasing role in the running and safe management of ports, the Army providing security for important bases and infrastructure, and the Airforce acquiring responsibility for the security of major airports. A road-map for the implementation of this proposal would assist its evolution.

### The Benefits

38. The adoption of this proposal would be beneficial for both the civil and military establishments. For the civil it would provide personnel who could fortify existing arrangements for vulnerable areas of parliament, the public and the many authorities, organisations and services vital to the effective and efficient running of the machinery of state. For the military it would provide a field of gainful employment for the personnel whose traditional tasks are (or already have been) taken over or disappeared as a consequence of automation, robotics or other technology-induced change. Young men and women join the ADF today prepared to give of their all, if necessary, to serve the people of Australia ; like all workers they seek satisfaction from the work they do. There are many aspects and circumstances of ADF life that are monotonous, boring and far from satisfying. Involvement in activities where they can assist civil power in achieving its aims would add a new dimension to the service they can give. It could have a marked effect on retention rates.

39. Employment of ADF personnel in the manner proposed would signal a significant shift away from the model of traditional military employment we inherited. But many young nations employ their military on civil tasks when they are not required operationally. Doing so in Australia would possibly reduce the degree of complacency towards defence and security matters : it might simultaneously reduce the proportion of the population who regard expenditure on defence as a waste of resources which should be directed to health, education and welfare.

## **CONCLUSION**

40. The ADF attracts some of the nation's finest youth. It welcomes, trains, supports them and looks after their welfare. It encourages them

to pursue high professional standards, teaches them values and how to be team players. It instills in them the pride of wearing the Queen's uniform. It asks a lot of them in times of stress and it encourages them to display courage, loyalty and determination. It values their service, knowing that each one of them is prepared to give his all on behalf of the nation.

41. For the most part the capabilities they acquire and the qualities they possess remain hidden from the public. Occasionally, particularly when called upon to Aid Civil Power, the standards they have achieved are on display. Over the past 3 years, during which a series have crises have necessitated call out of ADF elements, they have been more in evidence than usual; the value of their assistance in getting on top of the Covid epidemic is becoming increasingly evident.

42. The strategic outlook for Australia at the present time is bleak. It is currently under review. The resulting re-set posture will predictably necessitate reconsideration of how ADF personnel can best be used. This paper makes a proposal for increased involvement by ADF personnel in the day-to-day running of the country – a proposal which would have substantial benefits for both the ADF and the nation it serves.

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