Strategic Planners: A response to operational complexity

By Major Andrew Maher

Abstract

The release of the Defence White Paper 2016 marked a tectonic shift in attitudes to international engagement, elevating it to an ‘integrated core function’ of Australian Defence Force business. This article proposes a human resources framework for the Australian Army to allow it to generate specialist planners with the ability to enhance the capability of local partners. It proposes the development of ‘generalist plus’ officers with regional specialisation, termed ‘strategic planners’ within this discussion. Such personnel would bring recent operational experience, be developed to offer specialist advice to foreign militaries and be capable of orchestrating strategic planning functions, nuanced with regional understanding and context. This form of investment reinforces the long-term requirement for defence attachés to act as military diplomats, imbued with a deep regional political knowledge and requisite language skills. The ability to perform specific advisory functions that require a nuanced understanding of the local political and cultural dynamics of a specific region is an essential prerequisite for the Australian Army to fulfil a number of the tasks set for it by the government.
Introduction

Once actions in war (both violent and non-violent) are seen as a form of language used to communicate meaning in the context of an argument, there is a possibility of being misunderstood … Thus strategy in relation to war seeks to link the meaning of tactical actions with the intent of policy to deliver the desired policy end-state … Strategy does not merely need to orchestrate tactical actions (the use of force), but also constructs the interpretive structure which gives them meaning and links them to the end of policy.¹

As Emile Simpson describes it, the nuance of strategy can approximate another form of language. In 1989, General John R. Gavin, Supreme Allied Commander in Europe, argued for the return of uniformed strategists, perceiving that the ‘language’ of strategy had atrophied given the fallout from America’s disastrous Vietnam and El Salvador experiences. Gavin suggested that key elements of the development of strategists include a higher level of schooling, operational experience, and lifelong personal development.²

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) does not develop specialist ‘strategists’, but instead trains and assesses all officers in tactical planning at single-service schools and throughout their subsequent promotion courses, assuming that strategic (and operational) skills will be instilled by osmosis.³ In the age of the ‘strategic corporal’, this is a mindset that must be questioned.⁴ Indeed, today’s ‘disruptive thinkers’ are doing just that.⁵

Inadequate strategic thinking was the theme of a recent RAND review of America’s wars since 11 September 2001, aptly captured in the title ‘Improving Strategic Competence’:

Two themes emerged from this survey. First, land warfare has evolved away from conventional combat against state actors and their standing forces to an increasing incidence of irregular warfare fought by joint forces, against non-state actors. This has led to an increasing reliance on SOF … Second, while the Army often learns tactical and operational lessons from the wars it fights, it often struggles to incorporate these wars’ broader strategic lessons … The joint force and the US government as a whole have displayed an ongoing ambivalence about and lack of proficiency in the non-combat and
unconventional aspects of war and conflict against non-state actors, despite their increasing frequency.\(^6\)

A recent United Kingdom (UK) report into strategic thinking and planning identified similar limitations:

*The central contention of our Report is that Government has lost the capacity to think strategically ... the UK has “lost the institutional capacity for, and culture of, strategic thought” ... Our main recommendation is to create a “community of strategists” ... However, the response is largely silent on our central recommendation about the need to recruit, train and promote strategic thinkers.*\(^7\)

Is Australia any different to its United States (US) and UK counterparts? Indeed, such observations should cause some trepidation given that the ADF’s officer development model is so similar to that of its ABCA partners. However, this article proposes an alternative framework for the development of a uniformed strategist, responding to the observation that, while Western forces have dominated the tactical battle, strategic success has remained elusive. The driver for change is evident in the fragile transition in Afghanistan; the fact that Western forces have been forced to re-intervene in Iraq only three years after transition; and that the intervention in Libya cannot be regarded as a success.\(^8\)

Williamson Murray and Mark Grimsley offer their own model, highlighting that strategy is ‘a process, a constant adaptation to shifting conditions and circumstances in a world where chance, uncertainty and ambiguity dominate ... [and conclude that] a cadre of strategically educated and adept individuals capable of coping with this uncertain environment is a necessity.’\(^9\)

Adaptive Campaigning suggests a need to ‘probe’ the operational environment on a continual basis, learning and adapting accordingly.\(^10\)

Indeed, the Defence White Paper 2016 articulated an intention for the ADF to routinely engage with the operating environment through the mechanism of international engagement. It would achieve this through:

- increasing investment in the Defence Cooperation Program to build confidence and the capacity of countries in the Indo-Pacific region to contribute to collective security (para 5.8)
• increasing the number of multinational exercises in which the ADF participates across the immediate region and the broader Indo-Pacific (para 5.9)

• increasing the number of Defence personnel overseas to conduct more liaison, capacity-building, training and mentoring with partner defence and security forces (para 5.10)

• increasing investment in training ADF and Australian Public Service personnel responsible for undertaking international engagement so as to support these initiatives (para 5.11)

This article responds to the direction provided in the White Paper, exploring the selection, development and employment of personnel as ‘generalist plus’ officers for strategic planning roles. The long-term objective of developing such personnel is to groom future defence attachés with 10 or more years of regional experience and considerable expertise. In order to frame a capability gap of military strategists, regional experts and future defence attachés, the next section will review the complexity of the operating environment, consider the professional military education that addresses such complexity, and examine the means to retain such skills in the workforce.

A complex operating environment

Globalisation has driven complexity in strategic issues through the interlinked ethnic, economic and political systems now spanning the globe which inevitably yield the ‘law of unintended consequences’. Adaptive Campaigning codifies such complexity, and demonstrates the requirement for personnel operating, planning and thinking with a long-term, nuanced view. The Future Land Warfare Report 2014 describes this complex environment as crowded, connected, lethal, collective and constrained. The White Paper also focuses on this trend towards complexity, and seeks to mitigate it through multilateral approaches described thus:

As Australia’s strategic environment becomes more complex it is important to further develop our international partnerships including with our allies the United States and New Zealand, and with Japan, Indonesia, India, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, China and other key partners.
Reflecting on the complexity of the operating environment in recent wars in the Middle East, Kilcullen and others have called for specialist training for the planning and conduct of counter-insurgency operations, having highlighted the cultural awareness deficiencies that are readily apparent within Western militaries. Indeed, ‘policy makers with an in-depth knowledge of the Koran and what it means to the various Sunni and Shia sects are the rarest of beings. Lacking that nuanced understanding, we interfere far away without understanding the domestic consequences.’ But was this any different in the past? How well did we understand the ideology, motivation and intentions of the Vietcong prior to the Vietnam War? How well did we understand the ethnic differences between the Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda? Was there anyone in the ADF who spoke Pashto in 2001? It is important to ask the awkward question of whether interventions in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan might have been more successful had Australian forces been equipped with a better strategic understanding of their foe when crafting operational plans. Indeed, it is worth asking whether this deficiency in cultural, political and regional understanding is undermining the ADF’s strategic competence.

A targeted focus on developing regional advisers is a hedge against the conventional warfare orientation of the ADF, the rising frequency of irregular challenges and the increasingly strategic nature of current conflict. It is notable that other militaries enjoy significant access and influence as a result of having such advisers. A prominent example is the Iranian General Ghasem Soleimani, commander of the elite Revolutionary Guard’s Quds Force, who has routinely been photographed with Iraqi, Syrian and Hezbollah senior leadership figures over the course of the past decade. Iranian success in coordinating proxies across the Middle East is indicative of the value specialist adviser capability affords a military.

**Countering complexity with education**

In 1996, Dietrich Dörner, a psychologist studying the way people interact with complex problems, discovered that experience was the single most important variable in distinguishing performance in simulations involving complexity. The challenge therefore lies in building organisational experience pertaining to particular complex problems — characterised in this case by geographic, ethnic and linguistic regions. Such experience
might be built through education and gradually increasing levels of exposure to foreign nations. A professional military education study by the Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) in 2012 recommended that the ‘ADF … adopt a policy of increasing the number of personnel with higher postgraduate qualifications’ and that ‘the ADF … examine ways and means of securing for selected officers a one- or two-year master’s degree at a civilian university with a significant component of research.’ The key to such a recommendation is likely to lie in the aspirational goal of cognitive diversity, again a variable that has been found to improve engagement with a complex problem. Indeed, this recommendation by ASPI holds the potential mechanism for building foundational knowledge to manage the complexities resident in a given region.

The army’s recent implementation of alternative career pathways, outplacements and diversifying opportunities all point to a similar goal of increasing cognitive diversity. By targeting junior officers who have demonstrated the potential for strategic thinking, an organisational return on investment and individual retention mechanism are simultaneously introduced at precisely the time when talented individuals are considering alternative careers (usually around five to six years’ experience in the ADF).

Describing the requirement

The strategic planner concept seeks to address a specific capability gap; strategic planners must be capable of planning operational actions, cognisant of their strategic effect. The crux of this challenge lies in understanding foreign cultures, a challenge clearly articulated in the White Paper. The previously mentioned RAND study into lessons from the past 13 years of war identified seven lessons, summarised in Table 1 below:

Development of a specialist planning capability within the context described by RAND must be considered with a long-term aim of growing capability that is imbued with joint, interagency planning expertise, an understanding of behavioural science and complexity, and regional cultural and language skills. Such persons should hold a postgraduate qualification in international relations or security studies, ideally with a language skill, and a strong understanding of the geo-political influences in a designated target region or country. This envisioned capability is similar to the US Foreign Area
### Table 1. Summary of RAND's Lessons from 13 years of war with grey highlight identifying points of most relevance to this article.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>A deficit in the understanding of strategy</td>
<td>‘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 that often failed to occur … 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.’</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Deficits in the process for formulating strategy</td>
<td>‘Formulating strategy is further inhibited because there is no established integrated civilian-military process that would rigorously identify assumptions, risks, possible outcomes, and second-order effects through soliciting diverse inputs, red-teaming, and table-top exercises. The lack of such a process inhibited timely adaptation of strategy in response to the evolution of understanding and events.’</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>A failure to incorporate the essential political element of war into strategy.</td>
<td>‘The US military has also been reluctant to grapple with the political aspect of war, in the belief that it is either not part of war or entirely up to the civilians to address. Yet an intervention is unlikely to produce lasting results without a strategy that addresses the political factors driving the conflict and provides for enduring postwar stability.’</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>The inability of technology to substitute for the socio-cultural and historical knowledge needed to inform understanding of the conflict, formulation of strategy, and timely assessment.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>A failure to plan, prepare and conduct stability operations and the transition to civilian control, as well as belated development of counterinsurgency capabilities.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Insufficient emphasis on shaping, influence, and non-combat approaches to addressing conflict.</td>
<td>‘There is a chronic lack of emphasis on shaping, influence, and unconventional approaches that might in some cases [avert] the need for Phase III major combat operations. The lack of emphasis can be traced to (1) a reluctance to engage in a proactive manner while a conflict is still relatively small or unthreatening, (2) an insufficient understanding of the full range of possible activities, and (3) an underdeveloped model for planning and conducting these operations as a campaign that achieves results without major combat … Yet the paradigm is not fully established, as “Phase 0” shaping, influence, capacity-building, and unconventional activities are often seen as a prelude to and preparation for major combat operations rather than a potential alternative to them.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Inadequate civilian capacity and inadequate mechanisms for coordinated implementation among joint, interagency and multinational partners.</td>
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Officer (FAO) program, and should emulate that program with appropriate modifications for the Australian context.

In 2011, Major Cate Carter presented a compelling case asserting the utility of FAOs within the Australian Army as a whole.24 Her analysis of similarities with the US system suggests a ‘glide path’ towards a cadre of approximately 60 officers within the army, but notes that as few as five ‘would cover a sufficient variety of countries to add weight to operational planning.’ Carter also noted the Australian intelligence community requirement for a FAO-like capability, commenting that ‘in the modern quest for generalists, we have lost the expert’. She observed that Defence was not alone in this respect, with diplomatic staff likewise requiring rotation through regional desks, thereby diluting regional expertise.

Internationally, a similar concept to the FAO also emerged when US General Stan McChrystal advocated an ambitious level of advisory support through the ‘Afghan Hands’ program,25 similar in concept to the British Foreign Service or an extension of the US FAO program.26 Australia currently has no equivalent concept for grooming such specialists at even a modest level to support operational command. Admiral Stavridis, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander Europe from 2009 to 2013, emphasised that the Afghan Hands program is ‘one of the smartest tools for achieving peace we possess’, noting that ‘it should be considered as a possible model for other such programs elsewhere in the world’.27

Generating the requirement

Army workforce analysis has identified a requirement for almost 13% of its workforce to be ‘generalist plus’ officers; currently, however, only 5.5% of its workforce fits this categorisation (as at mid-2015). The generalist plus categorisation is currently utilised for members with specialist qualifications, for example a Masters in Human Resource Management that equips the officer to fill particular roles within a career management agency. The concept of strategic planners described in this article applies the specialist qualification more broadly as a blending of the benchmarks of the FAO program with the drivers of enhanced capacity for international engagement and improving strategic competence. Educational objectives that significantly enhance Defence’s capacity for international engagement (for example, fluency in Mandarin Chinese) are therefore considered a ‘specialist qualification’ allowing specialist career management.
The development of strategic planners must first recognise the challenges in strategic planning that demand the ability to understand foreign cultures in order to be employed as an expert adviser. Consequently, screening of volunteers is critical before significant investment occurs. This screening process could leverage the existing selection models for special forces, founded on a joint process of identifying volunteers who seek additional challenges, to identify those who seek to operate to strategic effect. Furthermore, since this selection model is extant, building a strategic planner program would not represent an additional liability during this stage of force generation. For the envisaged strategic planner role, potential selection criteria might focus on personal attributes such as tolerance of ambiguity, insight, emotional quotient, social skills, the ability to think critically and foreign language potential.

Major Fernando Lujan, writing for the Center for a New American Security, defines the crux of the FAO or ‘Afghan Hands’ program as: ‘select hard, manage easy.’ While not perfectly suited to a Defence human resource paradigm that yearns for the flexibility to rotate personnel almost universally, Major Lujan’s observation describes the individual investment (and in turn retention) paradigm necessary for specialist planning and advisory roles. ‘For all the talk of doctrine and preserving lessons learned, it is the people who will carry the hard-earned knowledge from the past decade of war and apply it to future security challenges.’ The failure to adhere to volunteer requirements and apply appropriate selection ‘gates’ undermined the Afghan Hands program and serves as a cautionary warning for a potential strategic planner streaming initiative.

Training and developing the capability

According to the White Paper, ‘Defence will expand cultural and language capabilities to increase its effectiveness in operating in the region and collaborating with international partners ... Defence will increase the number of personnel with intermediate and advanced language skills to support our enhanced international engagement, with a focus on languages in the Indo-Pacific region.’ This commitment significantly improves the feasibility of the concept of the strategic planner as such language training would form the foundational training individuals would receive once selected for the strategic planner role. However, it is also worthwhile pausing to consider an alternative
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paradigm should the ADF simply deliver increased language training. How will the ADF support the individual in maintaining such language skill sets since they will not be managed as linguists? How is the ADF member with the right language ‘force generated’ to the right international engagement activity or operational contingency? These human resource challenges are specifically addressed by the strategic planner concept.

The broadening of ADF individuals for a strategic planner role would leverage the existing long-term schooling program to enable the individual to complete postgraduate or advanced language qualifications appropriate to individual goals, aspirations and strengths. Moore notes that ‘despite the array of schooling available, the centre-piece of education for strategists is attendance at civilian universities.’ Such broadening objectives are critical to building the necessary level of regional understanding to perform successfully in international engagement.

Future strategists would then be developed through training in joint operational planning, information operations, psychological operations, network analysis, and ‘red teaming’. Such diversification is essential to develop people equipped to fight the contemporary non-state networked threats — a challenge which the ADF professional military education continuum appears unable to meet. Advocating for a ‘red teaming’ capability in the Australian Army, Lieutenant Colonel Rose argued that, ‘as military professionals in a complex, chaotic system such as war [members of the army] require tools, attitudes and methods to challenge our solutions, actively explore them, reduce our risk and highlight opportunity.’

Figure 1 illustrates the selection and training models that different organisations have employed for the adviser role and attempts to capture their relative efficacy. An ‘adviser course’ is a critical inclusion in the optimum model. Distilling lessons from recent operational experiences, capacity-building operations in Vietnam and the Pacific, and complementary language study, a baseline would be set for an individual’s regional ability to plan host nation capacity-building through such instruction. This training would enable an individual to plan and execute targeted international engagement activities that worked to support Australian strategic objectives and thereby increase the ability of that individual for subsequent challenges as a uniformed strategist.
Recognising that schooling is not the only component to strategic thinking, the development of experience specific to planning in the complexity of today’s operating environment is also envisaged over this total development period. Strategic planner development (trainees) would cost a minimum of six positions at senior captain (O-3) to major (O-4) rank and a similar number for long-term schooling to enable a baseline strategic planner capability to be built. Once qualified, these officers would fill the role of lead planner for international engagement exercises within organisations such as brigade headquarters, special operations headquarters and amphibious task group headquarters.

Under this program, the individual would remain responsible for maintaining situational awareness of his/her specific area, reaping enormous benefits for Defence in supporting the expansion of the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP) and long-term planning for defence attaché appointments. This model is illustrated in Figure 2 below, and shows how ADF institutional support could utilise extant international engagement activities, the language study tour program where applicable or overseas postings where appropriate, to further develop such individuals.

**Employing the capability**

Strategic planner regional and country specialisations aim to assist human resource management and to align with FAO designations wherever possible. To ensure interoperability with US planners, the following designations are suggested; these designations also illustrate the potential for targeted employment:

- **A** – Command streaming Officers
- **B** – Latin America (Spanish)
- **C** – European (French) – which in the Australian context would include Trans-Sahel Africa, NATO and the UN
- **D** – South Asia (Farsi/Dari/Urdu/Hindi)
- **E** – Eurasia (Turkish, Eastern European or Russian language)
- **F** – China – which in the Australian context should be designated Indochina, to include Taiwan, Laos, Cambodia and Vietnam (Cantonese, Khmer or Viet language skills)
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The benefit of investment in a strategic planner capability would be maximised in an operational context through using respective strategic planners for contingency planning (for example, a ‘D’ planner would be used to support a planning team focussing on the Straits of Hormuz, or an ‘F’ planner to supplement a planning team for the southern Philippines). Ideally, the experience gained by strategic planners earlier in their career will have

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**Figure 1. Summary of historic operational force generation models for advisers.**

- G – Middle East (Arabic)
- H – North-East Asia (Japanese, Mandarin or Korean)
- I – South-East Asia (Thai, Malay or Tagalog)
- J – Saharan and southern Africa – which in the Australian context should focus on the Eastern seaboard of Africa (Swahili or Arabic)
- N – Indonesia (Bahasa Indonesia)
- P – Pacific (Pidgin, Solomon Islands Pidgin or Fijian)
- X – Niche skill sets for Defence diplomacy outside regional orientation (e.g. PhD qualifications in international relations or a masters in anthropology).
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provided them an intimate understanding of the region in question. As was typical in most ADF deployments over the past decade, such specialist human resources are required within hours, or at most weeks. Indeed, exploiting those officers trained as strategic planners to fill DCP postings across the region may pre-position the right human resource prior to the emergence of a crisis.

Emile Simpson, in *War from the Ground Up*, describes ‘conflict as politics’ which, when extrapolated through the analogy ‘all politics are local’, highlights the need for local understanding of drivers for conflict so as to orchestrate successful strategy. Simpson notes: ‘strategy can use the flow of history as an emotional current upon which to float its rational narrative … The idea that we can associate strategic effect by aligning ourselves with the currents of history is an important consideration.’ To ‘improve strategic competence’ the ADF requires regional specialists with an understanding of the local politics pertinent to a particular region — specialists who take time and investment to grow.

Managing the capability

The opening of amended ‘pathways’ for Command and Staff College accreditation provides a unique opportunity for developing military strategists and future defence attachés. Indeed, further broadening of career management pathways should be considered for the development of strategic thinking and regional expertise. For example, an embedded adviser to a foreign military battalion-sized organisation might be a viable alternative to an O4 sub-unit command appointment, filled through the expanded DCP. Indeed, the operational employment of advisers within the Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam or British advisers to the Royal Armed Forces of Oman during the Dhofar insurgency, exemplify the value of culturally competent embedded officers. The allocation of overseas Command and Staff College appointments, such as to Japan, Indonesia or Pakistan, could clearly be used to enable the strategic planner model, where officers demonstrate potential beyond that of a defence attaché. At the O5 level, appropriate service within organisations such as ASPI, Border Protection Command, the Office of National Assessment, the Defence Intelligence Organisation, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade or US theatre commands may present a viable alternative to a unit command appointment.
for the specific purpose of grooming a future defence attaché. This career management paradigm should represent personal, informal management through service career management agencies to ensure the retention of such personnel within the ADF.

A tangible demonstration of the model of the strategic planner concept can be found in the career profiles of a number of individuals who had a marked impact on World War II and the Korean War, yet who did not conform to the ‘command streaming’ officer model. One such officer was Lieutenant Colonel John E. Beebe who was ‘an intelligence officer on General MacArthur’s staff in the Philippines and Japan during World War II. From 1946 to 1949 he was Assistant Army Attaché at the American Embassy in China. During 1949 he spent 5 months behind Chinese Communist lines. He served in Korea with the 40th Infantry Division and subsequently was assigned to the Korean Military Advisory Group as Senior Advisor to the Commanding General, Southern Security Command, Republic of Korea, for 9 months during which time anti-guerrilla operations were conducted’ that effectively rid South Korea of its communist insurgency.  

Figure 2. Developing strategic planners.
Beebe’s example demonstrates that the value of certain human resources is difficult to articulate before they are needed. In the same way, the Australian Army lacks doctrine or professional development to meet Adaptive Campaigning’s fifth line of operation — indigenous capacity-building — which implies the development and retention of specialist personnel with unique backgrounds and skills. This is a notable gap. Major Lujan’s observation addresses the strategic imperative to select, train and develop those with the potential to represent Australia’s interests — its future ‘military diplomats’:

Prevention is the new “victory” … the wrong man can do more harm than the right man can do good … [our] most critical resource is human capital – talented, adaptable professionals who are not only fluent in language, culture, politics and interpersonal relationships but also willing to wade into uncertain environments and influence outcomes with minimal resources.

**Conclusion**

In 2011, then Vice Chief of the Defence Force General David Hurley observed that the ADF needs to be ‘deeply engaged with regional countries and possess an exceptionally strong understanding of their cultures, languages and ways of thinking.’ The development of such understanding presents a significant obstacle to current career management processes due to the time obligations for postgraduate education and language training. However, to the strategic planner concept, an understanding of culture and language represents a symbiotic relationship with imbued critical thinking and planning skill sets. Nowhere is this relationship more pertinent than in lessons that should be drawn from the ADF’s experience in East Timor, Solomon Islands, Iraq and Afghanistan, with very different cultural orientations and language demands.

The UK Public Administration Select Committee 2010 inquiry into UK national strategy quoted the Chief of the Defence Staff, Sir Jock Stirrup, who drew particular attention to the fact that, in his view, the UK has ‘lost an institutionalised capacity for, and culture of, strategic thought’. While acknowledging that the UK certainly possessed people who could think strategically, Sir Jock considered that his nation had become ‘hunter-gatherers of strategic talent, rather than nurturers and husbandmen.’
This article has advocated the nurturing of a strategic planner cadre, the creation of a virtual, specialist network, daily orientated to the international engagement function, that can be used as required to perform specific planning roles within the Defence establishment. Strategic planners would conceivably also constitute a pool of specialist advisers for foreign capacity-building operations. Over time, they would develop situational awareness of their targeted region through repeated international engagement iterations, language study tours and overseas postings.

Within such a context, General Gavin’s poignant advice still resonates:

*We can never predict who will be in the key positions of strategy formulation and execution in a time of crisis, and we cannot expect to be able to create “instant military strategists” in time of war. In order to have the ability to expand, we need a structure … in which at any one time there are officers at all levels experiencing a maturation of their talents as strategists.*

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**About the author**

Major Andrew Maher has served in a range of operations, training and staff appointments within the Australian Army, including overseas service in Afghanistan and Iraq. He holds a Masters in Defence Studies from the University of New South Wales, Bachelors degrees in Human Resource Management and Civil Engineering, and has travelled extensively.

**ENDNOTES**


3 Strategic skills are exceptionally difficult to develop, as strategy is effectively a form of ‘contingent guessing’ about how the essentially unpredictable future will unfold. This topic is discussed in detail by Barry Watts in his chapter ‘Barriers to acting strategically: Why strategy is so difficult’ in *Competitive Strategies for the 21st Century: Theory, History and Practice*, edited by Thomas Mahnken, Stanford University Press, CA, 2012.

4 See Brigadier Michael Krause, *Square pegs for round holes*, Working Paper 132, Land Warfare Studies Centre, June 2007. In a similar vein, Krause laments that ‘formal joint training is often first received at Staff College by middle-ranking majors’. In an environment increasingly dominated by joint, interagency frameworks, an understanding of strategy is necessary at a far earlier stage of training than after almost 15 years of service.
This phrase notes the controversial essay by Benjamin Kholmann, ‘The Military needs more Disruptive thinkers’, Small Wars Journal, 5 April 2012, at: http://smallwarsjournal.com (accessed 12 June 2012). Kholmann highlights the benefit of drawing on innovation at the typically O3 rank — the 25 to 30 year olds — by educating these individuals in fields well outside Defence, to bring new concepts and approaches to military problems. While criticised for his essay, it is worth noting that the German staff system under Moltke at the dawn of the twentieth century instituted a similar methodology, thereby introducing the technology of the telegraph to the German army. The importance of cognitive diversity has been identified by DSTO as critical to effective decision-making in complex environments.

Linda Robinson, Paul Miller, John Gordon IV, Jeffrey Decker, Michael Schwille and Raphael Cohen, Improving Strategic Competence: Lessons from 13 years of War, RAND, 2014, p. xi, at: www.rand.org. RAND’s conclusions are supported by senior members within the US Department of Defence, evidenced by the statement: ‘Time and again, the US has undertaken to engage in conflict without fully considering the physical, cultural, and social environments that comprise what some have called the “human domain”.’ Raymond Odierno, James Amos and William McRaven, Strategic Landpower: Winning the clash of wills, TRADOC, Washington DC, 6 May 2013.


Moore, What’s the matter with being a Strategist (now)?, p. 8.


A ‘generalist plus’ is a generalist army officer with a tertiary qualification that is relevant to army capability.


‘Irregular warfare has historically been and will probably continue to be the main form of organised violence across the planet.’ David Kilcullen, Out of the Mountains: The Coming Age of the Urban Guerrilla, Oxford University Press, 2013, p. 103.

Simpson notes: ‘The extent and speed of inter-connectivity associated with contemporary globalisation can un hinge classical strategy. Contemporary globalisation challenges the two prerequisites of war in the Clausewitzian paradigm: first, in the proliferation of strategic audiences beyond the enemy; second, in the tendency for conflicts in general to be drawn further away from the pole of ‘pure polarity’ as strategy tends increasingly to be sensitive to the opinions of global audiences. The consequence is the erosion of the distinction between military and political activity.’ Simpson, War from the ground up, p. 68.

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20 Robinson et al., *Improving Strategic Competence*, pp. xii–xiii.

21 Ibid., p. xiii.

22 Ibid., pp. xiii–xiv.

23 Ibid., pp. xiv–xv.


25 ‘We decided to field a cadre of several hundred American military officers and NCOs – “Afghan Hands”, after the “China Hands” of the 1930s and 1940s – who would be trained in the languages, history and cultures of Afghanistan and Pakistan, and then employed there over a five-year period. On rotations in country and back in the United States, their focus would be the same region or topic.’ Stanley McChrystal, *My share of the Task: A memoir*, Penguin Group, NY, 2013, p. 307. McChrystal added that, ‘after almost a year in command, I was more convinced than ever that a cadre of language-trained professionals, steeped in the culture and assigned for multiple tours to establish genuine relationships, would be the single most powerful asset we could field.’ (pp. 385–86).

26 Indeed, Douglas Pike in his *People’s Army of Vietnam* (Presidio Press, CA, 1986, pp. 4–5), describes himself (US Foreign Service) as having ‘grown up with the Vietcong’ over 15 years of service. He elaborates: ‘a person with a background in political science (especially Marxism-Leninism), social psychology, and the communication of ideas can better explain the unrolling phenomenon of the Vietnam War than one schooled in military science.’


29 Ibid., p. 29.


31 It is highly recommended that the proposed strategic planner capability be developed with a return of service obligation following the completion of long-term schooling in order to justify proposed ADF expenditure. This obligation in turn provides career management certainties, noting the long lead time involved in generating this capability.

32 Moore, ‘What’s the matter with being a Strategist (now)?’, p. 12.

33 ‘Red Teaming is an activity performed by individuals educated and trained to enhance staff planning and decision making; decision support, critical review, and threat emulation … It is a function that provides commanders an independent capability to fully explore alternatives in plans, operations, concepts, organisations and capabilities in the context of the operational environment and from the perspectives of our partners, adversaries and others.’ This training is delivered for the US Army by the University of Foreign Military and Cultural Studies. See: http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/UFMCS/FAQ.asp (accessed 1 September 2012).
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35 Members of the Australian Army Training Team – Vietnam completed an adviser course of almost six weeks in duration. RAND recommends for the US context: ‘Reopening the advisory school at Fort Bragg can be a powerful mechanism for developing common procedures and understanding for operating in small, distributed, blended formations, as well as [providing] a ready cadre of trained advisers able to meet the expected demand of a national security strategy that places increased emphasis on partnered operations and building partner capacity.’ Robinson et al., Improving Strategic Competence, p. xviii.

36 These positions generate resilience in the S3/S5 functions, that can accept the loss of a strategic planner to support a planning team, leveraging their regional expertise. A senior captain to junior major rank will offer sufficient reporting history to identify whether the incumbent has a noted potential for strategic employment, while also providing a sufficient tactical base from which the officer can be groomed for operational-strategic roles.

37 While additional positions are recommended, short-term development of the strategic planner concept may be possible at neutral growth but would be constrained without dedicated pool positions.

38 Language study tour programs are three weeks in duration, and are fully funded by the army.

39 Andrew Davies, Peter Jennings and Ben Schreer, A versatile force: The future of Australia’s special operations capability, ASPI, April 2014, p. 27, at: www.aspi.org.au. The authors recommend enhancing ‘SOF regional engagement through regional liaison elements’. Davies et al. also recommend that ‘maintaining and strengthening SOF cooperation with our US ally is vital … similar arrangements [to the establishment of a SOCOMD liaison post at US PACOM] could be considered with US Central Command and US Africa Command’ (p. 6).

40 Note that there is no ‘N’ designation (Indonesia) within the US Army FAO program, but this is clearly a sound investment in Australia’s most significant neighbour.

41 Likewise there is no ‘P’ designation (Pacific) within the US Army FAO program. This affords a unique capability option for Australia (and potentially New Zealand) to ‘force generate’ for combined strategic outcomes within the coalition planning environment.

42 Simpson, War from the Ground Up, p. 216.


44 This terminology borrows Lieutenant General Peter Leahy’s ‘Military diplomacy’ term, used in a submission to the Defence White Paper 2015, at: http://www.defence.gov.au/Whitepaper/docs/251-Leahy.pdf, which concludes with the recommendation that: ‘the Minister maintain his interest in military diplomacy and direct the ADF to seek ways of further enhancing military diplomacy with a focus on the Asia Pacific Region.’

45 Lujan, Light Footprints, p. 5. Major Lujan is commenting on the small-scale nature of future American military interventions, and the resultant imposition on human resources.

46 Smith and Bergin, Education for the profession of arms in Australia.


49 ‘Joint and service capabilities that create and maintain regional familiarity or expertise, advisory capability, and other special skills for irregular warfare and stability operations should be preserved and refined at the level needed to execute current military plans. These personnel can serve as a training cadre for rapid expansion in the event of a large-scale stability operation or counterinsurgency’. Robinson et al, *Improving Strategic Competence*, p. xviii.

50 Moore, ‘What’s the matter with being a Strategist (now)?’, p. 18.